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ABEL ALLNUTT.

2 vol

A NOVEL.

James Justinian Morier

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"HAJJI BABA," "ZOHRAB," &c.

And if I have done well as is fitting the story, it is that which I desired; but if slenderly and meanly, it is that which I could attain unto.

2 MACCABEES, XV. 38.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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It frequently happens that when a hen is sitting, a strange egg is introduced into the nest, and thus a bird of a different species is brought to life with her brood. It is so with this work. My strange egg will be found in the eleventh chapter of the second volume, but only half hatched, because I leave it to others to bring it to maturity. An antiquarian subject, tending to illustrate sacred matters, it may be said, has no business in the pages of a novel; but I venture to answer to that, that its fitness depends upon the mode of introducing it; and I hope it will be found that the mode I have adopted is not wholly objectionable; since it at one and the same time illustrates the character of one of the essential personages of the tale, and tends to the discussion of an interesting question. I had often thought of bringing the subject to notice in some separate form; but, all things considered, I think it just

as likely to be read in this manner as in the paper of a literary journal or some antiquarian miscellany. This hint, however, I hope, will be sufficient to such of my readers as only read for amusement's sake, to warn them of the existence of such a subject; whilst it may, perhaps, induce those grave and learned persons who hold all fiction as trash, to relax their dignity, and admit "ABEL ALLNUTT" to the honour of a place on their table.

When a poor fellow falls overboard and gets adrift, there is an ingenious contrivance on board ships, called a life-preserver, which is launched after him; and if it acts properly, he may probably save his life by clinging to it. When I see "ABEL" launched into the vast ocean of society, one of the *rari nantes* struggling for existence, I cannot help looking to my CHAP. XI. v. 2, as his life-preserver, which may, probably, keep his head above water a little longer than others who are cast adrift at the same time with himself, with nothing but a *puff*, whatever their merit, to keep them from sinking.

THE AUTHOR.

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ABEL ALLNUTT.

CHAPTER I.

Some account of the Family of Allnutt.

IN a remote part of one of the western counties of England, thickly surrounded by trees, overgrown with ivy, and secluded from the public gaze, was situated an ancient, small red-brick house, that was often compared to the face of an old lady, peeping through the close frills and ribands of her cap, looking snug, neat and cheerful. From a back study, about ten o'clock one fine summer's morning was heard to issue the sounds of a German flute, which although both door and windows were closed, would find its way to the ears of the inmates, and occasion exclamations of either disapproval or the contrary, according as their nerves might or might not be affected. The individual who played the flute was a short, faded-looking man, about thirty-five years of age, whom we beg leave to introduce to our readers as the Abel Allnutt of our title-page. A peculiar benignity of aspect was the only charm that adorned his person; for his face was pale, his teeth indifferent, his hair scanty, and there was an awkward simplicity in his manner which indicated that he had mixed little with the world. He had been sickly from his youth upward, and it was owing to the great care his sisters had taken of him (for they had lost their parents when he was still of an early age,) that he escaped the unrelenting per-

secutions of consumption. They had combated with all their might his excessive love of the flute, and this had been almost the sole cause of dissension between them during the many years which they had passed together under the same roof.

As he was blowing his way successfully through one of the most difficult of Mozart's solos, suddenly the door of his study opened, and his eldest sister, Aunt Bab, as she was usually called, appeared, holding the door-handle with one hand and resting her arm upon the door-post with the other. She was many years older than her brother, and was a matter-of-fact-looking person, who enjoyed the principal management of the house, and whose decision on all matters which concerned the family generally was conclusive. Her eyes were light, though piercing, her hair inclined to red and now thinly streaked with gray, and in her whole manner and demeanour there was that life and bustle which denoted a notable and intelligent woman,—for, be it said, a lack of comeliness is the parent of many virtues.

“How can you go on in this manner?” she said to her brother with an expression that might have passed for anger and reproof; “it is too bad, when you know that it was but yesterday you had that alarming fit of coughing.”

“My dear Barbara,” said her brother, in the most placid tone, and without showing a symptom of ill humour, “I will just get through this solo, and then I promise to lay by my flute. I would not have taken it up this morning, but that I dreamed of this difficult passage all the night through, and by shutting my door and windows I thought that I should not have been heard.”

“You are mistaken, though,” she said: “I will never let you alone so long as you have dealings with that horrid instrument; and when you know that it may be the death of you any day, and leave me and my sister without your protection, it is really too bad—and, what's more, very selfish.”

“Well, then, I'll play no more,” said Abel, with the greatest good nature; and so saying, he unscrewed his flute, placed it in its case, and shut up his music-book. “There—will that do for you?”

“That's a good man!” said his sister. “But what I wanted to speak to you about was our dinner to-day,—you know this is John's last day, therefore what shall we have? He will be here at five with Mary.”

“What shall we have?” said Abel, slowly turning his thoughts from seraphic Mozart to vulgar pudding: “why, what does John like best?” he inquired.

“I think he likes most things,” replied his sister, becoming thoughtful at the question. Hence ensued a pause, followed by one of those discussions upon the important subject of dinner so apt to puzzle even the wisest heads, and which, in this instance, ended in that never-failing compromise, that universal point of agreement in English taste, viz. a leg of mutton.

“If that be the case,” said Bab, winding up the argument, “let us give him a leg of mutton at once.”

“Very well,” said Uncle Abel, rubbing his hands as if he had settled a great question; “let us give him a roasted leg of mutton.”

“Done!” said his sister; “we’ll have it.”

“But what does Mary like?” added Abel; “poor Mary must have what she likes—we must not forget that dearest girl.”

“Girls of her age,” said Aunt Bab, “don’t care much what they eat: poor thing, I fear she won’t have much appetite, now that she is about to lose her father for such an uncertain length of time. But I will take proper care of her:—she shall not be starved, I promise you—we shall be able to make out a very good dinner, and John will go away happy.”

“Poor dear John!” exclaimed Abel; “would that he could always secure so good a dinner! I fear that, considering the life he is about to lead, he will be often obliged to rough it upon much more indifferent food.”

Thus much having been settled, Aunt Bab went her way to make the necessary preparations. The reader must be told that the occasion of this dinner teemed with consequences of great import to the family of which I have hitherto afforded but a glimpse; and as it will be impossible for him to proceed without some knowledge of its history, I beg leave to submit the following short account to his notice.

The family of Allnutt, for such was the name, claimed an ancient descent, and had been allied to many noble families. Its actual chief was the Earl of Knutsford, a proud nobleman, who enjoyed great political influence. He was a distant relation to the individuals already mentioned; and it was a received truth, that if certain events should happen, and certain persons should die, the title and estates

would fall to the lot of the family now under consideration. Mr. Allnutt, father to Abel, had been a country gentleman of about two thousand pounds a year; he married a lady of no importance in point of family, but of great excellence of character. They had had a family of four children, two daughters and two sons. Barbara, the eldest, whose name had gradually run through a scale of diminutives until it had stopped at Bab, was some years older than the others. The second child was John, the third Fanny, and the youngest Abel, he being about twenty years younger than his eldest sister. They became orphans when Barbara was about thirty years of age, and consequently the duties of managing the family had devolved upon her—duties to which she was quite equal. Owing to the active and bustling turn of her character, she had secured so great a share of influence that the others submitted almost implicitly to her guidance.

Although the Earl was scarcely aware of the existence of this branch of his family, and if he were, would perhaps not have recognised any of its individuals as belonging to himself, the father, Mr. Allnutt, prided himself much upon his ancestors, whose names he asserted were to be found in Doomsday Book, and never ceased hinting the possibility of one day himself enjoying some of its hereditary dignities. He had lived in a handsome old mansion; and although his fortune was small, yet he could not resist the vanity of making an elder son of John, upon whom he settled his house and estate, leaving to his three other children five hundred pounds per annum between them—that is, one hundred pounds a year to each daughter, and three hundred to Abel.

John at an early age had shown such a turn for science, and as he grew up became so conspicuous for the enterprise and boldness of his character, that his father easily acceded to his wishes of placing him in the army. He entered the engineer service, and in the course of time became a distinguished officer, serving with great credit in the war of the Peninsula, by which he gained as rapid promotion as could be acquired in that branch of the service. At the peace he returned home as Major Allnutt. So long as he was employed by others, with the responsibilities of his profession hanging over him, his conduct was distinguished by prudence and sagacity; but no sooner was he his own master, than he became the plaything of his own schemes, and the ready instrument of every schemer. He

was one of those visionaries who conceive they can stride into affluence by a single step, and by one bright thought gain an eminence which others only attain by years of intense study. His quickness in the field of battle, which had gained for him many a bright laurel, made him conclude that he might be equally successful in the arts of peace, and he rushed with the same ardour upon what he thought was an indisputable invention as he did upon an unguarded point of the enemy's line. He wrote unanswerable pamphlets which were never read, for which he never got more than the warm thanks of those to whom he presented them, backed by the bill of costs of his publisher. He invented a ship that was never to sink, in which he embarked half his fortune, and just escaped with his life as he was exhibiting her capabilities to an astonished crowd of patrons and spectators. He then consoled himself by endeavouring to convert young town thieves into honest yeoman; in which having failed without taking warning of experience, he devised a scheme for rearing salt-water fish in fresh water, hoping to supply the town with cod and turbot to the discomfiture of Billingsgate, and in the success of which he was about exulting, when, as the Armenian said of his horse, he exclaimed, "had they lived but another day, his experiment would have been complete." In these and such like pursuits, at the end of a few years, he found his fortune so considerably diminished, if not entirely dissipated, that he was obliged to turn his views to some more certain mode of acquiring a fortune. It was about this time that England began to run mad upon the subject of the emancipation of the Spanish colonies from the mother country, upon loans to the new republics, and particularly upon mines and mining companies. A universal fever of generous patriotism raged throughout the country in their favour. One of our greatest statesmen had called them into existence. Patriotism begat the rage of lending money, lending money begat a desire of large interest, and with an increase of interest all the world seemed at once to have gained a short cut to unlooked-for affluence. John Allnutt was seized with the raging mania in its worst form. He ran about like one demented; wrote pamphlets full of tables, calculations, and predictions; talked of the flood of wealth which was about to visit the world with the same certainty as a certain class of enthusiasts now announce its end, and rendered himself so conspicuous by the zeal of his extravagant hopes, that one of

the principal Mexico mining companies was too happy to secure him as the director of their concerns.

At the moment of this our history he was expected to arrive at the home of his brother and sisters, accompanied by his daughter, on his road to join the ship that was to take him to Mexico. It must be told that he had married early in life a beautiful young person, who had left him a widower after a few years had elapsed, in the possession of this only child. Mary Allnutt was now about seventeen years of age. Her beauty was so perfect, that it would be difficult to say which feature excited the most admiration. There was great delicacy, accompanied by a brilliant appearance of health; grace shone in all the movements of her person, which was veiled by such retiring modesty, that the awe it produced discouraged impertinent glances; whilst in her lovely face there beamed so much goodness and intelligence, that the moment it was seen the beholder was impelled by a wish to acquire her friendship and approbation. She felt all the value of a father at a time that she was called upon to make a sacrifice of that possession. She loved him with warmth and even enthusiasm, for she also partook of the ardour of his character; and it was only the hope of seeing him restored to her in a short time, which prevented her from insisting upon accompanying him in his present expedition. It was settled that she was to live with her uncle and aunts in the country during his absence; and as she loved them almost with the same devotion that she did her father, she composed her mind into something like philosophical submission at the loss which she was about to sustain.

CHAPTER II.

The character and pursuits of the family are gradually developed by a variety of minute circumstances.

THE inmates of Ivycote (for that was the name of their cottage) were almost bursting with impatience for the moment of seeing their brother and niece during the long day on which they were expected. Abel had done little else than walk down the lane which led from the house to the

high road to endeavour to catch the first glimpse of their approach;—the active Barbara, laying aside the usual routine of her occupations, as multifarious as those of a secretary of state, had walked from the kitchen to the dining-parlour, and from the parlour to the kitchen, inspecting, first, the various concoctions which were in progress in the one, and then overlooking the arrangements which were making in the other, and ever and anon exhibiting her head at the house-door, until she became weary with anticipation;—whilst Fanny, whom we have still to present to our readers, remained in a listless state of expectation, seated, with her hands across, in the minute apartment called the drawing-room. Abel and his sisters were usually called uncle and aunts, in compliment to their only niece, whom they worshipped with almost divine honours; and as it was a title of which at least Barbara and Abel were proud, we will occasionally continue so to call them. But Fanny, who was still at an age when an *aunt-dom* is not quite a desirable appointment, rather endured than approved of that too frequent reminder of the lapse of time. She was loitering on the neutral ground which lies between undisputed youth and more debatable middle age—at least such was her view of her case. In the minds of those who would not allow poetry to usurp the place of matter-of-fact, she was settled down into a *bona fide* old maid; but in her own view of the matter the case was quite different—she adhered to youth with unflinching constancy, and blinked the question of age as the man deeply in debt avoids the sight of his banker's book. In her disposition she was as much a prey to apathy and indolence as her sister was active and stirring. It was only when some new individual in the form of man presented himself that her energies were roused, and straightway the powers of both her mind and body were brought into vigorous action—from being an habitual dawdler she then became an active fidget. Her taciturnity would then give way to much talking, her eyes would be armed with long practised artillery, and all the graces of attitude would be summoned up to aid the *levée en masse* of all her forces. Withal, in the main she was amiably disposed—prone to charity, and always ready to produce pincushions and workbags whenever some mighty neighbour projected a fancy bazaar, accompanied by a ball, for the benefit of the poor.

She was seated at her little work-table netting a purse and quietly waiting the tide of events, when the sharp and

piercing voice of her sister was heard calling to her from the other side of the house.

“Fanny,” she cried, “do you know whether John sleeps on feather-bed or matrass?”

Fanny listlessly turned her ear to the sound and said, “What?”

Again the question was repeated; when Fanny, urging her soft voice to the highest pitch, exclaimed, “I don’t know—I never know what any one sleeps upon.”

Aunt Bab then thought it right to follow up her question by appearing herself; when a long and anxious discussion took place between the two sisters about John’s general habits, his mode and manner of sleep—whether he was chilly or the contrary—whether he required much or little covering, two or more pillows, and whether he was accustomed to something warm when he went to bed. Much uncertainty and doubt existing upon these topics, they called in to their councils an old woman who had been a servant in the family from her childhood, who was better acquainted with John’s habits than any one else.

“La! Miss Barbara,” exclaimed old Betty, when the question concerning the matrass and feather-bed was put to her; “I recollect as well as though it were yesterday, that just before Master John went to the wars, he slept in the back attic that’s over Miss Mary’s room,—she was quite a little thing then,—and once in the middle of the night, she ran in to me in a mortal fright, poor thing! saying, she was sure some monster or great beast must be sleeping over her head, for she heard it growl quite plain; and sure enough, as I’m alive, I went with the dear creature into her room and heard an awful noise sounding through the deal-boards. I was afraid something was wrong with Master John, and so, think’s I, I’ll steal up to his room and see what is the matter. I then gently opened the door, and what d’ye think I saw? Why, there was Master John wrapt up in his great military cloak, with his portmantel under his head, fast asleep on the bare boards alongside of his own bed which remained untouched, just as I had made it up in the morning. After that, Miss Barbara, I don’t think we need much mind which be uppermost, the mattress or the feather-bed;—Master John would sleep sound on the top of the kitchen dresser—that’s what he would.”

“What could he be doing that for, Betty?” said Fanny.

“Why, Miss, I taxed him with it the next morning, and

bless his face—I see it now—says he to me, ‘Betty, says he, ‘I’m now a real soldier, and soldiers must be hardy: it won’t do for me to be sleeping on a bed when the bare ground will do as well.’ I remember it as though it were yesterday.”

“That is so like John!” exclaimed Bab; “he never does a thing like anybody else.”

“He was always a strange boy,” re-echoed old Betty; “and that’s the truth on’t.”

Not long after this conversation had taken place, when the patience of the whole house was nearly exhausted in expectation, the sound of wheels was heard in the lane, and as they approached the house it was ascertained that the post-chaise was in sight, and soon after it stopped at the door. Abel rushed out to greet his brother, followed by his sisters, backed by Betty and the old man-servant; and by the time the vehicle had come to the end of its career, every living thing within the house was present. John leapt out of the chaise first, and was followed by his daughter. Seldom does one see a family-greeting so full of feeling and affection as that which took place on this occasion. Kissing and embracing, and other palpable demonstrations, are not so frequent in our frigid latitudes as among more southern nations; but with a set of simple and warm-hearted country folks who had scarcely ever stirred from their village, such a show of feeling may be allowed as quite natural, and it actually took place. John Allnutt was a handsome, animated looking man, who although now in the zenith of middle age, had the buoyant spirits of a school-boy. He kissed and embraced every thing that came in his way, even to old Betty, who, drawing up with a smile on her face, wiped her lips with due gratitude for (to her) so rare a mode of salutation.

The interchange of all the proper inquiries and exclamatory greetings having taken place, the family commenced a short course of comparative anatomy upon each other’s persons. Bab found John grown fat, Fanny thought him thin; Abel said Mary had grown tall, Mary asserted that Abel was grown young; John found Bab blooming, and then fell to admiring Fanny’s hair; whilst Abel, still keeping his eyes upon his niece, patted her cheek and would have said she was beautiful, but he checked his too enthusiastic admiration, fearing to make her vain. Bab and Fanny then began their scrutiny upon Mary, and criticised every inch of her growth as if they had been cheated out

of it by her absence, and then asked John what he thought of her. The affectionate father, casting his parental eyes on the charms of his daughter, whilst tears sprung into their channels, said with an overflowing heart, "She is a dear good girl, that's what I think of her," and then kissed her cheek and forehead with all the rapture of a kind and endearing nature. During this scene in which the family were settling their different disks, old Betty stood at a distance with her apron in one hand and the other uplifted, looking, and smirking, and exclaiming, "Well, who would have thought it!" and "dear me!" and "well-a-day!" when being kindly noticed both by John and his daughter, she departed to evaporate her wonderments and ejaculations to her companions in the kitchen.

When the palpitations of first meeting had somewhat subsided, Aunt Bab would have hurried her brother and his daughter to their rooms, to throw off the dust of the road, so anxious was she to exhibit to them the preparations she had made for their comfort; but John was so full of his schemes, that he could not be prevented from a fit of explosion. Little heeding the seclusion in which his sisters and brother lived, and their consequent ignorance of what was doing in either the political or commercial world, he exclaimed with exultation in his accent,

"Well, Abel, have you heard the news? Capital news to be sure!"

"What news?" exclaimed Abel, Bab, and Fanny with one voice.

"Famous news! I can tell you," said John.

"Oh, such news!" re-echoed the gentle Mary in a subdued voice.

"What is it, pray?" said the others.

"Why, they have positively found silver in the Coffer," said John with great satisfaction in his manner.

"Have they?" said Abel—"Have they?" said Bab—"Have they?" said Fanny, all in the various tones of persons who are puzzled.

"They have indeed," said John, little minding the ignorance of his auditors; "and what's more, we are to have it."

"Shall we indeed!" exclaimed Bab, as if she now understood perfectly what was meant. "Well, that will be nice!"

"This news of the silver luckily just reached before

"I left London," said John, "and the directors are full of it."

"Why, I thought we were to have it," said Bab.

"Have what?" said John.

"The silver, to be sure," said Bab. "Did not you think so, Abel?" said she turning to him.

"To say the truth," said Abel, "I know not what to think. John says that silver has been found in the coffer, and that we are to have it; but which coffer he means, he has still to tell us."

"Papa, you said nothing about Perote, that's true," said Mary, smiling, and amazingly amused at the mistake in which her uncle and aunts had fallen: "'tis the Coffer of Perote that papa means."

"Who may Perote be," inquired Aunt Fanny with animation: "Is he any thing to us?"

"No, no, my dear," said John, with a good-natured smile, as if he was recovering from a dream; "you have mistaken me, or perhaps you don't know. Perote is not a man—it's a mountain—it is a high mountain standing conspicuous in the chain which skirts the Mexican coast, and is distinguished by a large square rock on its very summit, which the Spaniards have assimilated to a trunk or coffer, and thus have assigned this name to it. The mining company have heard that a mine has been discovered close at hand, of which they have acquired possession; and as it is situated in a healthy climate, and much nearer to the sea than the one to which I was about originally to proceed, this circumstance became to me a matter of joy and congratulation."

"And much greater to me," said the gentle Mary, taking her father's hand; "for then you will be so much nearer us, and we shall so easily hear from you."

"Oh, is that all?" said Abel, Bab, and Fanny.

"But, John," said Bab with great earnestness, "you have never told us to this day what you are going to do at this Mexico you talk so much about. All the people here say that engineer officers know more about mines than any body else, and that when a mine is to be blown up they do it. But then, I say, if you blow up the mine, what becomes of the silver and gold inside?"

"It's very true," said John, "it's very true that the business of an engineer comprises the knowledge of mining; but that applies to fortifications and walled cities—he there undermines and there blows up. But the mining I am to

undertake is a totally different thing—I am to dig into the bowels of the earth for the precious metals, and get as much silver and gold as I can out of them.”

“Oh,” said Bab in a lengthened note, “now I understand. It is time for you to be making money, after having lost so much. Will it be long before you get some?”

“The time is uncertain, but the result is certain,” said John with great confidence. “What has been done before will be done again. Why, Bab,” said he, taking both her hands into his, and looking at her straight in the face, “do you know that in 1825, Guadalajara coined 676,073 pesos; Durango, 800,000; Zacatecas, 3,000,000. In 1810, Guanajato produced 500,000 marcs of silver, and 1500 marcs of gold; Veta Grande, 100,000; and Catorce, 600,000 pesos.—There—what do you say to that? and that with malacaties only, and without the aid of a single steam-engine!”

Bab, confounded by such a descent of hard names and round numbers upon her rustic mind, could scarcely breathe from astonishment, and drawing up a long “Indeed!” from her inmost throat, stood staring, uncertain at the meaning of this display of knowledge.

“Are all those gentlemen with long names, coiners?” inquired Fanny.

“No—they are the places where the ore is found,” said John; “and I flatter myself that when I get up our steam-engine with my improvements, I shall raise double the quantity.”

“Well,” said Bab, “whatever it may be, I shall be quite satisfied even with what it was before.”

“And what may a malacati be?” inquired Abel.

“Oh,” said Mary, who seemed to be well informed upon every subject which interested her father, “a malacati is a large leathern bag which descends to the bottom of the mine, and being filled, is drawn up to the surface by means of a large wheel worked by horses,—is it not so, papa?”

“Why, you would be as fit to be a director of a mining company as I am,” said her father: “I think I must take you with me to help me.”

“Do, do, my dear papa!” exclaimed Mary with joy and animation shining in her expressive features; “let me go with you,—I would give worlds to go with you!”

Upon these words her uncle Abel and her aunts assumed the most serious gravity of aspect, and the first addressing his brother, said, “John, you really are not serious in saying this—are you?”

“John,” argued Bab, “would you really sacrifice your daughter to the fury of naked savages, and let her live in the woods upon roots and hips and haws, without a rag to her back, only because she is conversant with the name of an outlandish bag?”

“No, no,” said John,—“no, my dears, you utterly mistake me—I am only joking; I would not allow Mary to run any risk whatever, were I to become as rich as the Conde de Regla himself. She shall stay quietly with you until my return: there is only one agreement which I wish to make, and which you must all swear to; which is, that she shall not marry, except it be upon most unexceptionable grounds, until my return. She has promised me as much, and I require the same at your hands.”

“Marry, indeed!” exclaimed Fanny; “and who is to marry her, I should like to know? There is not a creature within fifty miles of us likely to marry her.”

“Who knows?” said John; “husbands, they say, come down the chimney.”

“I am sure none has ever come down our chimney,” said Fanny with a doleful significancy in her accent and manner.

“Well, John, we promise,” said Aunt Bab, “we will watch over your treasure with the same care that you would if you were here yourself.”

“Yes,” said Abel, “trust to me; and what’s more, trust to her,” patting his niece’s cheek at the same time: “she will never deceive any one, that I will willingly take my oath of.”

With these words they dispersed, only to return to dinner, of which they stood much in need.

CHAPTER III.

Showing the excellence of that saying, “Let well alone.”

THE little oak parlour was snug; the sun gleamed across the landscape, and the table, with its clean white cloth and glittering accompaniments, spoke volumes for the perfection of Aunt Bab’s housewifery. John came in rubbing his hands rejoicing, accompanied by his blooming daughter,

whose young blood flowed briskly through her veins as she contemplated the comforts before her, and looked on the kind faces by whom she was surrounded. Old Betty, with clean cap and apron brought in the dinner; whilst the old man-servant, honest Brown, as he was called, who acted as butler, valet, groom, and gardener, waited at table. When they were all seated, and Aunt Bab's fidgets had somewhat abated, after her anxious countenance had duly connoised the array and circumstance of every dish, and when the first calls of hunger were allayed, the ardent John merrily pouring himself out a glass of wine, exclaimed, looking round him at the same time, "My dears, here is health and prosperity to us all! And now I will tell you of a glorious scheme which I have in my head for you, which will at one blow make you richer at least one-third than you are at present."

Aunt Bab, who had been intent upon carving the leg of mutton, was the first to exclaim, "John, what do you mean? How can you manage that?"

"Ah!" exclaimed Mary, looking very arch, "I know how—don't I, papa?"

"You'll be a conjuror indeed," said Abel, "if you can do that."

"Now hearken," said John; "the thing is as easily done as transferring ourselves from this parlour to the next room. You have been hitherto satisfied with drawing a small revenue from your three per cents.—now you shall enjoy six per cent. at once, with much better security for your money."

"Well, I declare!" said Bab, opening her eyes, and smiling with delight as she eyed John, in whom she had always placed implicit confidence—"well, that will be a capital hit! I can scarcely believe it notwithstanding, although I am sure you would never deceive us, John."

"Deceive you!" said John, very gravely. "The thing is as clear as noonday. Nobody thinks now-a-days of drudging on with the small interest derived from the public funds. In this remote corner of the country you can know nothing of what is going on in the world. Here have continents been opening, new governments forming, new sources of trade expanding, the energies of man developed, fresh life and vigour infused into the whole scheme of our existence; and here you are sitting quiet and unconscious in your cottage, without a single thought beyond the inte-

rests of the neighbouring village, as if you belonged in another planet!"

"Well, who would have thought it!" exclaimed Aunt Barbara; and turning to Abel, she said, "Abel, did you ever hear of all this? Here has all this been going on, and we know as little of it as the babes unborn!"

"How can we know what is going on," said Abel, drily, "when we never move from this place? Well, John, tell us your scheme."

"My scheme is this," said John. "You must send an order to your bankers in London to sell your stock out of the Three per Cents. and to buy in Mexican stock. By that single operation you will, I dare say, get at least another two hundred a-year to yourselves."

"Shall we, indeed!" said Bab, laying down her knife and fork. "Let us do it, Abel, at once."

"Abel," said Fanny, "let us do it to-morrow."

"I am ready to do what you like," said Abel; "but——"

"There is no *but* in the case," said Bab; "John says it, and therefore it must be right. What possible objection can you have?"

"You can have none," said Fanny, whose imagination had now fully seized all the advantages likely to accrue from this increase of revenue. "But how shall we get at the bankers?—they are generally agreeable men, and sometimes handsome."

"That is easily done," said John. Then turning to Abel, he said, "Pray let me hear your objection, Abel, if you have any. There is nothing like a free discussion, particularly in money matters;—one ought to have no delicacy there."

"Why, you know best, John," said Abel, very modestly, "and therefore what I might say is perhaps pure folly; but it struck me, that it might be better to remain contented with a smaller interest and the security of one's own government, than with larger interest and the uncertain security of a foreign state."

"There is wisdom in what you say," answered John; "but recollect how very differently Mexico is situated to other states. What greater security can you possibly require than a whole continent full of silver and gold?" (At these words Bab and Fanny looked triumphantly at Abel.) "The very stones of the country are silver—most of the precious metals which now exist in the world have been produced from her mines—and she is about again to pour

forth her treasures. After that, would you refuse to trust your funds in her possession? Believe me, that the riches of the whole Bank of England together are not to be compared to one of her mines. Why, the new mines of Tlalpuhahua alone will give you more security than a whole regiment of bank-directors."

"There—what can you say to that!" exclaimed Bab. "No, Abel, you have no chance in argument with John. No—we are resolved—we will do what you tell us, John—that is determined; but I want you to explain one thing to me, which I have never yet understood. You tell us to sell out of the stocks—now, what are the stocks?"

"Why, as to that," said John, "I might talk and explain to you till to-morrow, and you would perhaps never understand. Generally, then, I may say, they imply government securities for money lent to the state, for which the owner gets a rate of interest graduated by circumstances."

"I always thought," said Fanny, "that they were something like our village stocks:—if you got your money into them, like the poor man's leg, it was difficult to get it out."

Then, turning to John, Bab said, "Now you must put us in the way of accomplishing this job. You are going away to-morrow, and therefore cannot do it for us—you must leave us directions what we are to do."

"There is nothing so easy," said John, "and nothing which you cannot do as well as I; but, in order to prevent all difficulties, I would recommend you to have recourse to your neighbour Woodby. He made all his fortune in the Stock Exchange, and he will tell you precisely what must be done."

Upon this there ensued a pause in their deliberations. To put oneself under an obligation to a neighbour in the country is matter of deep consideration; and Aunt Bab, whose opinion was always consulted in family discussions of this class, remained silent, as if her mind was held in a state of doubt.

"The Gould Woodbys, you mean," she slowly said to John, "of Belvedere Hall? Do you think that would be advisable?"

"And why not?" said John. "He was a stock-broker himself, and surely he will be too happy to give advice upon what he knows best."

"Ah, that is just what he does not like to do," answered Bab; "does he, Abel?"

Abel answered, "Why, as to that, I have never found him otherwise than very friendly and civil to me, and ready to talk upon all subjects. He is fond, 'tis true, of referring to his ancestors, and to those of his wife, the Goolds; and therefore, perhaps, it is too readily inferred that he might wish to drop the broker while he asserts his ancient lineage. But that is only village gossip: I dare say, upon an occasion of necessity, he will not refuse to give his opinion on a point in which he is evidently so great an authority."

"What do you think of it, Fanny?" said Barbara to her sister. "You know Mrs. Goold Woodby and her daughters better than I do;—don't you imagine they would think it odd our going to consult them upon family matters?"

"Why, perhaps they might," said Fanny; "they have a trick of thinking every thing odd: but, as we are to be the winners, what can it signify?"

"It will signify thus much," rejoined the sapient Bab,— "that our private affairs will become the public talk of the whole parish; and then, if our means of living are increased, as John assures us they will be, the Woodbys will be sure to take the whole credit of it to themselves."

"My dear Bab," said John jestingly, "one would suppose that you were about to appoint Mr. Woodby your father confessor, and to divulge to him every secret of your mind. Allow Abel to be your negotiator: men understand these matters better than women, and they are settled in a few words. Go into any of the great marts of business, and you will see hundreds of thousands of pounds transferred from one pocket into another with little more than a word on each side and a nod. Two women will expend more words in a country market-place upon buying and selling a cabbage, than are expended by two of the other sex in settling the disposal of whole fortunes."

Barbara had but a small opinion of Abel's abilities in any thing that related to a bargain, and she consequently shook her head at John's proposal; but, as she was quite alive to the charms of an increase of revenue, she gradually ceased all further opposition, and it was at length settled that Abel should proceed the next day to Belvedere Hall.

The remainder of the evening was occupied in listening to John's schemes for the future; which, if they were here given with the animation and circumstantiality with which

he detailed them, would afford a lively picture of his character,—that is, of a genuine sanguine man. Like all men of that character, his imagination would get the better of his sober reason; and as when a high wind acquires possession of a weather-cock it veers about at its pleasure, so his mind was the play of every scheme, however impracticable. No circumnavigator had ever planned so vast a scheme as that which he now described. His intention, after having reached his destination and set on foot the objects of his mission, was to explore every mine in the Mexican continent; settle the quantity and quality of its minerals; trace its geological construction; survey the country from shore to shore, in order to construct a correct map, and thus refute Humboldt; make collections of natural history; transmit all its principal vegetable productions to England; write a code of laws for the future regulation of its republic; establish a navy; model its army; and, in short, renovate and reconstruct its whole being, moral and physical. He had thoughts of performing the same service to all the new states of the South American continent; he hinted at the possibility of making the name of Allnutt as famous as that of Americus Vesputius: and then, having settled to his satisfaction that portion of the globe, he had thoughts of crossing the Pacific, and keeping up a running fire of renovation and regeneration among the different islands of its archipelago; thus to circumnavigate the globe, and, so he expressed himself, surround it with a zone of civilization of his own making.

His auditors listened with open mouths and uplifted brows at the immensity of his intentions: they, who never having stirred from the confines of their village, looked upon an excursion to the market-town as a feat of uncommon enterprise. Contented and happy in themselves, without ambition for the future, they would have continued to live on as they had hitherto done, had they not been roused by their brother's energies to increase their means of existence. Another incentive was the presence of their niece, whose advancement and settlement in life they felt themselves called upon to promote. 'Tis true that her father's request that no steps should be taken during his absence to promote her marriage stood in their way: but hers was now the age for gaiety; their pride at possessing so beautiful and matchless a niece could not be restrained, and they longed to achieve an innocent triumph over their

neighbours, by infusing love and admiration—and perhaps, let it be said, envy—into their breasts.

“But, my dear John,” said Barbara after a pause, “how are you to mind the business you are going upon, and to make your fortune at the same time, if you are to do all these things?”

“And how will you be able to return to me,” remarked Mary in her most affectionate manner, “if you are to go so far as you now propose?”

John contended that much more was to be performed in a short space of time in travelling abroad than could be conceived by those who remained inactive at home. Owing to the great improvements in the science of navigation, men crossed and re-crossed the globe with much more certainty than they did formerly; and he asserted that he was ready to lay a good bet, in the same manner as he would stake his money on a steeple-chase, that he would go quite round the globe in a year, taking every continent which came in his way, without turning to the right or left to avoid it. He continued to talk with so much indifference of the long voyage which lay before him, and made it so much a matter of course that he would return at the prescribed period, that he materially blunted the edge of those feelings of sorrow which would otherwise have been excited by his departure; and he so well succeeded in making every one pleased with their own immediate prospects, as well as participating in his own views, that they parted for the night with none of that misery which usually precedes the taking leave of one who is much beloved.

CHAPTER IV.

An introduction to an important personage, both in his own estimation, as well as in this history.

EARLY the following morning every body was astir to witness the departure of the active and indefatigable John. During his hasty breakfast he did not cease reverting to the thousand schemes which engrossed his mind, and particularly to the one touching the immediate increase of the family revenue. His lovely daughter could not speak from

emotion, but sat looking fondly at him until the moment when he arose to depart, when with her last embrace she entreated him to return to her as soon as he could be released from his present engagements. Embracing his sisters, he made promises of writing by every opportunity; and his last words to Abel, as he warmly shook his hand, were "Consult Woodby, and lose no time." Upon that, springing into his chaise, he drove off at a rapid pace, taking the road to Liverpool, where he was to embark for Mexico.

During John's short visit, Barbara had placed the reins of government in his hands, and she yielded to whatever laws he chose to proclaim without the smallest reluctance, for his word was to her a command; but the moment he was gone she again reigned supreme, and her power was duly acknowledged. Fanny became almost an automaton, and only seemed to expand into life when the interests of mankind were brought into discussion. Mary, by her lively and docile disposition, diffused life and pleasure wherever she appeared; whilst Abel, in whom the total abnegation of self, with a reserve, let it be said, of occasional restiveness in favour of his flute, made him always ready to meet the wishes of every one who chose to command him.

When the sound of the wheel was fairly out of hearing, and the house restored to its usual repose, Barbara continued the subject which John had so much insisted upon. Addressing herself particularly to Abel, she said, "We know more about the Gould Woodbys than poor dear John could possibly know,—it stands to reason that we do; and therefore we ought to ask their advice with caution. I am sure I'm right."

Whenever Abel heard these formulæ of words "It stands to reason," and "I'm sure I'm right," with which Aunt Bab generally set forth her opinion, he always withdrew from further discussion, and generally submitted without a reply.

"I think so to," said Abel.

"Well then, since that is the case," continued Bab, "you must go to him to-day as if you were merely making a morning visit. I think I know Mr. Woodby well, and his habits of life. He will probably say something about the weather,—which is a subject he can say a great deal upon; when you will have an opportunity of asking how his crops are getting on,—which is another subject he likes;

and when you have got him well into that, you may pop upon him all at once with 'What do you think of the French Revolution? He will be charmed when he hears that question, and he will go on for an hour about it: and when he comes to the part where he says, 'I don't know what will become of us, and things never were in a worse state,' you may then ask him the price of stocks, and how things look in the City; when he will tell you all that we want to know. It stands to reason that you must go round and round him cleverly until you bring him to the point, and not frighten him by any one positive question. I'm sure I'm right."

"I'll go then at once," answered Abel: "John said 'lose no time.'"

"Do—you had better," rejoined Barbara, still full of her diplomacy. "But mind now—weather first—crops next—French Revolution after that, and then the price of stocks;—he'll tell you all by that means as easily as I can bring all the poultry about me by sprinkling a little corn here and there with judgment. Now mind; let him have his talk out,—he'll then tell you all. It stands to reason—I'm sure I'm right."

Abel, docile to her bidding, did as he was ordered, and taking up his hat and stick, walked away intent upon this great scheme; and before he reaches his destination, a walk of about two miles, it will be proper to inform our readers of matters relating to the house and its inhabitants towards which he was bending his steps.

Mr. Goold Woodby, as John had correctly stated, had amassed a very considerable fortune in the city, principally by dealings in the Stock Exchange. At the time of this our history, he had retired into the country, where he had bought a large estate; and not being known in the neighbourhood, dropped the habits of a citizen, and took upon him the airs of a country gentleman. During his mercantile life he had been known by the name of Wouldbe; but when he retired from trade, suddenly he discovered that, during the civil wars, a cavalier of that name had attained great notoriety by an act of treachery; and being anxious to make it known that that person was in fact his ancestor and related to the first families, upon pretext of disclaiming the odium attached to the name, he expended a large sum at the Herald's College, in order to change it to his present more rural appellation of Woodby. By this ingenious mode of applying the *lucus à non lucendo*, he taught the

world what no one would ever have cared to find out—that he was a man of old family,—a fact to which he was always happy to allude. Acting upon the same principle, he married a lady of the name of Goold, possessing riches, with sufficient personal attractions, who also founded much of her happiness upon the pride of birth; for she clearly and truly was able to demonstrate that she was a lineal descendant of Sir Jugg Goold, Knight, the well-known goldsmith to Charles the Second. With the junction of these names he flattered himself to have composed a very euphonical cognomen; and having tumefied himself and his possessions by all the pomp and circumstance of two shields, and as great a variety of heraldic insignia as he could obtain for his money, he gradually persuaded himself that he was a very considerable personage.

He built himself a house, or rather a castle. The utmost ingenuity had been displayed in making its outward appearance as little like a living house as possible. The windows were generally so placed, that when the sun shone, they caught the shadow of a projecting buttress instead of its cheering warmth. Gutters poured forth their contents from frowning embrasures; whilst small turrets, with loop-holes, protruding through dense masses of brick and mortar, like hats on pegs, were hung about the flat walls. The chimneys, which, when seen, give an appearance of snugness and hospitality to an unpretending house, here were hidden behind cunning angles of fortification, and as they disgorged their smoke, made one suppose the building was on fire, since the proper effect was not seen to proceed from the appropriate cause. A perfect flat and even range of country had been selected, upon which to raise this structure; but it had been called Belvedere, (or, as it was usually pronounced by the inhabitants, *Belvideer*,) from the circumstance of a small break in the dense woods which surrounded it, and which enabled the curious in fine prospects to discern a barn, the village steeple, and two haystacks peeping through the trees.

The grounds and shrubberies were laid out with the same taste which had presided over the house. Straight lines were forbidden; every thing was serpentine. The whole plan appeared to have been made with a view of placing every part of them as much at variance with common sense as possible. A walk across a flat lawn was tortured into the same figure as it might be through a wood, and made a straightforward man feel as if his hip would be

put out of joint in winding through it. Chairs and benches, composed of the most tortuous and the roughest of wood, apparently contrivances for the afflicted with distorted spines, were plentifully distributed about the grounds by way of ornament; and every where it seemed as if art had done its utmost to caricature nature.

Abel walked forward with alacrity to perform his appointed task, although he had certain misgivings as to the ultimate result of the change he was about to effect. We wish to bring the reader better acquainted with his character, for he is destined to perform one of the principal parts in the forthcoming narrative. We have already said that, owing to the sickly nature of his constitution, he had been nursed through his boyhood and youth at home. He had been but indifferently educated, for application of any sort had been interdicted; therefore in that respect he was extremely deficient. But what he wanted in mental acquirement and personal advantages was fully balanced by the excellence of his disposition. He might be said to possess, without cant or exaggeration, all those virtues which are called Christian, and which when brought into action, constitute a good and consequently a great character. His distinguishing qualities were meekness and humility: he thought so little of himself, that he was always happy to see others preferred before him. Benevolence was conspicuous in his countenance, manners, and actions; and however small the interest might be which his first appearance inspired, nobody could converse with him without afterwards feeling kindly disposed towards him. All his inclinations and desires were on the side of virtue. He was severe towards himself, but forgiving towards others. Wherever a charitable action was to be performed, a wrong to be redressed, or forbearance to be exercised, he was the first to take the lead, and ever the first to give way if others required him to retire. Such a character, in the bustle of life, was likely to be passed over, often laughed at, sneered at, and made a butt of: it required to be well known to be appreciated.

Upon approaching the place of his destination he found masons at work upon a magnificent entrance composed of two stone lodges, castellated and turreted, and connected by a long range of iron railing, curiously wrought, opening at intervals by two gates, each surmounted by a shield accompanied by a motto.

Abel cast his eyes up at these emblems of vanity, and,

smiled at the pretensions which they announced. He crept up towards the principle entrance of the castle almost with the same timidity that a shy man encounters a whole roomful of company, and rang the bell. He was received by a servant in that sort of dress which announces unreadiness to receive visitors, seeing it was still early in the day, but was duly ushered into the presence of his master.

Mr. Goold Woodby's person did not second the claims which he had set up either to ancient birth or gentleness of blood. He was among men what a cabbage may be among plants. He was altogether a rotund man: his head was as round as a cannon-ball, his body protuberant and spherical, and his legs adorned by calves so round and muscular, that they might have performed the duty of balusters. There was much vulgarity in his whole appearance; although he had an intelligent look, and wielded an eye that was alive to every thing but the extreme ridicule of his own person. His dress was that of a substantially wealthy man,—he adhered to the old-fashioned row of buttons at the knees, and strong drab gaiters beneath, showing a wholesome azure woollen stocking in the interstice. A long, massive gold chain, with a bunch of embossed seals, hung down from that slope in his person where the fob is situated, and dropped a perpendicular a great deal more conspicuous than does a cable pending from the bows of a Dutch galliot. His hair was slightly sprinkled with powder, and his shirt owned a frill that flowed over his waistcoat. His manners betrayed a singular mixture of vulgar intimacy and cold reserve. When he thought he was too conciliatory, all at once he would stop short, as if he had forgotten something, and become almost rude. His shake of the hand, that indication of man's feelings, was truly characteristic: he gave his hand, but shook his elbow; which was as much as to say, "I leave you to decide between my hand and my elbow how matters stand between us." He was apt to be ceremonious to his inferiors, but would expand into affected ease and jollity with people of consequence, particularly if some equal or inferior was at hand to see him. To any one who had affinity to persons of rank he was invariably attentive, and would always, by hook or by crook, particularly when others were present, allude to that affinity. He was therefore the professed friend of the Allnutt family; although, out of consideration to their poverty, there was always a tincture of protection in his manner towards them. With Abel he adopted the

jocular patronising manner ; and when on this occasion his name was announced, he immediately placed himself in a corresponding attitude, and when he approached him, gave him one hand, and placed the other on his shoulder, whilst he exclaimed, "Ah, Allnutt, how are you?" What passed between them will be read in the ensuing chapter.

CHAPTER V.

The consequences of the foregoing introduction described.

ALTHOUGH Abel was ever ready to hearken to his sister's directions, yet it did not follow that he always obeyed them; for he felt that conviction which we believe is inherent in the male sex, whatever may be the weakness of a man's person, his mind must ever maintain the superiority over that of the woman. On this occasion he had almost entirely forgotten the instructions with which he had been furnished on departing for his embassy; and when he came into contact with his negotiating party, he determined to allow the conversation to take whatever course it might please. However, he did not long remain in suspense how to act; for Mr. Woodby had no sooner delivered himself of his first ejaculation, than he went on as follows.

"It is very good of you to come. I suppose now you came to see my new lodges, which all the world comes to see. Now an't they handsome? I flatter myself they will be as fine an ornament to the county as any thing in it. You remarked the double shields, I hope?"

"Yes, indeed I did," said Abel,

'Ah, well, that's right of you! You see we don't do things in the common way; it's done in the most expensive manner, and Stone, the architect; tells me they beat Lord Thorofield's lodges hollow.'

"They are certainly very conspicuous," said Abel.

"I meant them to be conspicuous," rejoined Woodby. I think it quite right, in these times, that people should show themselves properly: it is necessary that those who have weight should assert it by their acts. Now good lodges, I maintain, does that."

“Yes,” said Abel; “their architecture is solid, to be sure.’

“Certainly it is; and so it ought to be in these times. But did you remark the shields? I am sure you could not have overlooked my shields. I think they show capitally; Lord Thorofield has only a crest.”

“Yes, I remarked the shields,” said Abel.

“Well, what did you think of them?” continued Woodby, not waiting for the answer. “You know the history of the Woodby arms, don’t you? did I never tell it you before? (he had done so a hundred times.) Why, it is just this:—You know the Wouldbes are one of the most ancient families in the kingdom; and I am told that the bull’s head *regardant* over the frog *gonflet*, for so they call it in heraldry, is intended to record the ambition of the first baron of the family—who, in his arroganee, aspired to no less a thing than the crown,—and that the motto ‘*Je voudrai si je toudrai*,’ in old French,—in what they call Norman-French,—means, ‘*I would be, if I could be.*’ Is it not strange? You see I have thought it right to adopt the old arms; although I never could think for a moment in these times to preserve a name so degraded by its want of loyalty to its sovereign as was that of my ancestor, and, therefore, as a matter of duty—as an open declaration of my principles—I thought it right to change it, and to adopt the one I now bear. Now don’t you think I am right?” said he, closing upon Abel, and taking one of his buttons in hand,—“don’t you think it was handsome of me? It cost me no less than three hundred pounds at the Heralds’ College. Who is the man, now-a-days, I should like to know, who would voluntarily come forward and expend three hundred pounds upon loyalty?”

“None but yourself,” said Abel, smiling, “that’s certain!”

“That’s right!” said Woodby, taking the words as a compliment; “but you see I did it though: and I’ve reason to think it has been well taken at court. The king granted the patent as soon as it was asked for, and, I assure you, it was done in a very handsome manner; and when I kissed hands upon the occasion, his majesty, with the utmost condescension, said, ‘How do you do, Mr. Woodbine?’ I ventured to put him right, and said, ‘Woodby, your majesty,’ upon which he smiled, and so did all the surrounding princes and lords, and I never was so

pleased in all the whole course of my life. Is not that charming?"

"Very!" said Abel.

"But you remarked the other shield too, did you not?" said the vain man, who was now completely run away with by his subject. "Well, that, you know, contains the Goold coat of arms; that's the shield of Mrs. Goold Woodby's family. The story attached to that is one of the most interesting, and, I may say, peculiar, in the whole history of England. It has appeared in the 'Anecdotes of celebrated Goldsmiths.' You see, Goold was goldsmith to King Charles II: he is well known to have worked for that monarch's unfortunate father, for it is so attested by records in the family, fac-similes of the bills sent in being in existence to this day, and therefore at the Restoration he was appointed by royal sign manual the court-goldsmith. He was a remarkably shy man, sober in his habits, dressing invariably in a suit of unpretending drab, and keeping clear of all the license of those days. Well, the king one day, in a merry mood, determined to knight him, and straightway he was dubbed Sir Jugg Goold.—But the story of the shield is to come. You know, in those days, all shops were designated by signs, which hung out conspicuously upon handsomely ornamented iron posts. Well, in addition to the knighthood, the king ordered that a coat of arms should be added, which should consist of a hand wielding a hammer, and that the motto, out of compliment to the excellence of the man, should be '*Aurum quam bonum*,' which, you know, means in Latin, '*Gold how good!*' which, I may say, is a sort of *double entendre*, as we say in French, or a pun, as some pretend it is,—for Charles was fond of a joke,—which means both things—that the metal gold is good, and that the man Goold was good also! Now, is not that a curious historical coincidence or fact? Well, this was done. A handsome sign, containing the coat of arms and the motto, was forthwith executed with great skill by a painter of that time, and hung over the door of the shop until the fashion of signs went out. That sign—the original sign—I have now in my possession, having come to me through my wife. You'll own that's a thing to be proud of?"

"It is, indeed," said Abel.

"Therefore, I think, in these times," continued Woodby, "every man of ancient family ought to take particular care to exhibit the titles to his descent, and thus uphold what it

is now-a-days the fashion to despise,—to destroy those fatal levelling principles which were first introduced into this country by that ever-to-be-lamented French Revolution.”

At these words Abel recollected the injunctions of his sister, and hoped the moment was now at hand when he might introduce the object of his visit with its proper effect. “That was a sad event, that’s most certain!” said he.

“Indeed, I can speak feelingly,” said Woodby, “for I was as near being one of the victims of its fury as ever man was.”

“How was that?” said Abel.

“What! did you never hear that?” exclaimed Woodby, as if he had just found a fresh point of departure. I was as near done for as you can imagine. I was young at the time: I went to Paris on business. You ought to have seen what the Revolution was to have any idea of it! Why, what do you think they took me for?”

“I really don’t know,” said Abel.

“Why, they took me for a gentleman,” said Woodby.

“Did they indeed!” said Abel.

“Yes,” said Woodby, “as sure as you stand there they took me for a gentleman, because I only blew my nose with a white pocket-handkerchief, when I ought to have done it with a tricolor one. They were as nearly seizing me up to the lamp-post as possible, and hanging me without judge or jury, when having discovered that I was an Englishman, they let me drop souse into the mud as if I was nothing at all. Few can say that of themselves. I only wish that you had seen me!”

“I should have been sorry to do that,” said Abel. “But I fear we shall long feel the effects of the French Revolution.”

“Ay,” said Woodby, looking sad and drawing a deep sigh, “I don’t know what will become of us,—things were never in a worse state!”

Abel, recollecting the words of his sister, then said, “But the prices of stocks keep up pretty well, don’t they? I think my brother John calls them the barometer of the times.”

At the words “prices of stocks,” Woodby’s face clothed itself with a new expression, and, like the old war-horse, that pricks up his ears upon hearing the sound of a trumpet and longs to be off, he felt at those words that all the fascinations of the Stock Exchange had come upon him with their former power. “Prices of stocks!” he exclaimed;

“what do you know of the prices of stocks?” his eyes at the same time twinkling with a true broker’s twinkle.

Abel then no longer delayed giving him in as few words as possible the real object of his visit, and asking his advice upon the best mode of proceeding to put his scheme into practice.

Aunt Bab had been perfectly right in her judgment upon Woodby’s character: for it is probable that if Abel had made a point blank statement of his case, and asked his advice as if he were addressing himself to a professional merchant, Woodby would have entrenched himself in his shields, his lodges, and his dignities, and taken offence; but, brought on, as it had been, in this gradual and seemingly unpremeditated manner, the whole broker was declared at once by a natural impulse, and he embraced with eagerness the scheme proposed to his consideration. He inquired, with an interest that astonished and delighted Abel, in what manner he could serve him; and when he found that it was his intention to invest his money in the Mexican funds, he did not hesitate for a moment in encouraging his design, and gave him all the proper directions how to put it into execution. He said that disposing of one’s money with such great interest and such like securities was like eating one’s cake and keeping it,—that it was better than actual gold and silver, for that it saved one the trouble of a banker, inasmuch as it was buried in the earth. He then informed him how he might get a proper power of attorney made out to empower his bankers in London to act for him, and said that he himself would write to his own bankers to facilitate the operation.

Abel was all gratitude at this act of kindness from one upon whom he had no other claim than the fortuitous one of being a country neighbour, and made his acknowledgments accordingly. Woodby, however, was by no means a disinterested adviser, although he looked like a man who would fain believe that he was entitled to gratitude. The truth, be it spoken, was, Woodby was himself possessor of a large sum of money in the Mexican funds; and as an experienced navigator, when he sees a small cloud rising in a suspicious point of the horizon, knows that a storm is likely to ensue, so, by certain indications in the temper of the Stock Exchange, he began to apprehend that Mexican stock might soon be at a discount, and therefore was only watching a fitting opportunity to get rid of his venture with the least possible loss. What then was

his delight when he found that, instead of an expected loss, his good stars were about to visit him with unlooked-for gain!

“Mexico,” said Woodby, “is an astonishingly rich country. We are told that every domestic article there is made of silver, down to their wash-hand basins, pewter pots, &c. You can’t go wrong in investing your money in its funds: besides, they say, you know, as new brooms sweep clean, why shouldn’t new republics pay to the day?”

“Ah,” said Abel, “that is what my brother John told us. He said that they had more money than they knew what to do with: but I have since been thinking, Mr. Woodby, if that is the case, why do they want money from us? Perhaps you can tell me.”

“Why, you see,” answered Woodby, looking wise, “it is just this:—You may have your barn full of corn; but what is the use of it if you have none of the implements necessary to thresh it out, and no mill wherewith to grind it, before you make it into bread? So it is with the Mexicans;—they possess the ore, but they want the means of turning it to use. They borrow from us to provide themselves with the means, for which they pay a great interest, being certain ere long to repay the capital borrowed.—Pray,” said Woodby with an air of business which spoke much for the broker, and but little for the owner of shields and the descendant of an ancient family,—“Pray, what may be the amount of the stock you require?”

Abel mentioned the amount to the best of his knowledge; when Woodby, making up a look composed of friendship and protection, said, “Now, Allnutt, I’ll show you how much I am your friend; I’ll furnish you with the money!”

“Will you indeed!” exclaimed Abel with an expression of grateful feeling beaming in his countenance: “but that I can never allow; I will never consent to take that from you which you value so much.”

“Oh, never mind that!” said Woodby; “you shall have the money, and I’ll write to my bankers immediately to communicate with yours upon the subject. I’ll take no refusal.”

“But it must not and shall not be!” said Abel, determined, as he thought, not to be outdone in generosity. “How can I deprive you of the advantages which you have described? shall I prevent you from eating your cake and keeping it to?”

“Say no more about it,” said Woodby with vivacity; “I’ve settled it, so no more.”

“I cannot acquiesce in so much goodness,” retorted Abel: “can I forget that you said money in Mexican bonds was better secured than in your bankers’ hands? I am determined not to deprive you of such advantages.”

“You’ll make me angry!” again replied Woodby, who was really beginning to be nettled; “I’ll have no further reply: when I have once determined upon a thing, nothing can turn me. You shall be supplied: and as for the advantages you talk of, let them be forgotten in the pleasure I have of being of service to you.”

Abel was quite overpowered by what he considered an act of gratuitous liberality, and Woodby rose in his estimation at least a hundred per cent. Unused as he was to transactions of this kind, ignorant of their details, and accustomed to consider every one as honest as himself, little did he suppose that Woodby’s conduct on this occasion was prompted by any motive save that of a pure disinterested desire to be useful. He therefore made his acknowledgments accordingly, and would have departed at once to make known the joyful tidings to his sisters, had not Woodby in the fulness of his exultation insisted upon his staying to take some luncheon before he resumed his walk, to which Abel, not knowing how to resist, consented.

CHAPTER VI.

Showing by what small means importance may be appreciated.

GREAT events are frequently produced from trifling causes: the intentions of a minister are sometimes discovered by a single phrase, a secret may be disclosed by a nod, and a man’s character may be divined from one single act. It was thus with Mr. Gould Woodby’s luncheon. From the circumstances attendant upon that meal, to which Abel had been invited, the reader may probably draw inferences which will save us the trouble of entering into a long description of the Woodby household, and he will learn by deduction that which we shall be

happy to be saved the necessity of asserting in broad plain terms.

Belvedere Hall had been fitted up at great expense. It contained handsome rooms, with much costly furniture; and wherever the eye turned, the conclusion was self-evident that nothing had been spared "to do the thing handsome," as is frequently said on such occasions. After Abel had finished his conversation with Mr. Woodby, he was taken to the dining-room, where the table was spread for luncheon, and there he awaited for a short time the arrival of the host and hostess. A door which was wide open led into an adjoining apartment, evidently the drawing-room, and thither Abel walked to while away the time. Every thing within was so papered over, covered and pinned up, that it was plain, excepting on particular occasions, the whole was as sacred as the chambers of the Inquisition. A half-open shutter disclosed the riches which it contained, and shed its light into an adjacent room, which was in the same dishabille. Just as Abel had finished his survey, and was retreating from the cheerless apartments, he was met by Mrs. Goold Woodby, who was then entering, followed by one of her daughters. We are sorry to detain the reader by another personal description, but it is absolutely necessary in order to give a true colouring to the following sketch. The lady in question was one of those persons who, to certain tastes, come under the denomination of a "fine woman." Her complexion was fair, her eyes light, her hair not dark; and although she wore an anxious look, still the habit of her face was to smile. She was now about fifty years old, but might be called a young-looking woman for her age. Her pretensions to beauty she had long given up to her daughters; but since her installation in this fine house, and in consequence of her neighbourhood to certain persons of consequence with whom she had interchanged visits, she had extended the boundaries of her pretensions to gentility, and it was a subject worthy of remark, how gradual had been her advances, in that most difficult, most capricious, and coyest of qualities, since she first emerged from the city; for she was then a creature of a different species to what she afterwards proved in the country. She there had lived with those whose contempt for the letter *h* was unbounded, whose pronouns were plainly demonstrative, and whose designations were generally made after the following examples, viz.—"*this here man,*" "*that there cow,*" "*them there pies.*" She at that time used frequently to be herself found tripping; but now the gramma-

tical construction of her sentences, by a certain caution which she imposed upon herself, had assumed a more refined form. So anxious was she to be thought well-bred, that, as those who prove too much prove nothing, she was apt to overstrain her efforts. She never asked any one 'to eat,' but 'to partake;' nobody 'lived' in a place, they always 'resided:' if she described a woman's dress, she was not 'dressed,' but 'attired.' Thus, from downright coarseness, she had glided into a sort of bland vulgarity; and we must leave our narrative to help her through her dilemmas without further preliminary,—not without a hint that, like all persons in her position in life, she laid a great stress upon the redeeming properties of riches, and thought she might occasionally have a right to clip the king's English, provided she did not curtail his gold.

The Allnutts in her estimation were what she called very genteel, on account of that circumstance which she ever bore uppermost in her mind—their being related to a nobleman; but as they were poor, she allowed herself great latitude in their company, and permitted Cheapside to float more upon the surface than when she was under the high pressure of genteel restraint. As for Abel, she looked upon him as so entirely insignificant, that his presence scarcely put her out of her way. On this occasion, when she met him in her dining-room, observing that he had been in "her suite," as she called her drawing-rooms, she said, "Those are clever rooms, an't they Mr. Allnutt? We are going to unpaper soon, because we are to have company. You see we never sit there unless we have company, because it would be a pity to be spoiling of handsome furniture, which nobody sees but ourselves. The silk of those curtains cost fifteen shillings a yard; the carpets are real Kidderminster; and as for the tables, all real rosewood, they were knocked down to Mr. Goold Woodby at the auction for more than any body else would give, although he was bidding against Lord Thorofield.—I think you have seen them unpapered?"

"Yes," said Abel; "I remember to have seen them when you had the goodness to invite us to your ball last year."

"So you did," said Mrs. Woodby. "Ah, you recollect that ball, do you? We are going to have our house full now: there will be Lord Demone and Lady Thomson, and several others."

"Won't Edward Manby be here?" inquired her daughter with an anxious exclamation, to which the mother paid no heed, but continued.

“My girls want me to give another ball this year, but I won't.—I tell you what, though—which I'll tell you as a secret—we are thinking of giving a fancy bazaar next spring or summer, and then the girls may dance—a thing all for charity's sake.”

“That will be nice!” exclaimed Miss Woodby, who till now had taken no notice of Abel: “that's a dear good mamma!”

Miss Woodby was a handsome person, of bloom unrivalled, of well-poised stature, and whose head was so overloaded with fair golden hair, that not all the props of combs and velvet ligatures could keep it in order. She had pretty features, but no countenance: health spoke through her brilliant skin and vermilion lips, but she was Hebe without softness;—a Hebe who, if the gods had been addicted to malt liquors, would have been better fitted to pour out beer than nectar. Miss Woodby was reckoned one of the beauties of that part of the country, although her sister Ellen, who certainly had not a quarter of her brilliancy, had more admirers. We must leave their perfections to the gradual development of our narrative, and in the mean while must proceed with our luncheon.

Great indeed was the falling off from the awe inspired by the massive lodges, the double shields, the castellated mansion, and the general exterior of grandeur, to the chill produced by the fragments of food arrayed on the board which called itself luncheon. On a large white earthenware dish edged with green paint was displayed the elderly remains of a cold leg of pork, which evidently had so frequently appeared on the same service, that there was nothing more left thereof than about two inches of importunate gristle which clung with pertinacity to the well-scraped bone. A stale half-eaten apple-tart, in a very remote corner of which about a spoonful of apple had taken refuge, was made to face the pork; whilst under an indented block-tin cover, brought in with great state, a small half-dozen of smoking potatoes were discovered, by way of christening the whole with the cheering epithet of a hot meal.

At this juncture entered Mr. Woodby, rubbing his hands, looking hungry, and sparkling with exultation at the result of his morning's interview with Abel. “My dear,” said he addressing his wife, “we must not starve our guest after his walk; we must have something more.”

All the answer he got was a knitting of the brow from

his wife, accompanied by a significant shake of the head, as if to say, "This will do very well for him."

Woodby appeared not to take the hint, but continued—"Let us broil the bone at least. Allnutt, you are fond of a broiled bone, an't you?"

Abel said he was but a small eater at best, and therefore hoped that nothing more might be provided on his account.

Mrs. Woodby's face cheered up at these words; but her husband calling for wine, it resumed all its look of moroseness. She curled her features into every contortion which might mean *no*, but without effect—he insisted upon having wine until she was fairly obliged to seek the keys, of which she was ever the faithful depositary, and then, in her rage, fairly left the room, wondering and storming within herself what could possess Mr. Woodby to call for wine when there was nobody there but Abel.

In the mean while Miss Woodby thought it right to speak to Abel, of whom she made all the necessary inquiries concerning his sisters, heard with delight of Miss Mary Allnutt's arrival, (of whose beauty, let it be said, she was of course jealous,) and then launched out on the subject which much filled the minds of herself and the neighbourhood—the anticipated fancy bazaar in the spring, with the money of which it was intended to build a new school-house. Aunt Fanny was her particular friend among the Allnuts, and she was in the habit of making her a sort of confidant,—a recipient for all her likes and dislikes—for all those retreats and advances, those conceptions and misconceptions, which are so apt to form the furniture of a young lady's mind when it has not been tutored and kept in order by sagacious parents. Aunt Fanny, who was still happy to be thought a bird of the same feather as this blooming girl, was nothing loth to lend her ear to whatever might be poured therein; and thus was established that sort of thing between them called, in young ladies' language, 'friendship.'

"I hope your sister Fanny," said Miss Woodby, "is hard at work for us. Can you tell me what she has settled to work upon that rug that she has in hand—a cow or a Turk?—Tell her again, from me, that I am all for the cow:—I hate those nasty Turks with their long beards—fa!"

"I really don't know," said Abel; "she is always hard at work."

“You must set your niece at work for us too,” continued his fair companion.

“What can she do?” Is she clever? I hear she is very clever. Can she make screens? Can she make figures that dress and undress?”

“What are you saying there, Anne?” exclaimed her father, as he caught her last words, through the vigour of his mastications: “what can you mean?”

“La! papa,” answered his daughter, “I’m talking to Mr. Allnutt about our bazaar: I said nothing improper, did I, Mr. Allnutt? Do you think Miss Mary could make us a pair of such figures—one a man, the other a woman? You can’t think how well they would sell; and nothing of the like has been seen in this part of the country, yet.”

“I am not yet acquainted with the extent of my niece’s accomplishments,” said Abel. “I think I am certain that she draws flowers very prettily; but,” added he, innocently “I am not prepared to say whether she can make the sort of figures you allude to.”

“Do let her try,” said Miss Woodby: “I am sure she must know something new, since she’s just arrived fresh from town; for country folks are in general so ignorant.”

“I’ll mention the subject to her with the greatest pleasure,” said Abel, “and also will deliver your message to my sister Fanny;” and he made a motion to depart, when, at the same moment, the servant came in with the key, and, with all the proper etiquettes due to the mysterious contents of a well-administered cellaret, brought out two decanters, one containing about an inch of port, and the other three inches of sherry.

“Take a glass of wine before you go,” said Woodby to his guest, “and let us drink success to Mexico.”

“I never drink wine,” said Abel; “but I’ll wish every success to Mexico notwithstanding.”

During the time that Woodby took to make his libation, his daughter exhibited a second display of her charitable zeal, by saying, “But you, Mr. Allnutt—you can do something for us, can’t you?”

“I fear I am really worth nothing to any body,” said Abel, with great humility. “Only tell me what I can do, and I will do it to the best of my ability. But, alas! I have always thought that I was one of those creatures who are only born ‘to look about them and to die.’”

“Could not you write a book for us, or any such thing?” said Anne.

“A book opens a large field, to be sure,” said Abel, smiling and shaking his head at the same time. “What sort of book?”

“Oh,” said Miss Woodby, “any thing. Telemachus, Johnson’s Dictionary, or Tom Jones—any thing will do.”

“That would be any thing, indeed,” exclaimed Abel, with great good humour—when Woodby, having finished his meal, arose, and as Abel wished his fair daughter good morning, they left the room together, and shortly after the house.

Woodby was anxious to say a few parting words to Abel upon the business which they had previously settled, in order to instruct him upon the mode of getting the proper power of attorney made out, and also upon the nature of the letter he was to write in forwarding that document to his bankers in London. He therefore walked with him as far as his new lodges, and on the road made the necessary communications. When they had got there, the consequential man, all at once, lost sight of the broker, and, as if suddenly exalted by the sight of his shields, like one who feels proud at being allowed to stand in the same room with a king, he made a full stop—and, whilst he threw his arms crossed over his breast, he tossed his head up, and said: “Ah, I think that will do very well. *Je voudrai si je voudrai*: just the thing—beats Lord Thorofield hollow! Stone has done the thing well! Ah, *aurum quam bonum*! Capital! This is handsome, Allnutt, is it not?”

“Very handsome,” said Allnutt, in a hurried manner, and added: “I’ll now wish you good-by’e.”

“Good-b’ye,” said Woodby. “You must all come and dine with us soon, do you hear? We will let you know. We shall have Lord Demone, and Lady Thomson, and some more. You’ll be sure to come, and then I will show you the original Goold coat of arms.”

“Good-b’ye,” said Abel; and fearful of more explanations, he squeezed his hand and fled.

“Your servant,” said Woodby.

CHAPTER VII.

How ignorant some people may be of what everybody is supposed to know!

ABEL bent his steps homewards, his thoughts full of the events of the morning. The fears which he had entertained that this attempt to increase their fortune would prove disastrous had entirely vanished; for Woodby's conversation had so confirmed his brother's views, that he could no longer feel any apprehensions as to the result of the transfer about to be made. His heart was full of gratitude towards Woodby for the readiness with which he had espoused the interests of himself and his sisters, and more particularly for the great sacrifice which he was convinced he had made of his own advantage in order to secure theirs. He was ever apt to look upon the bright side of things, and ready to approve of, and like, every person with whom he came into contact: he therefore glanced with lenity at the instances of meanness and vanity which he had remarked during his visit, and would not allow himself to criticise with asperity what, in the estimation of others more versed in the ways of the world, would have been ridiculed and condemned without compunction.

When he met his sisters at dinner, his first words were to extol the kindness and attentions of the Woodbys; and having done so, he related in the fullest detail the success which had attended his mission.

"Did not I tell you that you would succeed?" said Aunt Barbara, taking the whole merit of it to herself. "He was sure to talk about the French Revolution, and then you clinched him: was it not so? I'm sure I'm right."

"It was exactly so," said Abel: "he seemed quite ready to meet my wishes, and espoused our interests exactly as if they were his own."

"I always said Mr. Woodby was a good man," said Barbara, "whatever people might say about his pride, and his love of grandeur and old families."

"I believe he is as good a creature as ever lived," said Fanny.

"What a dear man he must be," said the gentle Mary with great vivacity, "for being so kind to you, uncle Abel!"

"And what did Mrs. Woodby say?" inquired Aunt Bab;

“did you talk to her about our scheme? I fear she will grudge us our good fortune.”

“No, I did not,” said Abel; “I only saw her at luncheon. She talked to me principally about the company she was shortly to have in her house, and about unpapering her rooms.”

“Who is she to have?” said Aunt Fanny: “did she mention any names?”

“I think she said—indeed I am certain she mentioned Lady Thomson and Lord De—Do—— Lord Somebody, I think she said, and others.”

“Who can he be?” said Fanny. “Let us see.—Oh, I know!—it must be Lord Demone; he is an Irishman—the Woodbys do nothing but rave about him. Anne Woodby told me that her parents wished her to marry him; but, la! he’s old enough to be her father.”

“And who is Lady Thomson?” said Barbara.

“What! have you never heard of Lady Thomson?” said Fanny; “Mrs. Woodby’s Lady Thomson?—why, she can think and talk of nothing else. She is called a rich widow, and is every thing at Cheltenham—they call her the Queen of Cheltenham—she can do whatever she pleases with the Woodbys. I have never seen her, but I hear that she is a prodigious person, wearing such turbans and possessing such shawls!” Then turning to Abel, she inquired whether Edward Manby was not to be of the party.

“I think Miss Woodby said something about him,” said Abel; “but I did not pay great attention.”

“And who is Edward Manby?” inquired Mary in a timid accent. “I never heard his name mentioned before.”

“Oh, the Woodbys call him a charming young man, and so handsome they say!” exclaimed Aunt Fanny with enthusiasm. “Nobody knows who or what he is; but he is somebody’s nephew, that’s certain, and he is patronised by Mr. Woodby; and, what’s more, I hear wears the most charming waistcoats you ever saw. He is such a favourite!”

“He is young Woodby’s friend, I believe,” said Aunt Bab. “He is said to be a very civil, well-conditioned youth; but, for my part, I am always afraid of your mysterious youths—they are always to be suspected.”

“Suspected!—suspected of what!” exclaimed Mary with innocent warmth. “What can he have done?”

“It does not matter,” said Aunt Bab; “but I know I’m right—it stands to reason that I’m right.”

In this manner did the two aunts, the uncle and the niece, pass the evening; sometimes chatting of their neighbours, at others of their future prospects, and ever and anon wondering what John was doing at that moment. They were about retiring to their beds, when Aunt Barbara all at once exclaimed, as if she had forgotten something of importance, “But, Abel, you have not told us yet by what means we are to get our money transferred from the English to the Mexican funds: do tell us before we go to bed.”

“As to that,” said Abel, “it must be done through Cruikshank the attorney.”

“Through Cruikshank!” exclaimed Aunt Fanny in amazement.

“And how can he do it?” said Aunt Bab.

“Through a power of attorney,” said Abel: “that’s the way to get it.”

“Cruikshank! a power of attorney!” again exclaimed Fanny as she left the room and went up to her bed. “Who would have thought it?”

“Well, we shall see,” said Aunt Bab, little understanding the nature of the transaction. “I suppose it’s all right. John must know best; but ——” Then, shaking her head, she also went to bed, ruminating in her mind how such things were done, and still shaking her head as she thought upon Cruikshank.

Abel gave his blessing to his niece as she tripped up to her room, and the cottage was soon after wrapt in the rest and quiet of night.

It has occurred to us, and we doubt whether it will not also have occurred to most of our readers, to meet with instances of ignorance in the commonest affairs of life among men and women—but more particularly among women, which might be said to amount to idiotism, were it not certain that there is as great a variety in the structure of minds as there is in the composition of the features of faces. Aunt Fanny was a striking illustration of this observation, as will be seen by what is immediately about to follow; although when it is taken into consideration, that living a life of more seclusion than falls to the lot of most modern ladies, her ignorance might fairly be accounted for on that ground alone.

She, who usually was the latest at breakfast, was on the following morning the first to make her appearance. Her mind seemed full of some impelling thought which required to expend itself by utterance. Therefore, as soon as Aunt Barbara appeared, she exclaimed, "Barbara, it never will do!"

"Do what?" said Barbara.

"Why, Cruikshank—Cruikshank, to be sure," rejoined Fanny.

"And what of Cruikshank?" said Barbara.

"Surely you understand," said Fanny: "he never will do."

"He never will do what?" answered Aunt Bab, looking all amazed.

"You are quite provoking!" said Fanny: "I have been thinking of him all night, and I am sure he never will do,—he is such a little man."

"But what is he to do?" said Barbara.

"You heard what Abel said as well as I did," said Fanny: "he said our money was to be got at by an attorney of power; and you can't surely say that little Cruikshank is the man."

"An attorney of power!" exclaimed the astonished Barbara; "Fanny! what can you mean?"

"Why, did not Abel say that an attorney of power was to go to London to get at our money, and to do what John said was to be done with it, and that Cruikshank was the man? We surely ought to have a man of more power than that little fellow. He never will do;—who would give our money to him? We ought to get some good, stout, handsome man, to be sure, to do the business."

"You must be wrong, Fanny," said Barbara, puzzled. "I don't think that Abel said an attorney of power—I think he said a power of attorney, whatever that may be; and I should suppose that to be a different thing—at least I think so, for does it not stand to reason that they can't mean the same thing!"

"It must mean the same thing, though," said Fanny, "for I turned the words over in my mind all the night through a thousand times, and I could come to no other conclusion than that he meant a fine, handsome, strong man—in short an attorney of power."

"It may be so," said Barbara; "but I think I'm right when I say that I understood Abel otherwise;—but here he comes."

As soon as Abel entered the room, Fanny was the first to cry out, "Now, Abel, did not you say that our money was to be got by an attorney of power?"

"An attorney of power?" exclaimed Abel, "what do you mean?"

"I thought that I was right," said Aunt Bab; "I thought he said a power of attorney."

"And so I did," said Abel.

"Then pray what has Cruikshank to do with it?" said Fanny. "I am sure you mentioned his name."

"And so I did," said Abel; "he is to make it out."

"How can he make it out," rejoined Fanny; "such a poor, little, miserable thing as he is, how can he make any thing out like power?"

"My dear Fanny," said Abel, smiling, "I am afraid that you got out of your bed this morning with your wrong leg foremost, for you have strangely misunderstood this matter."

"Indeed!" said Fanny, with some little mortification in her tone and manner; "it is not strange if I have misunderstood it. You tell us first that Cruikshank is to get our money for us; then that he is to be the power of attorney, or the attorney of power, just as you please, but which appear to me to mean one and the same thing; and now you say that he is to make it out. Make what out, I should like to know?"

"Why, the power of attorney, to be sure," said Abel. "A power of attorney is a piece of paper, and not a man: when it is duly written according to the prescribed forms, signed, sealed, and delivered, all of which was explained to me by Mr. Woodby, it then empowers one person to act for another. Cruikshank, being an attorney, is to make this out—we shall sign it; it will then be sent to our bankers in London, who will thus be empowered to act for us. Now do you understand me?"

"I said as much," said Barbara, looking wise and significant. "Now I understand the whole thing."

"Then a power of attorney is a piece of paper, and not a strong man," said Fanny, with a dogged and mortified look; "well, I thought otherwise."

"If it were a strong, handsome man," said Abel, with the greatest good-humour to his sister, "then you were perfectly right in thinking that poor Cruikshank could be no candidate for the office, nor do I much wonder at your ignorance. To this day, since the death of our dear fa-

ther, never have we had the smallest occasion to disturb the deposit which he left for our maintenance. I was equally ignorant until Mr. Woodby enlightened me on the subject. And now the next thing to be done is, that I immediately proceed to put his directions into practice; I will set Cruikshank to work this very morning.

So much having been settled, Abel took his way to the village, found the attorney, who, in truth, was a little shrivelled old man, who had made the wills of the neighbourhood for half a century, and esteemed the oracle on matters both foreign and domestic by all the simple-hearted peasantry: soon completed the task to which he had been appointed.

The little community of Ivycote in the mean while had received intelligence of John's arrival at Liverpool, of the arrangements which he had made previous to his embarkation, and at length of his departure. His last letter was full of promises to write upon every occasion—full of sanguine anticipations of success in his own schemes, and of hopes for an excellent result in the one which he had suggested to their notice. Aunt Bab, who idolized her brother, and, notwithstanding his many failures in making a fortune, still had the highest idea of his understanding, dwelt with admiration on every word he wrote, and, when his letters were read aloud, listened with breathless attention; whilst Fanny, equally affectionate, but less awake to his schemes, was only animated when he described men and manners. The tender Mary would devour every thing he wrote with an attention that indicated how deeply she loved her parent; whilst Abel, without saying much, would listen, and, as he listened, would speculate and draw his own conclusions upon the subjects that were brought before his mind, but never finished without some benevolent ejaculation, praying for his brother's health and prosperity.

The power of attorney was duly made out, and, when presented by Cruikshank for signature, he was thanked as if he had conferred a great family benefit; when many an innocent joke passed, as they surveyed his person, at Aunt Fanny's mistake and aberration of imagination. The document was forwarded by the post with due solemnity; the hours were counted when the answer and result would be received; and, in the expectation of that event, we will for the present close this chapter.

CHAPTER VIII.

*The results of shallow education upon frivolous minds.
Misses Anne and Ellen Goold Woodby.*

IN due course of time an answer arrived from the bankers in London, announcing the completion of the transaction precisely in accordance with the orders which they had received, by which the family of Ivycote, fulfilling the prognostics made by John Allnutt, were put into possession of a comfortable increase of income.

In anticipation of this event, they had frequently discussed among themselves the use to which they would apply their additional revenue. Barbara insisted upon adding to their domestic comforts—buying some necessary articles of furniture, renewing others, and, above all, enlarging the measure of their hospitality. Abel had no ambition beyond that of extending their charity and making themselves useful to the poor; whilst Fanny insisted, as a preliminary to further schemes, that honest Brown's hat should be ornamented with a gold-lace band, and, moreover, that two gold-laced button-holes should be added to the collar of his livery-coat. We mention these circumstances, as they will tend to illustrate the characters of the three individuals here mentioned; and we do not include their niece, the retiring and unpretending Mary, because, at this period of our story, she was too young and too little of a personage to be supposed to have any opinion of her own. She naturally acquiesced in every thing that was proposed—obedience and docility were the habits of her mind; no cloud was ever seen to cross her brow, and she seemed only to exist in the love and approbation of those who surrounded her.

They had been some time seated in council, discussing the various subjects of interest in the family brought on by their increase of fortune, when the wheels of a carriage were heard approaching the door, and soon Miss Woodby and her sister Ellen made their appearance. After the first greetings, Miss Woodby announced that she had been sent by her papa and mamma to invite the whole party to dinner at a future day, which she named; and, as

an incentive, added, that they would meet Lady Thomson. In her estimation it was sufficient to mention "Lady Thomson," and all was said. At Belvedere Hall this personage was looked upon as the beginning and the end of all gentility; and Miss Woodby expected that her name would produce the same effect at Ivycote. She hoped to have seen them all jump with delight at the invitation, but was mortified to find that it was received in solemn silence; for as such an event at Ivycote was rare, its first effect was to produce a pause, and then a deliberation. Abel and Fanny looked to Barbara for a decision, who, after a due quantity of acknowledgments for the honour and the kindness, and so forth, finding that she was properly seconded, accepted it.

Miss Woodby, upon hearing this, expressed herself very much pleased, and said she was sure that they would be delighted to know Lady Thomson, because nothing could be kinder than she was—and then she was a knight's widow, and so very genteel! She added, that she saw the best company at Cheltenham, and a good deal of it; and then whispered to her friend Fanny, "Would you believe it, she is so very high bred, that she thinks nothing is half good enough for her; and, moreover, never will sit in the same room with a tallow-candle!"

Finding that the visitors were likely to make a long stay, Aunt Barbara left them to busy herself in household affairs; Abel returned to his room, thus leaving Fanny to entertain her young friends; whilst Mary lingered on to improve an acquaintance with Ellen, who was about her own age.

As soon as Anne Woodby found herself released from the severer presence of Aunt Barbara and the grave looks of Abel, she was carried off at once by her usual high spirits, and relieved herself by a burst of volubility.

"Will there be no one else at Belvedere besides Lady Thomson?" inquired Fanny.

"Oh dear, yes," said Anne, "she usually brings several men with her. You have heard of Lord Demone—I told you all about him before;—well he is one—is it not horrible? You see Lady Thomson is so very genteel that she must have a lord with her; and she is so very fond of me, and is so anxious that I should be genteel too, that she is positively wild to marry me to this man. Now, isn't it horrible? he is old enough to be my father, they say; and then he is so ugly, and dresses so much like a

scrub—there is no bearing it—I'm sure I won't for one. Lady Thomson says that I am too fastidious; but I'm sure I'm right in being fastidious—Pa always told me that I ought to be fastidious, for that I'm to have a large fortune when I marry, and I'm sure it is quite right to be fastidious. Now don't you think, Fanny, I should be quite wrong not to be fastidious?" she said to her friend with a most beseeching look.

Aunt Fanny was about to answer this appeal to her feelings and judgment, when, without waiting the result, Miss Woodby continued to disburthen her heart.—“Oh, I wish you had been with us at Cheltenham this summer, you would have had such fun. We were always along with Lady Thomson; and, as she was the head of the society there, we did whatever we liked. You ought to have seen how we were followed about—I am sure I was called very proud. I made it a rule always to turn my back upon every man who was not regularly introduced; you can't think how I frumped them.”

Upon hearing this, Mary, whose ear had caught this declaration, looked quite astonished, and even distressed.

“Well,” continued Anne, “and we never, at home or abroad, walked, rode, sat, or lounged, without being surrounded by officers: there were some such nice ones—one such a love!” (Here Mary blushed.)—“Oh! you ought to have seen how we went on; but I was so very proud. Only think, one night at a ball at the rooms, which was given under the patronage of Lady Thompson, I had such an adventure. We all followed Lady Thomson, and entered the rooms, quite a crowd of us,—quite a galaxy, as the papers said. The master of the ceremonies came up and asked to introduce Mr. Dolittle to me, son of Messrs. Dolittle, the bankers of Cheltenham; before I could say yea or nay, there was my man close at hand, and he was introduced. I had no choice left; and, just as he was coming up, the master of the ceremonies had time to whisper behind his hand into my ear, that he drove a phaeton and kept his own hounds: so he asked me to dance, and I said yes, quite thoughtlessly. Well, when it was time to stand up, who should come up and insist upon my dancing with him, but Captain Swaggle, in full uniform. You know I could not resist this; and when Mr. Dolittle came to claim my hand, you ought to have seen what a fuss there was. I believe they would have fought on the spot, only the master of the ceremonies interfered; but Lady Thompson

was very angry with me, because she is so very high bred she can't think of transgressing the rules of the Cheltenham ball-room."

"Well, and what happened after that?" inquired Aunt Fanny, whilst Mary looked all aghast with apprehension.

"Oh!" said Miss Woodby, "I was obliged to make Mr. Dolittle an apology,—only think of that; and then, by way of making it up, I was obliged to dance with him; but then he became so very familiar, it was quite shocking, for—would you believe it?—he was impertinent enough to snatch a rose from my hand, for we all carried bouquets, and then he stuck it in his button-hole; but I was up to him, for, when he was looking another way, I snatched it from him in my turn, and strewed it in a thousand bits on the floor. You ought to have seen how he looked. He was quite mortified, and then said, 'Oh! Miss Woodby, you are a dear little'—such a word he said!—'a dear little devil:' now wasn't that shocking? But I served him quite right, didn't I? I know I am too fastidious perhaps; but such a man as Mr. Dolittle has no business to put himself so forward, has he?"

Miss Woodby delivered herself of the above effusion with a volubility and an energy that can only be compared to the impetus of a train of fireworks; her frequent stops to make an interrogation acting like the pause which takes place at the extinction of one wheel, before the ignition of a second.

Aunt Fanny, who in her day had figured at country balls, had danced with captains, and had gone through the probation of having flowers snatched from her, and who still hoped, that she was not utterly rejected by man, was pleased to have her recollections revived by the conversation of her young friend; but Mary, who to this time had been brought up by those who were jealous even to a fault of the purity of her mind, and who was as ignorant as an infant of the ways of the world,—was entirely confounded by what she heard from Miss Woodby. She at first attempted to engage Ellen Woodby's attention by talking to her upon the various subjects of work, books, drawing, flowers, and dress; but, finding her wholly absorbed in what her sister was saying, she was obliged to direct her attention there also; and as the various topics of Cheltenham, Lady Thomson's supremacy, her own fastidiousness, Mr. Dolittle's forwardness, and Captain Swaggle's charms were discussed, she evinced astonishment,

some slight amusement tinged with some share of disgust, and looked upon her new acquaintances as creatures of a new genus. And here, as a French preacher once said, who had ventured to address an English congregation in their own tongue, 'Having finished our three *pints*, we will draw a little *more-ale*'—here we may remark of what consequence it is, in order to preserve the purity of youthful minds, that they should never be permitted to hear any conversation of the nature which we have here recorded, before their minds are so well prepared by principle, that they would be able at once to recognise wrong and right upon their own perceptions. Let us ask what can be more enervating to the mind,—what more destructive of purity of thought and single-mindedness—than those frequent allusions to lax and unrestrained conduct, implied in Miss Woodby's words, between young people of different sexes? Mary had been brought up in the abhorrence of every thing bearing the remotest affinity to levity, and in the love of every thing that encouraged virtue, and, new as Miss Woodby's effusions were to her ears, she instinctively settled in her own mind that she could not have enjoyed the same advantages of education as herself, and therefore charitably made allowances for her misfortune. But had any other young person, whose mind left unprotected by principle, and open to the intrusion of frivolity,—had she been in Mary's place, what might have been the consequence? Most probably she would have become dissatisfied with the tameness and seclusion of her life, she would have longed for Cheltenham and Lady Thomson, she would have burned with impatience to make herself dear to Swaggle, and been ardent with zeal to annihilate Dolittle. She would have dreamt of officers in full uniform, of snatching and demolishing roses, of the obsequiousness of masters of ceremonies, of bankers driving phaetons, and of old lords driven to despair.

Aunt Fanny, finding that her friend Anne Woodby's effusions had only yet half commenced, and that in proportion as her patience to hear became manifest, so the desire of the other to communicate increased, prudently withdrew into a further corner of the room, for she had sense enough to perceive that the conversation which had hitherto taken place was not adapted to Mary's taste, and thus she left her and Ellen Woodby together.

Mary therefore made another attempt to draw Ellen into conversation, who, on her part, having hitherto been kept

silent by the interest which her sister's communications had created, was nothing loth. Ellen who, according to the received phrase, was not yet *out*, from not yet having quite opened in the book of life the chapter which explained its realities, was absorbed in sentiment, and lived in the indulgence of that species of poetry, peculiar to the imagination of young ladies, which is so apt to turn young men into Edwins and themselves into Emmas. There was a sentimental cast in her countenance and manner: her hair was parted flat over her brow, she sued paleness as the first of blessings, and she had not yet made up her mind whether she should look like a madonna, a nun at her vigils, or the impassioned Eloisa.

She very soon began to talk to Mary, and the subject which was nearest her heart very soon came to the surface on her lips. "Do you know Edward Manby?" she said with a deep sigh, and with her eyelashes slightly quivering over her pretty eyes.

"No," said Mary, "I have not that pleasure."

"Ah, you may well call it pleasure," said Ellen: "I do. Anne may talk of her Captain Swaggle; but I should like you to compare him to Edward Manby. The one wears his beautiful uniform, 'tis true, and moustaches; but the other, for all he will persist in dressing like any common person, without either tuft or moustaches, is so very handsome, that he beats Captain Swaggle all to atoms. He has beautiful auburn hair curling naturally to begin with: and then such eyes! you never saw the like, they positively pierce you through and through: his nose is a little aquiline—Anne says it has a turn too much; but I say it is perfect. She says too that Swaggle's teeth beat Edward's out and out; but there she is wrong again, for his are like pearls, and show so pretty whenever he opens his mouth, whereas Swaggle's lips are always shut so tight that he might have charcoal for teeth and no one would be the wiser for it. Then he has such a brow, he looks like a colonel of dragoons at least—some say he looks quite as commanding as Bonaparte, some like the royal family; but this I will say, that nobody can see him without loving him. I always feel a sort of involuntary tremor when he stands near me; and when he speaks, his voice thrills through and through me, it is so very heart-rending. Now isn't he nice?"

"I dare say he is," said Mary, not knowing exactly what to say; and, not willing to extend the subject, she endeavoured to turn it off by remarking, "Lady Thomson,

too, appears to be very kind and amiable, from all your sister says of her."

"Anne is her favourite, and she has a right to praise her," said Ellen; "but I cannot like her, she does all she can to keep Edward Manby out of our house, because she is afraid Anne will fall in love with him, and then she would not marry that old lord she is always carrying about with her; but I can tell her Edward is not the man she takes him to be. Although he is poor—and why should he not?—yet he is above pitiful pelf; he is humble and unknown, yet he has all the pride of a Marquis. I should not be at all surprised if he were a prince in disguise, although they say that he is only the son of a poor officer and the nephew of a brewer. You know that does not signify, does it?"

She made this inquiry with such real interest, as if her whole happiness depended upon it, that Mary could not refrain from catching some of her earnestness, and said,

"No, certainly; a brewer's nephew, provided he be good, is just as much entitled to one's esteem as any other man's nephew."

"Well, that is so good of you!" said Ellen, squeezing her hand; "that is what I always say, although I have all the family against me. I have inquired a great deal about brewers, and from all I hear they are excellent men, and, what's more, members of parliament. Besides, brewers' nephews may wear tufts and moustaches, and chains, and smart sticks and waistcoats, as well as other men; now mayn't they?"

"I see no good reason against it," said Mary, quite startled at the question."

"That is so very good of you!" repeated Ellen, as if Mary had done her a particular favour. "I think I might in time persuade Edward Manby to wear them, for he is so very good natured you can't think; he does every thing to please every body, and then, although he has so little money allowed him he is always buying us things, and gives all he has to any poor creature that asks him. If you ever see him, don't like him too much, Mary," said Ellen, with a sort of playful emotion, showing how deeply her affections were already engaged. "I shall be jealous of you, do you know, if you do."

"There is no fear of that," said Mary with a good-natured smile.

"I am afraid that there is though," said Ellen, "for every

body is sure to love him who knows him; there is one comfort, he is not to be at Belvidere this time, owing to that odious Lady Thomson, and so you can't love him yet."

And so terminated the *tête-à-tête*; for Miss Woodby, having fairly exhausted herself in her communications to Aunt Fanny, hastily took her leave, declaring that she should be too late to "take a ride" in the open carriage with her mamma; and hinted that they were to have their four horses out for the first time, with the new Gould Woodby liveries, in order to try how they would look before Lady Thomson came.

CHAPTER IX.

Country Simplicity.—'Where ignorance is bliss,' &c.

THE family of Ivycote had not quitted their quiet and unpretending habitation for many a long day upon an expedition such as the one now set on foot by Miss Woodby's visit, and therefore it became an event in which the exertion of more than ordinary energies was requisite. Occasionally one or two individuals at a time might dine with the parish clergyman, or visit the farmer Flamborough of the neighbourhood, or even the great squire, such as Mr. Woodby might be; but to dine out *en masse* in this manner was unheard-of. Since the death of their father and the ruin of their elder brother, they had wisely kept the incognito as much as possible, and refrained from the smallest approach to display: but since the turn which their fortune had taken, and with the desire of giving Mary a chance of settling in the world, they felt it right to relax. Accordingly, the first step which the ladies of the family took, was to make a survey of their respective wardrobes. Aunt Barbara could not boast of many gowns; she had her every-day cotton and her Sunday tabinet—the one having frequently shivered in the breeze at the great family washes, and the other slumbered on a peg behind the door only to be called into action every seventh day. She therefore was perplexed what to do, particularly when she reflected before whom she was about to appear; and at

length, after as many pros and cons as a chancellor of exchequer might make ere he settled the imposition of a new tax, she determined upon the strong measure of creating an entirely new gown, and that, *mirabile dictu*, let it be properly announced, of silk. As for Aunt Fanny, she was much better provided; for, by that extraordinary ingenuity which some women possess over others, she managed almost daily to exhibit herself in a different attire. At one time a gown which was in the last stage of decrepitude would all at once come out with renewed youth, bristling with ribands and swelling with mysterious bulbs: but on this occasion she was at a nonplus, and as her heart also yearned for something new, she likewise determined to exhibit her taste and fancy in a new dress, whilst it was decided that Mary was to look cheap and lovely in white muslin. An expedition to the nearest market-town was consequently planned and forthwith executed; whilst Abel, contented with his long-tried and apparently everlasting black trousers and silk stockings, was happy to devote the hour of their absence to his much-beloved flute.

The three ladies returned with their pony-carriage laden with the purchases which they had made, the sage Barbara depending upon the solvency of the New World for the payment of this extra expense. Package after package was handed out, to the astonishment of old Betty, who had never seen such doings since the days of the family grandeur, and did not cease uttering her 'Well-a-day!' and 'I never seed the like!' until every thing was safely landed in the hall. But these ejaculations were nothing to those which followed when the contents of the packages were displayed before her. Barbara first dazzled her eyes by a gray silk; but when Fanny opened the mysteries of her purchase, which after much uncertainty of purpose she had settled should be a cherry-coloured silk, the enraptured old woman almost fainted with delight.

Then succeeded the difficulties of 'making up,' to use the mantua-maker's jargon. It was so long since a new gown had been manufactured in the family, and those that existed being of obsolete fashion, it required that some expedient should immediately be devised to secure a specimen of the last mode. In the adjoining village there were no mantua-makers, therefore in their dilemma they determined to send to the Miss Woodbys to beg the loan of one of their gowns, which they supposed would be of undoubted authority. This was soon obligingly supplied, accompanied

by a note from Miss Woodby, who said, from Lady Thomson's authority, "that tuckers were positively descending and skirts ascending, and that therefore allowances should be made in the cutting out."

As soon as the garment was exhibited, great was the astonishment it created. Upon being held up to view, after much scrutiny Aunt Bab exclaimed: "But there must be something wanting yet. Surely this can't be all the gown—it stands to reason, that something more is wanting at the top; why, it would not cover my shoulders!" They all agreed in this remark; and then, by way of ascertaining the fact beyond a doubt, they pitched upon the smiling Mary as their manikin, and requested her forthwith to strip and put on Miss Woodby's dress. This she did, accompanied by all the retiring and bewitching modesty of her nature; and when she found herself deprived of the covering to which she had been accustomed, she felt even in the presence of her aunts as if the finger of insult and mockery was pointed at her. We wish that those who daily go into crowds openly and unblushingly with their persons presented to the gaze of whoever chooses to look upon them, could have seen this beautiful maiden as she stood thus exposed, expressing in her abashed looks the true feelings of modesty which nature has implanted in woman both for her protection and to increase her attractions: they would have received a lesson which would have taught them how reprehensible is the prevailing fashion of their dress. Let them be assured, that if it be intended to secure the attention of man, the object fails, for what is common is no longer observed; and that, be he libertine or otherwise, far from admiring, he is the first to deride and contemn.

"And so tuckers are descending!" said Aunt Bab, as she turned poor Mary round and round, looking at her with horror and astonishment, her eyes being particularly attracted by that portion of the gown which was drawn like a horizontal line across her beautiful bust.—"Why, the woman must be run mad to say so! How much lower would she have them go?—What shall *I* do?"

Fanny whose heart in truth went as much with fashion as Whig or Tory goes with his party, although she could not refrain from siding with her sister in condemning what she saw before her, endeavoured to come to a compromise by saying, "You know we can trim as high as we like."

“Trim!” cried Bab, her anger increasing with reflection—“trim to be sure!—what can Lady Thomson mean?—trim indeed we will with a vengeance!—Why, if we were all to start from home in gowns like this—the very dogs of the village would howl with astonishment—it stands to reason that they would. Besides, she says we must shorten our skirts—Why, if we lower our tuckers and shorten our skirts, what becomes of the gown we may as well leave it off altogether. The woman must be mad—it stands to reason!”

Fanny attempted to soften her sister’s wrath, by reminding her of the power of fashion, and how difficult it was to set one’s face against it; but her words were of no avail, for Bab avowed that if no one would set their face against it, she for one would, and she would let them know what it was to dress with becoming modesty and decorum.

The gowns were soon cut out, and the whole of the female household being employed in stitching and putting them together,—for they worked as if it were a family concern of the first moment,—the whole were ready to put on even twenty-four hours before the eventful day of the dinner.

On that morning the plan of operations for the evening was settled by Aunt Barbara herself, aided by the countenance of Abel. It was arranged that he, putting his dress-shoes in his pocket, should walk to Belvideer Hall, and be ready to meet them at the door in order that they might all enter the drawing-room together; whilst the women should proceed in the pony-chaise, driven by honest Brown in his new livery, which was to be exhibited for the first time on the occasion.

Just as this had been settled, a note arrived from Miss Woodby to Aunt Fanny, which stated, “that Lady Thomson being very fond of music, her mother begged it as a particular favour that Miss Mary Allnutt would bring her music-book with her, in order that she might favour them with a song after dinner.”

When Mary heard this, she almost sank into the ground with apprehension; for although she had learned music and was as good a performer upon the pianoforte as most young ladies, and although she had a sweet voice and sang little unpretending songs and ballads when she was alone, yet she had never exhibited herself to more than her father, her uncle, and aunts in her life; and therefore to sing before Lady Thomson, the head of the society at Cheltenham, and a ‘lord,’ and all the Woodbys, and she could not say

who besides, appeared to her an undertaking so appalling in its circumstances, and in her so presumptuous, that although she was ever ready to attend to every one's wishes, yet on this occasion she entreated and begged that she might be excused. Aunt Bab and Uncle Abel were both well inclined to accede to her wishes; but Aunt Fanny, who had a secret hope that she herself might be called upon to raise her voice for the amusement of the company, —for she in her day had had a voice, and had sung and heard 'brava!' and 'excellent!' whispered into her ear,—insisted upon Mary's acceding to Miss Woodby's request, and, by way of encouragement, said that *she* would accompany her. Poor Mary, seeing how much in earnest her aunt was in her wishes, busied herself to select the songs she could best sing; and whilst she was so doing, Aunt Fanny also slipped in an old book containing some of her own obsolete songs, in case she might have a fitting opportunity to exhibit her powers.

At length the morning of the eventful day arrived, and the hour for dressing soon followed. We will pass over all the bustle and anxiety, and gently glide over the numerous difficulties which the reader may easily suppose took place on this occasion, in order to arrive at the grand result; and we will describe the appearance of the ladies *seriatim* as rustling with unusual sounds from their dressing-rooms, they one by one disgorged from the narrow staircase and stood erect in the parlour.

Aunt Barbara, first, arrayed in her new gray gown, stood looking around her above and below as if she had been metamorphosed into some new being; and truly nobody who had seen her in the morning could well have taken her for the same person. She had indeed kept her word, and had carefully abstained from cutting out her gown according to Miss Woodby's pattern. Her neck and shoulders were comfortably covered: she had so successfully trimmed up to her very throat, that she might not unaptly be compared to one of those larger owls which, furred and ruffled up to the eyes, are sometimes pleased to look out of an ivy-bush. Then her sleeves, so large and ample in Miss Woodby's gown, she had pared away to answer very much in shape to a pair of moderate-sized bellows; and as compared to the modern forms of ladies, (for she despised all artificial redundancies of person,) she looked like a tree that had just been pollarded, or like something cut to the quick. But with all this she wore an appearance of great respect-

ability; and however strange it might appear to our eyes now, we would uphold her dress in preference to that of many a lady of fifty, who exhibits her decayed person to every glancing eye, and runs the chance of being made ill rather than forego the charm of being in the fashion.

But when Aunt Fanny made her appearance, it was quite with a different air. She could not resist the fascinations of a fashionable gown; and although she had not in fact listened to Lady Thomson's doctrine of lowering her tucker, yet she had shortened her skirts; and there she stood with her country-made shoes, exhibiting her feet, never naturally too small, looking like one uncertain whether she had done right or wrong. Her whole look and manner too were changed since the morning: living in a state of illusion concerning her real age, still thinking herself entitled to stand in the ranks of youth, she had matched her ribands to her imagination, and not to her complexion; by which means she produced a failure in general effect, like the painter who, called upon to restore a decayed landscape representing an autumnal scene, makes use of colours only adapted to the freshness of spring. The cherry-coloured silk matched ill with a complexion no longer the delight of the lily or the rose: it rose in judgment against naked arms and a bare neck, and seemed to enjoy a secret triumph in putting into confusion the ambition of approaching age, which was making this expiring effort for supremacy. In arraying herself in her new attire, she seemed to have thrown off her usual apathy of manner: all at once she assumed a youthful and lively air and manner, and tripped about in unceasing activity as if to acquire practice in the management of her feet in their new and exposed position.

Mary came down dressed with a degree of beauty and propriety which was astonishing considering that this might be called her first appearance in society, which proves that good sense, wherever it exists, will preside over every action, whether in the greater or in the smaller concerns of life. Her hair was gracefully and simply arranged, ornamented by a single flower placed precisely where it ought to be. Her dress, which was neither fashioned by the hand of prudery nor that of extravagant display, was so beautifully made, that while it sufficiently portrayed the grace of her form, it still retained every restraint of propriety, and made it impossible for criticism to find fault.

Altogether, nothing could be more worthy of admiration than her whole appearance.

All being ready, properly secured by cloaks and bonnets, they ascended their chaise, and honest brown then drove off with the dignity of a duke's body coachman; whilst old Betty, together with another, her companion in the kitchen, who had attended at the door to see them off, persisted in looking at them until they turned the corner of the lane and were fairly out of sight.

"Well, I declare!" said old Betty; "how charming they all looked!—how handsome was 'missis!'" (so they called Aunt Bab)—"how sweet was Miss Mary!"

"Ah, I liked Miss Fanny best," said the other; "she was so fine!"

"Yes," said old Betty; "she was fine, 'tis true: but then 'twas a pity she was so lively—with such large feet too!"

CHAPTER X.

Lady Thomson, the Queen of Cheltenham. The effect of her presence in village life.

Ever since the day of Abel's visit to Belvidere Mrs. Goold Woodby had been in a state of unceasing activity to prepare the house for the reception of Lady Thomson. The drawing-room furniture was uncovered, the state bedroom aired, all the best china and glass were brought to light, and every thing done to denote the reception of a person of the first quality. The fact is, Mrs. Goold Woodby was ambitious of exhibiting herself in the very best colours to her friend, who had great reputation for taste and knowledge in the art of living, and who had made herself so much feared by the tyranny which she exercised wherever she went, that in every arrangement, be it in the ordering of a dish or the distribution of furniture, or in dress, or in the choice of servants, Mrs. Woodby's universal text was, "What will Lady Thomson think?" In illustration of this, we must say that she had given orders that all the men-servants down to the gardener were to be ready in attendance in the hall, duly dressed and powdered, to appear as soon as Lady Thomson should drive up, to form a lane

for her to walk through, which as she had been told, was performed in the houses of the great. The moment was now fast approaching for her ladyship's arrival; the butler, the under-butler, the two footmen, the coachman, the groom, the gardener—all were there powdered, (all except the gardener,) stiff in their new liveries, gorgeous in worsted and plush, and bristling with batteries of the largest double-crested buttons that had ever been made. When Mrs. Woodby, as agitated as any stage-manager upon a first night, came to inspect them, she observed that the gardener had not powdered his head, and inquired the reason why. The good man endeavoured to excuse himself by saying that gardeners never powdered; but when he was pressed narrowly to explain what had become of the flour which he had received for the purpose, he was obliged to confess that his wife had made it into a pudding, and that he had in a moment of temptation devoted that to his belly which had been intended for his head. We will suppress, for the honour of the sex, the feelings of anger that rose in her breast, and the form of words in which they were expressed; but just as she had ordered the culprit away to the flower-tub, the teeming equipage was perceived in the distance making the best of its way to the door, and all was hushed into order in expectation of the eventful moment. Mrs. Woodby retreated to the drawing-room for the purpose of receiving her guest with becoming dignity, her heart beating with a thousand different feelings, and seated herself upon the corner of a sofa, so prodigiously new and glossy that she thought herself committing an act of sacrilege in making a print of her person upon it. But before she did this, she loudly called to her daughters to appear, exclaiming "Anne—Ellen, come down immediately! Here is Lady Thomson coming; and if you are not here to receive her, what will she think?"

She scarcely had time to regain her breathing after this effort, before in walked Lady Thomson herself, in all the pomp and circumstance of travelling-dress, furred and velveteed at all points, properly hung about with chains and brooches, lap-dog under the arm, and a lady companion bringing up the rear. Perhaps the reader may at once recognize the sort of personage we mean to introduce to his acquaintance; if he should not, then we will assert that she was as fine a specimen of the genus *maitresse femme* as might be seen: loud and free of speech, bluff in her deportment, exacting attentions, heedless of giving trou-

ble, careless of giving offence, addicted to violent wrenching of the hand, and to patting on the shoulder by way of protection and a thorough mistress of egotism in all its branches.

She walked in with her hands extended; and, inflicting a kiss on both Mrs. Woodby's cheeks, she exclaimed, "Well, my dear Woodby, here I am at last! I thought we should never get here." Then, turning to her follower, she said, "Let me introduce Miss Swallow;" then, unmindful of her friend, she said to the said follower, "Here, Swallow, take the dog; you had better see it washed and combed, and get it a chicken, for it's dying of hunger. Then turning to her friend again, she said, as she looked about her, "This is a charming room;" and looking at the furniture, added, "and what very handsome silk!"

"I'm glad you like it—I was sure you would," said Mrs. Woodby; "it cost us fifteen shillings a yard, and is quite new."

"New! to be sure it is," said Lady Thomson; "but why is it new—don't you always sit in this room?"

"No, never except we have company," said Mrs. Woodby, quite exulting.

"There you're wrong, Woodby," said her friend; "it's quite vulgar not to sit in your best room;—nothing so vulgar as a new thing, and particularly new furniture. I do believe you never sat upon this sofa before!" Upon which she bestowed herself upon its soft cushions with a considerable concussion, and then looked about her with so criticising an eye that it made poor Mrs. Woodby wince with apprehension.

"Now, what are all those chairs doing against the wall," she continued, "like so many raw recruits in a row? They ought to be spread about the room to sit in, to be sure. Then you ought to group your tables,—not one great round thing in the middle, like a room in an inn. And where are your books, your drawings, your albums? You look for all the world now as if you had dropped from the skies, like Eve in paradise! Then those glass things—what do you call them?—upon the chimney-piece—they won't do, indeed they won't; such trash is quite out. You must have old vases or some of the fashionable crooked candlesticks: I'll sell you mine a bargain." Then jumping up as if she were inspired, she flew about the room, and pulling the chairs from their places, the tables from their corners, she managed to bring them all in a

cluster into the middle, and produced so utter a confusion, that, notwithstanding her love of Lady Thomson and her desire to be in the fashion, Mrs. Woodby fairly stood aghast at this destruction of what, from her earliest youth, she had always been taught to esteem as the height of gentility.

“There, that’s the sort of thing,” said Lady Thomson; “none of your stiffness—every thing must be free and easy.”

“Free and easy with a vengeance!” exclaimed Mrs. Woodby between her teeth, and scarcely recovering from the shock which her old prejudices had received.

“But where is Anne—where is Ellen,” said Lady Thomson, “and Mr. Woodby? Do they know that I am come?”

“I’ll call them,” said her friend; and she was just about to ring the bell, when in rushed Anne, followed by her sister, dressed in the smartest of morning dresses, and looking quite the pictures of rude health and vulgar satisfaction.

“My dear Anne,” said Lady Thomson, before she kissed her, and looking straight into her face with a scrutinising air, “what do I see on your nose? That must not be: have you no sticking-plaister? If you are intended to be seen, let us have none of this: you know Lord Demone is to be here to-morrow. And Ellen, too,—my dear, why do you flatten your hair down in that fashion over your forehead? If you had a Pasta face, I would say nothing; but ringlets always go with dimples: mind, that’s the rule.”

“I thought,” said Mrs. Woodby, somewhat recovered from her late shock, “that Lord Demone was to have come with you. We are all ready for him; his sheets are well aired, and so is his bed.”

“I thought it right,” said Lady Thomson, in a tone of dignity and somewhat of mystery, “not to travel in the same carriage with Lord Demone: it is a duty I owe to myself not to travel with him. He will be here to-morrow.”

Every body has some sort of rule by which they pretend to shape their conduct in life. Lady Thomson’s universal dictum for every thing she did was given in the following form of words:—‘I owe it to myself’—or ‘it is a duty which I owe to myself’—or ‘in justice to my own self,’—thus raising a debt which, in her prodigality of duty, she was heaping upon her own head; but at the same time like a wise

financier, creating a sinking-fund of self-will, which enabled her to clear the debt whenever she pleased. In the present instance, the application of this rule of conduct happened to be well adapted to existing circumstances, inasmuch as the lady was about forty-five, and the gentleman above fifty years of age; but it also was a principle which she applied as a vindication of every folly, and of every act of egotism. As an instance both of her egotism, and of the application of her rule, we will state that she had not sat long with her friends ere she informed them that, in addition to Lord Demone, she had invited another of her friends to Belvedere besides Miss Swallow, her companion, whose presence had not been contemplated—one, be it said, of those many idle and insignificant dangles whom it was pleasant to her vanity to have appended to her suite, and of whose arrival up to this moment she had not given the smallest intimation. Mrs. Woodby was rather startled at this piece of intelligence, and began to show evident symptoms of that sort of infirmity called ‘the fidgets,’ which is common to anxious housekeepers. “I wish you had told me of this before,” said Mrs. Woodby, “for then I might have given him the blue room: pray who may he be?”

“My dear,” said Lady Thomson, nothing abashed at the inconvenience which she had evidently occasioned, “it is a duty I owe to myself, go where I will, to see the best society: I always do it—I lay it down as a rule. Mr. Simpleton Sharp is the gentleman I have invited: he is a particular friend of Lord Demone, and indeed he never goes any where without him; he is very much the fashion, and is quite indispensable in every genteel thing—at Cheltenham. I am sure you will like him—every body likes him: he plays better at whist than most people, and is first cousin to the great Mr. Simpleton of Yorkshire.”

After this eulogium, of course Mrs. and the Miss Woodbys could not be otherwise than highly impatient to become acquainted with so accomplished a person and make so desirable an acquaintance; and as both he and Lord Demone are soon to be brought more intimately to the reader’s notice, we must say a few words concerning them by way of introduction.

Lord Demone was an Irish peer, the owner of an ancient castle situated in one of the most peaceable counties of Ireland, in which almost every place begins with the syllable Kil, surrounded by a park which once had been flourishing, but which, alas! was so no more; for his revenues, which

once had also been flourishing, alas ! also, were so no more. His object was to increase them by marriage ; and having found in Lady Thomson a person willing to further this scheme, he attached himself to her during a season at Cheltenham, and fixed upon Anne Woodby as his victim. He had been a sensualist, commonly called a *bon vivant*, all his life ; had ever shown himself the most generous and liberal of men by refusing himself nothing ; and was every where received with open arms, because he was a wit, and one who excited laughter. In age he was past fifty ; his person was without attraction, for he was rather slovenly in his dress, and totally divested of any of the pretensions of a coxcomb. He had a keen eye, and his smile, which never condescended to roar into laughter, expressed much of the comicality of a wag, mixed up with a sufficient quantum of the bitterness of satire.

Mr. Simpleton Sharp, on the other hand, was quite a different person. He was young, had round red cheeks and a white forehead ; plump in his person ; dressed with the most studied precision ; and exhibited in his manner such vivid self-approbation, that every one who approached him longed to slap his face. His unmeaning countenance was a true index of his mind, which never generated an idea of its own, but, like the boa after a meal, would ruminate long and sluggishly upon the good things he had taken in, and then after a lengthened digestion turn them to his own advantage. His ambition was to be thought a wit, and he had attached himself to Lord Demone with a view of catching by reflection some of the brightness that surrounded him, aping his mode of speech and repeating his stories, and occasionally becoming the butt at which the wit levelled his shafts. Lord Demone's manner was irresistibly comic, and his face was always curling up into incipient mirth, like the cover of a pot, which just lifted up by the steam from the boiling liquid, discovers that there are good things within ; whilst Simpleton Sharp looked like one who is ever on the point of bringing forth a good thing without actually being known to have a safe delivery, or as a man about to sneeze who stops short with an unrealised spasm.

The day of their arrival was the one pitched upon for the dinner to which the Allnutts had been invited, and great was the stir produced in the house in consequence of this event. Lord and Lady Thorofield, the grandees of the neighbourhood, for the first time were expected, besides others of distinction in the county, and nothing was left

undone to make Lady Thomson and her friend pleased with their reception. The servants at an early hour thronged the passages to the dining-room, running against each other in the eagerness of preparation, and, unpractised in their vocation, 'spoilt more than they mended.' The din in the kitchen was great, and portended a result of singular production. Mrs. Woodby during the progress of the operations would every now and then steal down to those regions of roasting and boiling, and hold mysterious conferences with the cook; whilst Mr. Woodby busied himself in the cellar. The young ladies mean while were in constant communication with their wardrobe and their maid, devising the most effectual mode of setting off their persons, of fascinating their male guests, and of conciliating Lady Thomson.

CHAPTER XI.

One of the best standards for good breeding is the common process of eating and drinking.

We believe that no people in the world are more afflicted with shyness than the English. Whatever may be the cause,—whether it be from nervous apprehension, or pride, or from any other reason,—true it is that its effects are most inconvenient. Some it apparently places in hostility with their fellows, at one time causing them to shun their presence as if they fled from the plague, at another to meet them with trembling and perturbation. Others, casting a veil over the finest qualities of the heart and understanding, it makes them appear like fools and idiots, and they commit acts that belong only to fatuity; whilst others again, who yield in despair to its influence, it leads to put on the face of boldness and effrontery, the mind being so disturbed by its infirmity that it totally for the moment destroys the real character and exhibits one entirely artificial.

The Allnutts were all, more or less, constitutionally shy; and their seclusion from society had given them no habits of controlling their emotions. A charitable observer would have remarked, that in the midst of their awkwardness they possessed the foundation of the most polished man-

ners,—namely, the greatest benignity of mind, a disposition to think well of all people, and a total absence of selfishness; but in the circle to which they were going, it will be seen that their simplicity was laughed at and their good qualities overlooked.

The carriage, driven by honest Brown, just drove up to the door of Belvidere Hall as Abel, in the face of an assembled row of servants, was puzzling and shuffling over the simple operation of taking off his dirty shoes and putting on his dress-ones; and when, hot and perplexed by the exertion, he looked up and beheld his sisters, he was relieved and overjoyed. They soon joined him, and then with silent trepidation prepared themselves to encounter the first awful entrance into the drawing-room. Aunt Bab smoothed herself down, assumed an air of resolution, and taking Abel's arm, headed the column; Aunt Fanny, giving a twist to her curls, threw a glance over her tucker, and a look to her feet, and then received under her arm the hand of the timid Mary, who would willingly have retreated from the ordeal to which she felt that they were about to be exposed. The doors were thrown wide open: with their eyes suffused with agitation, and their senses almost in abeyance, they entered into the splendid apartment, where, lo! like a ship turning at once from a ruffled sea into a calm bay, their fears and apprehensions were quieted as if by magic, for no one was there—the place was untenanted, and instead of the visions of new and unknown faces which they were about to encounter, they merely saw the place “where the party was not.” They had in fact, arrived half an hour before their time.

This reprieve immediately restored them to their self-possession, and still scarcely venturing to speak louder than in a whisper, they eyed with admiration the magnificence of the room and the beauty of the furniture. They had sat there some time, when in walked one whom we have already described as Mr. Simpleton Sharp, who taking Aunt Bab for Mrs. Gould Woodby, (not having yet been presented to his hostess,) stepped up to her rather with a protecting air, though still with a most urbane manner, said, “How much he was obliged to Lady Thomson for having been the means of affording him the pleasure of making her acquaintance.”

Aunt Bab, who was not prepared for this, and not exactly seeing the mistake, speaking in the name of the fami-

ly, said, "We have not the honour of knowing Lady Thomson yet—we are just arrived."

"I beg you a thousand pardons," said the other; "I took you for Mrs. Goold Woodby. I hope that I have given no offence."

"Our name is Allnutt," said Babb: "there can be no offence where none is meant."

"Ah, Allnutt—Woodby,—ha, very good—very rural," said Simpleton Sharp with his mouth wide open, endeavouring to combine something in his shallow intellect which might pass for wit: but nothing obeyed his call save certain abortive hums and hahs, until Mr. and Mrs. Goold Woodby together entered the room. They looked both hot and contentious, for they had in truth scarcely recovered from a very vivacious argument which they had just held respecting the right of precedence between Lady Thomson and Lady Thorofield. Mrs. Woodby, being but indifferently versed in court matters, contended for her friend Lady Thomson, whom she invoked as the first lady at Cheltenham, and one who was looked up to as the first of her sex: whilst Mr. Woodby in vain asserted that Lady Thorofield was a peeress of the realm, and that she had as much right to walk out of a room first as a bishop has to make his exit before a dean.

As soon as they had properly greeted their guests and made acquaintance with Mr. Simpleton Sharp, their argument was renewed, both endeavouring to secure an authority for their respective opinions. Simpleton Sharp, who was conversant in such like discussions, of course at once decided the controversy in favour of Mr. Woodby; but Mrs. Woodby still persevered in endeavouring to procure the approbation of her own sex. "I should like to know," she exclaimed in the height of her enthusiasm for her friend,— "I should like to know who Lady Thorofield was? Why, isn't she the daughter of old Grimes, the former lord's agent, whose wife was a Tapps,—one of the Tappses of the Hare and Hounds on the London Road, and one of a family, if people speak truth, the son of whom was transported for poaching. I should like to know why she should be better than Lady Thomson?"

She was cut short in her argument by the appearance of Lady Thomson herself, who came sweeping in, in all the dignity of a velvet gown and a cap of no ordinary dimensions. The proper introductions immediately ensued; and as Mrs. Woodby had already duly apprised Lady Thom-

son that the Allnutts were related to Lord Knutsford, and as Lady Thomson felt unbounded respect for every thing that had the most distant reference to nobility, she did not fail to pay them marked attention; although in glancing her eye over their dress and appearance, she could not refrain from drawing conclusions upon that head which the worldly and vulgar-minded are too apt to do. The well-clothed neck and throat of Aunt Barbara attracted her attention as much as the bright cherry-coloured silk of Aunt Fanny's gown, which shone throughout the assembled group as bright as the blaze of a blacksmith's fire does amidst the sober-coloured cottages of a village hamlet.

Lord Demone soon after made his appearance; and at the announcement of Lord and Lady Thorofield the dinner was ordered to be served up, when that interval of suspense took place which by no exertion of ingenuity can ever be made agreeable. Simpleton Sharp tried in vain to say something agreeable upon Lady Thompson's lap-dog; Lady Thomson whispered to Lord Demone, who did not cease eyeing each individual assembled with the scrutiny of a satirist; whilst Mr. Woodby had not lost a moment in entertaining Lady Thorofield upon the subject of his lodges, his shields, and the virtues and high qualities of Stone the architect.

As soon as the joyful words of "Dinner is *hon* the table," audibly pronounced by a rustic butler, were heard, the procession gradually proceeded to the scene of action; Mr. Woodby taking the lead with Lady Thorofield, whilst at the same time he threw a look of triumph towards his wife, who was thinking all the while that Lady Thomson was an ill-used woman.

Mrs. Woodby having taken her seat where it is the pride of an English wife to sit—that is, at 'the head of her table,' flanked on either side by dignitaries after her own heart, soon began to dispense her attentions to her guests in those terms of civility which in her estimation were the touchstone of good breeding. "My lady, pray allow me to assist you to some fish.—My lord, won't you be pleased to play with a sweetbread?—Won't you be 'prevailed' upon to 'try' a kidney?—Mr. Simpleton Sharp, pray be 'induced.'—Miss Barbara Allnutt, I'm afraid there's nothing here that you 'prefer.'—All you see before you, my lord, we do at home: we bake, brew, milk, fish, kill our own mutton and lay our own eggs, all at home—Mr. Goold Woodby will tell you the same."

“I presume that your young ladies are home-made also,” said Lord Demone, taking up his glass and looking at Mary Allnutt, with whose beauty he had been particularly smitten, although he would fain have made the mother believe that he talked of her daughters. “You ought not to have forgotten them; they do more credit to your farm than your eggs.”

“Indeed, my lord,” said the good lady, not seeing the point of his humour, “they have nothing to do with the farm; they have had all the advantages of the genteel education—we have spared nothing to bring them up in the best principles of perfection:” and then lowering her voice, in a whisper she added, “And Mr. Woodby, there, is quite determined to give them each handsome fortunes. You see they are our only children, besides our son Thomas, and therefore we can afford to do it, and handsomely too.”

“But you eat nothing yourself, ma’am,” said Lord Thorofield, who was an old sportsman, and who, having been in the field all the morning, was too hungry to say much.

Mrs. Woodby’s principal pretensions to gentility, as far as regarded her own person, lay in three things: an ambition to be thought to have a weak stomach, her friendship for Lady Thomson, and her ancient lineage. In answer to Lord Thorofield’s accusation of eating nothing, she said, “Ah, my lord, ever since the time of Charles the Second the Goolds have been famous for their bad stomachs;—I am a thorough Goold, and that’s the truth of it—I never do eat any thing myself:” and then with a soft sigh added, “And *that* I can’t digest.”

“Ah, difficulty of digestion, ’tis true, is the general complaint now-a-days,” remarked Simpleton Sharp; “’tis said to be the lawyer’s complaint—at least it was so when I studied in the Temple.”

“There is nothing extraordinary in that,” said Demone.

“And wherefore?” said his companion.

“Because more laws are made than can be digested,” replied the other.

“Ha! ha! that’s very good!” exclaimed Simpleton Sharp; “I never thought of that.” Then, turning himself to Lady Thomson, he exclaimed, “There, Lady Thomson, did you hear that? Demone says that Lawyers make more laws than we can digest—is not that excellent?”

“His lordship is always sure to say the best thing at the best time,” said Lady Thomson from the other end of the

table, where she had been entertained by Woodby upon some one of his favourite subjects, owing to which propensity the reader has no doubt ere this discovered that he enjoyed the worst of reputations—that of being ‘a bore.’ This observation of Lady Thomson had stopped the current of his talk; when, turning himself towards the Allnutts, who had for mutual protection seated themselves in a row near each other, addressing Aunt Fanny, who was nearest to him, in a pompous tone of voice, he asked her, “I hope Lord Knutsford was quite well when last you heard from his lordship?”

“We never hear from him,” said Aunt Fanny, looking towards her sister to know what she should say; “but I believe he is well.”

Woodby then announced to her with a consequential look, as if he were the possessor of state secrets, that there were great rumours of a change of administration; and then added, “I hear that he is to have a seat in the cabinet.”

“Is he?” said Fanny, puzzled, and with much hesitation; “I never knew that cabinets were made to sit in!”

This remark, made at a moment when a dead silence had happened to take place in the usual clatter of the dinner, brought the eyes of the whole table upon her, and every sort of smile, from the smile of astonishment to that of derision, might have been remarked upon the faces of most of the company present.

Both Abel and Barbara had frequently felt confused at the ignorance and simplicity which Fanny often betrayed upon the common things of life, although, in truth be it spoken, they themselves were not much more enlightened; but, on this occasion, they were distressed, inasmuch as her remark brought the observation of the whole table upon them all. Lord Demone’s scrutiny had fallen more upon the beautiful and unconscious Mary, although, at the same time he could not refrain showing how much he was amused at Aunt Fanny’s simplicity. He had heard of country simplicity, but never could believe in its existence; rural seclusion he conceived never could prevail now-a-days to such an extent as to make any one ignorant of the affairs of the world; and the more he remarked her who had so exposed herself and those to whom she was connected, so he was drawn more particularly to scrutinize their manners, and give heed to what they

should say, in the hope of eliciting matter for feeding the springs whence his satire flowed.

"I believe," said Lord Demone, addressing himself to Aunt Barbara,—“I believe that Allnutt is the family name of the title of Knutsford?”

“Yes, it is,” said Barbara, happy to withdraw the attention of the table from Fanny, who, however, was not conscious of having committed herself.

“It is a good old Saxon name,” said Demone.

“I thought it might have been French,” said Simpleton Sharp with as much wisdom as he could throw into his unmeaning face, ringing the changes upon the word.

“It is no more French than your Johnsons and your Thompsons are French,” said Lord Demone.

“I hope you will recollect, my lord, that my name is Thomson,” said the lady, with a visible change of countenance, and a manner that showed how little she was pleased with his observation.

Lord Demone at once saw that he had involved himself in a dilemma, and, with peculiar quickness, answered, “My dear lady, your name is Thomson, 'tis true; but then it is Thomson without a *p*—that makes all the difference. The Thomsons without a *p* are a totally different people from those who possess that consonant; they are decidedly French—they came over with the Conqueror. Tonson is a real Norman name. The first tonsure, that distinguishing mark in the Catholic Church, was first inflicted in France on a dignitary belonging to that family: besides, surely you recollect the famous French old song of ‘Monsieur Tonson,’ that you will allow to be decisive in favour of its origin and its antiquity.”

These remarks at once soothed the irritated feelings of Lady Thomson; and having, by this short explanation learned more concerning her family than she had ever known before, she was delighted to find that she was so distinguished, and for the future greedily treasured up in her mind that she was a Thomson without a *p*.

“Then who are the Thompsons with a *p*?” inquired Simpleton Sharp. “Is it not strange that there should be so much affinity between the two names?”

“They are vulgar English—pure cockneys. Some savage butcher of Smithfield once beat his son, no doubt, and thence was called Thumpson, or Thompson—there can be no doubt of that etymology.”

By the time that this conversation had ended, the first

stage of the dinner had also come to a close, when Mrs. Goold Woodby, still determined to uphold the precedence and privileges of Lady Thomson, bobbed her head to that lady as a signal for departure, and then glancing at Lady Thorofield, all the ladies rose and left the table to the gentlemen, according to the most approved forms of English life.

CHAPTER XII.

A proof that the self-important man and a bore are identified.

As soon as the door had been closed upon the last petticoat, Woodby, still full of the subject which had been under discussion,—that is, the derivation of surnames,—and taking his seat at the head of the table, continued to dwell upon it; for it was one of those upon which he was always ready to say much. First, he narrated the oftentimes-repeated history of his own name, entering into all the various reasons which had caused him to change it, until his guests audibly yawned their desire for a change of subject; then, with great self-complacency, he gave a full account of his wife's name and lineage, until at length he glided into the history of the Goold arms and motto. Addressing himself particularly to Lord Demone, he said, "I possess the very coat of arms that was granted to my wife's ancestor, Sir Jugg Goold, and which hung as a sign over his door, according to the fashion of those days, denoting that he was the king's goldsmith." Then pointing to a dark painting handsomely framed, which hung over the chimney-piece, he added, "There—that is the very sign itself!—there you will see the arms granted by Charles the Second, a hand wielding a hammer, being, as you may observe, an indication or illustration of his art; and underneath the very appropriate motto *Aurum quam bonum*, which in the Latin language means 'Gold is good; a delicate mode of his majesty's of that day to denote that he at once applauded and approved of Goold the goldsmith and gold the metal.'" Then taking up a candle, he drew

Lord Demone and his other hearers to the inspection of the painting.

Demone's face had long been portentous of wicked intentions. Oppressed by the intensity of the bore, groaning with inward anguish, and watching his first opportunity for revenge, he looked about for some instrument which he might use with advantage. Reading the motto under the shield, he remarked, "Ah, *Aurum quam bonum!* 'Gold is good!'—very happy indeed; but I don't think that was the intended mode of spelling the word *bonum*. In those days, *bonum* was spelt with an *r*." Then approaching the candle, he said, "Ah, and so it was!—there you can see that the original *r* has been scratched out, and an *n* substituted. I thought there must have been something more than met the eye: the Merry Monarch intended to say 'Goold is a bore,' that was his object—he despised riches, and thought his goldsmith an ass.

Woodby felt sensibly distressed, although he would fain have made it believed that he too relished the joke. Those who understood the allusion could scarcely suppress the impulse of their merriment; whilst Simpleton Sharp, whose slow intellect had not compassed the full meaning of Demone's sarcasm, thought he had originated a very shrewd observation, when he remarked that this was an age for improvement, and that great progress had been made in orthography since the Restoration.

It was observed that until after Lord Demone had taken his departure, Mr. Woodby never reverted to the Goold shield and motto; for the new interpretation put upon it, which he felt might implicate his dignity, so entirely stopped the flow of his unceasing dissertations upon himself and his affairs, that it was remarked he had never been so agreeable as on that night.

Upon the return of the gentlemen into the drawing-room, they found the ladies engrossed in looking at some drawings, and in the highest admiration of their excellence; all excepting Lady Thomson, who sat aloof talking with Mrs. Woodby. Miss Woodby had been explaining to Aunt Barbara, whilst Mary was listening with great attention, and the fair Ellen seated near at hand, that these drawings were the performance of Edward Manby, who no sooner had been invited to contribute something to be disposed of for charitable purposes at the ensuing bazaar, than he sent the present beautiful productions.

"And pray tell us who is Edward Manby?" said Aunt

Barbara to Mr. Woodby as soon as he appeared. "He seems to be a very clever young man."

"Edward Manby," said Woodby, taking up a pompous and protecting tone, "is a very good young man—indeed I may say that he is a remarkably clever young man and deserves to be encouraged. He is a poor youth without parents—an orphan in fact, if I may be allowed the expression, with whom my son Tom got acquainted at college, and to whom I have been able to be of some little service. He has an uncle at Liverpool, a very respectable man, a brewer of some eminence, who educates him, and he is now at college. His father was an officer in the army, and died in the West Indies; he was brother to the brewer in question; and his mother, who was a well-born woman—at least so I have heard, for I don't know her family,—died there also. His parents left no property whatever; so Edward is totally dependant on his uncle's generosity, who having a large family of his own, it is not likely he will ever have any other patrimony than his wits, for I hear his mother's family will have nothing to say to him. He comes here occasionally to see us from Liverpool when Tom is at home; and my girls have, you see, got him to draw for our bazaar, and these are his drawings."

Having satisfied Barbara's curiosity, he then walked away to some other part of the room, and left her surrounded by Fanny, Mary, and the two Miss Woodbys, to pursue the subject upon which they were engrossed. Edward's beauty, the first of merits in the eyes of all women, was first discussed. The young ladies described his features one by one,—the outline of his face, the conformation of his nose, the length and breadth of his cheeks, chin and lips, and that very principal object of discussion, his eyes: then they talked of the colour of his hair and the brilliancy of his teeth, and, in short, gave so minute a description of his person, that it was evident he had made no common impression upon their memories. They talked long and enthusiastically of his perfections; compared him to each of their male acquaintance; deplored his poverty; but boldly asserted that nothing could prevent him from becoming the Lord Chancellor should he choose the law as his profession, or the Archbishop of Canterbury were he to go into the church. These observations sunk deep into Mary's mind; Ellen sighed and looked like a desponding shepherdess; whilst Aunt Barbara, taking a more matter-of-fact view of his circumstances, suggested that he

ought to be recommended to turn his views to business, making no doubt that, with his great abilities, he would in time turn out to be a very great brewer.

Lord Demone meanwhile, whether, with a desire of eliciting amusement from Aunt Fanny's simplicity, or through her to become acquainted with Mary, approached the more confirmed spinster and entered into conversation with her. She was flattered by his attention, and calling up one of those looks which in her best days would have inflamed every heart, she began to hope that her air and her cherry-coloured gown had done their duty. He acquired her good will and confidence by talking to her with great eagerness upon those airy nothings so usually discussed upon a first acquaintance; and so effectually did he impress her with the certainty of his being in earnest, that she was not long in persuading herself that her eyes had not lost their power. She therefore answered him with bestowing the aforementioned glance, which, old and practised as he was in the amiable weaknesses of the softer sex, he soon subtracted from the amount of simplicity which he had expected to find in her character. He soon said enough to make her believe that he was struck with her appearance, and then descanted in general terms upon beauty, upon country beauties, upon the comparative charms of the beauties of that part of the country, and at last upon the positive beauty of her niece, who, unconscious of what was passing, sat listening to the conversation upon Edward Manby with the attention of a child intent upon a story.

"Yes," said Fanny, rather disconcerted at the digression from herself to her niece,—“Yes, John thinks her handsome, and so do we; but then we are partial. He is decidedly handsome, and there is a strong family likeness among us all.”

“No doubt,” said Demone,—“no doubt,” looking significantly in her face: “he must be handsome if he is like those I have the pleasure of knowing. But pray, who is John?”

“Oh, don't you know,” said Fanny in a tone of surprise,—“don't you know John! He is my brother, and Mary's father.” Upon which she gave him a full account of his history, of his present views and undertakings, and of his future expectations. In proportion as she proceeded in

her narrative, so did her confidence in her hearer increase ; for he listened to her with the most well-bred attention, and so interested did he appear in all the various details of the family—of what Mary could do and what she could not do—of what Abel had suffered when he was a boy, and of his various infirmities now that he was a man—of Barbara's knowledge of housekeeping—all mixed up in the most amusing medley which a mind not regulated by logic could produce, that his entertainment increased with the involutions of her narrative. Her aim had been to give him a high idea of John's abilities ; which she did by narrating, with all the fidelity in her power, the various schemes which he had put into practice to make his fortune, but which had ended in his ruin ; and she had so well conducted her disclosures, that she ended by convincing her hearer that John was the very reverse of what she had been endeavouring to prove,—that is, instead of being a very wise man, that he was a very foolish one.

When Lady Thomson observed how much Lord Demone was feasting his eyes upon Mary's beauty, and that he was about attaching himself to her for the evening, by a sapient manœuvre she threw herself forward, and making a few prefatory speeches upon the delights of music, soon engaged all parties to supplicate Miss Mary Allnutt for a song. In this request Demone earnestly joined, followed by Simpleton Sharp, and backed by the ponderous Woodby, who, though he had about as much knowledge of music as he might have of astrology, thought it uncivil and inhospitable not to urge his timid guest to do that which she declared was disagreeable to herself.

In vain poor Mary looked alarmed and full of distress—in vain she turned with a beseeching air to her Uncle Abel, her refuge in all cases ; more dead than alive, she was dragged to the piano-forte, and there stood turning over the leaves of her music-book, whilst blushes suffused her cheeks and her temples throbbed with apprehension. Aunt Fanny, in order to give her encouragement, offered to accompany her ; and the time which she took in taking off her gloves, squaring her elbows, adjusting her feet, and striking a few antiquechords, gave Mary leisure to reason herself out of her timidity, and afterwards to sing one of her least pretending songs ; and this she did with an expression so full of pathos and simplicity, that all hearts were soon enlisted on her side. The Miss Woodbys fol-

lowed, with an air of superiority that seemed to say, "Now you shall hear something like Music!" Miss Anne struck two or three sound blows on the instrument by way of a fair start; and then she and her sister engaged their voices in a tortuous Italian duo, so full of involution, each part being so nicely poised by science, that if one voice did not immediately respond or take up the other, all went wrong; a piece of music, in fact, which would have required all the nicety of tact and skill of professed singers to overcome the difficulties which it presented. The adventurous sisters, however, set off, without any apprehensions as to the result—they plunged at once into the thickest of the dilemma, and then having thoroughly engaged in a sort of file-firing of *ti amo* — *mio sposo*, and of *mio sposo*—*ti amo*, they finished by entangling themselves therein so effectually, that what was intended to be sung together was sung separately, and what was meant to be sung separately was sung together and produced consequences which ended in an utter confusion of sounds. Miss Ellen, at the top of her voice, false by excess of exertion, got to the last note of her finale a full minute before Miss Anne, who, nothing abashed at having been so much out-run, thought that she made all straight by the grand succession of closing thumps which she struck upon her instrument with a great air of bravado.

The enraptured mother, who conceived that the more noise her daughters made the better they sung, went about seeking for congratulations upon their superior talent, and hinted again to Lord Demone that she had spared no expense to bring them up in the first style; and she whispered to him with an air of confidence, that as Anne always ate hearty, it was not fair to judge of her singing upon a full stomach; but that if he should ever happen to hear her before her meals she would astonish him.

Lord Demone said, he made no doubt that she would, and hoped that he might be informed whenever that event should happen; but that he begged leave to say that he was very well pleased with what he had heard, for that he was fond of a *full* voice, which, he presumed, proceeded from a *full* stomach.

Simpleton Sharp, who was at hand, and ever ready to laugh whenever his lordship opened his mouth, echoed this attempt at a joke far and wide, to the great mortification of Aunt Fanny, who was languishing under the expecta-

tion of being asked to perform, which she visibly made known by the sort of singing face singers are apt to get up on such occasions, and which she did too significantly to be mistaken. Lord Demone was the first to understand the drift of her machinations, and immediately pressed her to begin. Before any one but himself was prepared for the outbreak, she began, in powerful accents, to chant, "Shepherds I have lost my love," and thereby restored every one to that state of silent attention which is generally produced by a woman's voice, but which was broken by certain occasional titters excited by the richness of the exhibition. Aunt Fanny's calls for her love were totally disregarded; and by the time she reached the closing stanza, which she performed with scrupulous exactitude, her audience had almost forgotten that she was straining her throat for their amusement, and, excepting the well-bred Demone, every one had deserted her, and were proceeding to discussions in which her singing took no share. Her efforts wound up the amusements of the evening; and very soon after she had finished, the Allnutts took their departure, much thanked by the Woodbys, and much lauded, after they were fairly gone, by Lord Demone, and abundantly criticised by Lady Thomson.

CHAPTER XIII.

A sneeze sometimes awakens, so a sudden change of subject produces variety. A letter from John Allnutt.

THE visit to Belvedere afforded matter of conversation to the inhabitants of Ivycote for many days after it had taken place. Aunt Fanny had been particularly gratified, for she could not refrain from encouraging a secret hope that she had made a conquest of Lord Demone; whilst Mary, on the contrary, felt as great a loathing when she reflected how much she had been an object of his observa-

tion. Aunt Barbara was glad to find that they had got so well over it; and Abel, who had scarcely been noticed by any one, said little, but thought much.

Lord Demone had intimated to Fanny his intention of soon paying them a visit, and she was in daily expectation of that occurrence, when one morning, instead of his lordship, appeared the postman, bearing a letter, which was soon recognised to come from John. This happy event collected all the family together; and Mary, to whom it was addressed, showed, by the sparkling of her eyes and the agitation of her manner, how much her feelings were interested at this instance of her father's affection. As we do not wish the reader to lose sight of this member of the family, we will not apologise for giving his letter at full length. It was dated from Madeira; and after Abel had settled the geography of that island for the satisfaction of his sisters, and having received permission from Mary to read the letter aloud, he began as follows:—

“MY DEAREST MARY,

“You will be glad to hear that I arrived quite safe at this place a few days ago, after a passage more full of incident and adventure than I could possibly have expected. We left Liverpool with a fair and steady breeze, which lasted for two days, during which time I had all the leisure to think of you and your dear aunts and uncle at Ivycote, as well as to get acquainted with my ship, which I found to be an excellent sailer; and indeed I think, if the owner had adopted my suggestions in making certain alterations, she would have been unrivalled. On the third day it began to blow. As we entered the Bay of Biscay the sea was very rough, which caused the ship to labour a great deal, obliging us to take a reef in our topsails; which is an operation that I need not describe, fearing it may not be intelligible to a lady,—but it is more like making a tuck in a gown than any thing else which I can at present think of. The next day we were seated at dinner in the cabin, when the mate rushed in with terror in his looks, saying, ‘Sir, the bob-stay is carried away!’ Now, you may perhaps suppose that *bob-stay* might be a man, and might already begin to deplore his untimely end; but be not alarmed—it is only a piece of iron which secures the bowsprit, and acts in some manner as a martingale upon a horse's head, and keeps it steady. I think that I have hit upon a new

method of making bob-stays, which will save the country a great deal of money, and shall send my views upon the subject to the Admiralty by the first opportunity. We were obliged to bear up for Rochelle, which was the nearest port, in order to repair our damage; and we reached an anchorage at the mouth of the Garonne, where we managed to secure our bowsprit. During our stay there I landed and was shown a great curiosity—it was the last house Bonaparte inhabited in France previously to his embarkation to place himself in our hands. It struck me that a good speculation might be made in purchasing this house and transporting it to London, there to be erected and shown to the people of England. I was about striking a bargain for it during this my short stay in France, but was hurried away before I could accomplish it: however, I will keep it in mind as a good thing to do on some future occasion.

“We sailed again, and coasting the high lands of Portugal, shaped our course for Madeira, where we anchored in Funchal roads without further accident. I was introduced to the Portuguese governor——”

“The Portuguese governor!” exclaimed Aunt Barbara: “John must be wrong there. What have the Portuguese to do with Madeira—surely it belongs to us?”

“I believe you will find that John is right,” remarked Abel very quietly. “Madeira has always belonged to Portugal.”

“It stands to reason that it does not,” retorted Barbara: “for don’t all our consumptive patients go to Madeira?—no foreigners would allow that surely. You might as well say that those who die in the next parish have a right to bury their dead in our church yard. It stands to reason that I’m right.”

Abel continued to read.

“—I was introduced to the Portuguese governor, to whom I communicated a plan for new paving and lighting the streets of Funchal, and introducing the use of rail-roads, by which the inhabitants might ascend and descend their steep mountain without the risk of breaking their necks, riding on mules, as they do. But he appeared to be an enemy to innovation, and when I left him, I determined to propose that the people should appoint a committee to conduct their own affairs: whether they will adopt my plans time will show, for I fear that I shall not remain long

enough among them to renovate their island. I must reserve my exertions for Mexico and South America in general, where I hope to introduce so many improvements, that the face of that great country will be totally changed ere many years elapse. What with new constitutions, new roads, gas-works, steam-engines, schools, and newspapers, I trust to introduce so much more happiness at a great deal cheaper rate than any happiness they have hitherto enjoyed, that life will be a blessing to them, instead of the contrary, which it must now be.

“Although I am extremely impatient to be at my post, yet I am inclined to be less so when I consider that I have been the means of placing your uncle and aunts in better circumstances than they were before. By this time I calculate that they must be in possession of their new revenue; and if matters go on as prosperously as I expect they will in Mexico, I hope to realise so much wealth, that you, my dear child, as well as they, will be able to live in affluence during the rest of your lives. This letter I wish to contain all that I have to say to them as well as to yourself; and let me hope that after I have properly exerted myself for the benefit of mankind, I may return to you to give you my blessing before you settle in life, and which I now do from afar with all the affection and sincerity of your own father and friend,

“JOHN ALLNUTT.”

Mary was affected to tears at the perusal of this letter: her affection for her father was unbounded; and although she was surrounded by those who loved her as parents and acted towards her as such, yet what is there that can stand in competition with a father's love? They sat long in discussion upon the contents of the letter, for it brought John before them in every line and every circumstance which it contained. There he was, with his ardent and ill-regulated benevolence of character, sailing on the surface of the globe, making plans and sketching constitutions, as if upon himself alone had devolved the duty of civilizing a new world. Aunt Barbara, notwithstanding his repeated failures in former schemes, still placed implicit confidence in his abilities; and now that she was in the actual enjoyment of one of his suggestions, which had produced an increase of revenue, she willingly lent herself to the hope that he was about to put into practice all that he promised, and that ere long he would return to Eng-

land one of the wealthiest men of his time. Abel's enthusiasm did not run so high; but he also, seeing how regularly the increased dividends on their funds were paid, was more confirmed in his opinion of John's sagacity than he had ever been before. As for Fanny, she looked upon her absent brother as something greater than either Bonaparte, the Duke of Wellington, or the lord-lieutenant of the county, so highly did she appreciate the blessings of being able to wear cherry-coloured silk-gowns, and of being driven about by a coachman with a gold-laced hatband and gold-laced button-holes.

They had scarcely finished the perusal of John's letter when visitors were announced. Peeping from a corner, they perceived them to be Lord Demone and Simpleton Sharp, escorted by Mr. Woodby. In the twinkling of an eye, up ran Aunt Fanny into her bed-room to put on a more becoming dress, and away flew Barbara into the kitchen to prepare refreshments.

Abel and Mary remained below to receive their guests; which they did with appropriate speeches of welcome. Lord Demone was almost struck dumb by the dazzling beauty of Mary's face and person, and the uncommon grace of her manner; Simpleton Sharp remarked with singular presence of mind, that the name of the cottage answered precisely to its picturesque appearance; and Woodby strutted about as a turkeycock is frequently seen to do in the presence of minor fowls, as if he, personifying Belvedere Hall, that great mansion, was asserting its pre-eminence over the humble and diminutive Ivcote. Aunt Barbara very soon after came bustling in, with welcome and sandwiches beaming in her countenance; and at length Fanny appeared in all the exuberance of dangling curls and streaming ribands. Aunt Fanny soon took possession of Demone as of a commodity peculiarly her own, (although he willingly would have continued to gaze upon the lovely Mary,) and invited him to take a walk over their grounds, for so she called an acre and a half of lawn and shrubbery. She directed his attention to the various points of view; how he could see the parlour window of the house through one opening in the trees,—then how beautifully the kitchen chimney mantled with ivy peeped over a thick tuft of laurels; and at length she brought him by slow degrees to their great lion, their most famous point, the parsonage-house, with the village-steeple peering over it, backed by

the low range of the Huckaback Hills, whilst the light blue smoke from the blacksmith's shop curled up in the midst. At each stoppage Aunt Fanny made a speech, to which Demone answered by the usual exclamations; then taking him into the centre of the lawn, she said, "And here I shall want you to give me your advice; — I ask it from every one of our friends, and I will ask it therefore of you. Do you advise us to plant this lawn in *quidnuncs* or not?"

"In *quidnuncs*!" screamed Demone, scarcely able to suppress a burst of laughter. "Oh no, by no means! — root them out rather. No, no; never allow a quidnunc to take root, not even in your village, much less so near your house!"

Fanny was surprised at this singular burst of hatred against what in her mind she conceived to be a very innocent mode of putting five trees together, and more particularly at the merry manner in which that passion developed itself in her companion. However, she said nothing more on the subject, but determined to treasure up Lord Demone's opinion in order to bring it forward whenever the question should be brought under discussion in the family. She then led him to what in cottage grandiloquence she called the conservatory, consisting of an enclosure half green paint, half green glass, in which a few red pots were preserved, containing little half-inches of plants, with names tacked to them that would have puzzled Sanchoniaton himself to explain.

Having shown him all these things, they returned to the house, where they found Aunt Barbara's collation duly spread, and making a most striking contrast by the excellence and plenty of its materials to a similar meal on record as given at Belvedere Hall.

"Well," said Fanny as soon as she entered the room, unable to retain her first resolution, "do not you know that Lord Demone, is all against the *quidnuncs*: he says they won't do."

"*Quincunx*, Fanny," said Abel in a suppressed tone of voice.

"*Quincunx* or *quidnuncs*," answered Fanny, "I suppose it's all the same: but, in short, his lordship hates them so much that he would not allow one to be planted within fifty miles of the village."

"I do not like quidnuncs," said Demone; "I won't say as much for quincunx: I approve every thing which Miss

Fanny Allnutt approves,—there can be no appeal from her taste.”

Fanny, losing sight of her ridiculous mistake in the glory of receiving so flattering a speech, felt a glow and a joy all over her person which gave her the vivacity of sixteen, and she bounded about with those large feet of hers in a manner that showed how much the nerves of the heart are connected with those of the lower extremities. Nothing could be more ludicrous than the scene which took place between these two individuals; and Demone appeared willing to carry it on further, had he not been stopped by the dense Woodby, who had undertaken to give the history of the three Miss Popkins, ladies of great wealth, the possessors of a fine modern house in the neighbourhood, and who consequently were the theme of speculation throughout the country.

“These Miss Popkins,” said Woodby with great emphasis, “were coheiresses—that is to say, they cannot be called coheiresses because there are three of them; however for shortness, sake we will call them such. They inherited from their father after they had lost their mother, who was herself a coheiress with her brother, a rich merchant at Liverpool, who is looked upon as their uncle, which indeed he is on their mother’s side. They are the sole possessors of his wealth—that is to say, divided into three equal parts, of which by far the largest, if I may so say, will be that of the youngest Miss Charlotte Popkin, who is not yet of age, and who, by the bye, I have my eye upon for my son Tom; and, let me add, I have recommended Edward Manby to make himself agreeable to the two elder ones, for he might marry one or either of them—at least he shall have all my influence, poor fellow,—and that is not small, let me tell you, for after all Belvedere Hall tells in this part of the country; don’t you think so, Miss Barbara?” said he, abruptly addressing that lady, and who was at that moment planning a new plate of sandwiches.

“I beg your pardon,” said Barbara, very civilly; “what did you say?”

“I was saying,” said Woodby, “that Belvedere Hall, without flattery I may say now, tells in this part of the country, particularly now with its new lodges.”

“Indeed it does,” said Bab, most emphatically: “it is seen at least for two miles off from the back of our church,

and looks remarkably pretty. The lodges, it must be owned, are a great addition—I think you can't have too many of them."

Woodby, forgetting his original idea in the all-engrossing subject of his lodges, which had unintentionally been grafted upon it by Aunt Barbara, proceeded in his usual manner to dilate and remark and exult thereupon; and he would have comprehended the double shields containing the Goold and the Woodby arms, had he not been stopped by the presence of Lord Demone, who, the moment he ventured to touch upon that point, attacked him with so much humour upon the new version which he had given to the motto before alluded to, and threw the whole thing into such utter ridicule, that Woodby never more ventured in his presence to say a word upon it.

And it was remarkable how strong an effect the approach to the subject by Mr. Woodby produced on all those who had heard him speak upon it before. Immediately symptoms of impatience broke out—the averted look, the shuffling feet, the suppressed yawn, all indicated the impending calamity: and, on this occasion, where the very walls of Ivycote were impregnated with Mr. Woodby's long stories, the result produced was a termination of the visit. Lord Demone, taking a last look at Mary, made his bow. Simpleton Sharp, who had been concerting a joke during the whole visit, at length unbosomed himself by saying, "The next coat I have, it shall be green, for then it will put me in mind of Ivycote." He waited to watch the result of this effort of his genius; but finding it had fallen to the ground, he followed his friend, after making many fair speeches, and was at length overtaken by Woodby, who would not allow Aunt Barbara to escape without explaining why it was not suitable, and why it was out of all architectural rule that there should be more than two lodges at any entrance, although sometimes people were mean enough to place only one, as Lord Thorofield for instance.

CHAPTER XIV.

The dullness of the country relieved by intelligence from the world of folly and dissipation.

BELVEDERE HALL, in due course of time, was cleared of its visitors. Lady Thomson's visit had passed off much to her satisfaction, although she had not been able to bring Anne Woodby's marriage to a happy conclusion with Lord Demone. Whether he had been smitten by the superior charms of Mary, or whether Anne still cherished a tender feeling for Captain Swaggle, or whether—which, perhaps, was most probable—Mr. Woodby was averse to coming down with a sum sufficiently alluring to the needy peer, it were useless at present to discuss; but true it is, Demone took his departure without making any proposal, and Lady Thomson returned to Cheltenham, whilst the Woodbys at proper time and season exhibited themselves in London and at the watering-places.

Belvedere Hall remained deserted during the winter and spring; but as the summer approached, all the anticipations of the fancy bazaar and ball which had been so long promised broke out again in the country, and the neighbourhood became anxious for the return of the wealthy owners of that mansion.

The inhabitants of Ivycote passed the winter months in their usual retirement, anticipating a happier summer than the preceding one, grateful to Providence for all the blessings which they enjoyed, and dispensing those blessings to the utmost of their power to their poorer neighbours. They too began to count the days when Belvedere Hall would again be inhabited, for they longed to have an opportunity to afford the gentle Mary some of those gaieties to which they thought she was entitled at her age, but in default of which, such was the excellence and rational cast of her nature, she neither repined nor expressed herself impatient. One morning in the beginning of March, whilst they were at breakfast, the postman delivered a letter directed to Aunt Barbara, bearing upon it the Brighton post-mark, and which was discovered to come from Mrs.

Woodby by the cramped writing on the address. She immediately read it out as follows:

“MY DEAR FRIEND,

“This is to hope that you are all well, that your winter cough has been mild, and that Mr. Abel is well of his weak chest, as we are at present, thank God. We have been enjoying the breezes here, as they call them, which at present are blowing a hurricane and smashing all our windows one after the other; which is a pity, since we see the king and queen from out of them every day, taking a drive in their coach-and-four and their outriders. We take our hats off and make curtsies to their majesties at least twenty times every day, which is a great privilege; and Mr. Woodby says it is right to show one's loyalty, and he thinks that he is likely to be a great favourite at court, for the king took his hat off to him; and who knows? he expects to get a title—to go down on his knees for a knight: but not a word of that, my dear friend, for that is a secret,—and so is what I'm going to tell you, for you must not let it out in the village, whatever you do. You must know, that every body knows that we are to have our fancy bazaar and ball in the summer; and we have been desired to get up something *nouvelle*, as we say in French, and not one of your humdrum things. Now, my girls and I are of opinion that we ought to draw out the charity-school boys and girls to make a show on the lawn when the company comes: but the thing is, what shall we do with them?—Mr. Dodd, a gentleman here, thinks the boys might all be dressed as sailors, and the girls as their wives: but that, you know, would be low, and some think improper. Now, we have agreed otherwise: Mr. Simpleton Sharp, who is here, has told us that there is nothing so genteel as Roman gods and goddesses; and we want you, please, to tell Mrs. Humphries the schoolmistress, that she is to be Juno or Venus, whichever she likes; and Tim Merriday the schoolmaster, he is to be Jupiter. The boys will be Cupids, and the girls Psyches: that, you know, is just in character. The boys might have wings tacked on to their jackets just behind their shoulders, each with a bow and arrow in hand; and there you have your Cupids. The girl's wings might be stitched on behind their ears on their caps; and there you have your Psyches. Mrs. Humphries, if she be Juno, may have a tiara and a half-moon on her head, and the

peacock close to her,—for that is the way Mr. Simpleton Sharp and the learned represent the queen of the gods: and Merridy, to look like Jupiter, should have a wig over his own hair, which, Mr. Simpleton Sharp says, are called ambrosial curls,—and he might carry a set of fire irons in his hand for his thunderbolts. He ought to have an eagle beside him; but for want of that let him get one of the largest turkey-cocks in the yard, for they do look something like an eagle, and then he would be complete.—Now pray, dear Miss Barbara, do help us. We can get the Cupid and Psyche's wings made up here at about fourpence a pair, and we will also get the tiara and half-moon; but let Merriday practise the boys and Mrs. Humphries the girls: they may walk in a row backwards and forwards every day on the lawn with the peacock and turkey-cock behind them, and be taught pretty manners, such as Cupids and Psyches no doubt have. But not a word of it in the village—pray mind that, for the whole thing is to be a surprise to the company. My daughters and Mr. Woodby send their love. So no more at present from your sincere friend,

“ANNE GOOLD WOODBY.

“P. S. Tell Merriday, please, that he may twist some flax into long curls, and so make a wig: or if he likes to be Vulcan instead of Jupiter, (for Vulcan, you know, was Venus's husband,—that is, if Mrs. Humphries chooses Venus instead,) he may; and then, instead of the fire-irons, he may carry a sledge-hammer,—for Vulcan, I am creditably informed, was a blacksmith.”

Inclosed within this letter was another from Miss Woodby to Aunt Fanny, which the reader will perhaps like to be laid before him, and which ran as follows:

“DEAR MISS FANNY,

“I write in bed, for I have just done dancing at a ball, and take this opportunity of writing a few lines to tell you how we are going on in this gay place, and to make your mouth water about this ball that we went to last night, at a place called the Ship,—although it was not a ship, you know, but a hotel. It was called the Master of Ceremonies' Ball, although there was no ceremony about it that I could see, for the people all crowded in one after the other

as if they did not care a farthing how they got in provided they got in first, and pushed each other about like so many sheep in a pen. It was very good fun, however, for all that; for mamma, in getting through a door, nearly had one of her sleeves dragged off; somebody trod upon papa's foot, which he did not like; and as for Ellen, she was lost full ten minutes before we could find her again. The room was full of marchionesses, duchesses, and great people, and one of those sort of ladies called a 'patroness' was there; but, la! you never saw such a dowdy thing in your life! She was nothing near so smart as Lady Thomson usually is; indeed, I was much finer than she was, for the matter of that: but Lady Thomson would have beat her and every other lady that I saw out and out again. And as for your marchionesses, they are poor creatures with about as much spirit in them as a mouse. There was one standing in the doorway, and I thought I had as much right to stand there as she had, for we all paid alike, so I pushed by her; when she turned round and said, 'I beg your pardon, I am afraid I am in your way,' and she let me pass without shoving me again: now isn't that mean-spirited of her? But oh, my dear friend, who do you think I saw in the crowd in full uniform?—but I won't tell you, although perhaps you may guess: all I can say is, that it was not Lord Demone, odious creature as he is,—but he certainly looked very handsome, that is the truth of it. He had let his hair grow right over his chin, and he had altogether such an air, that when we danced together all the room was looking at us,—and I am quite certain that the patroness I mentioned before was downright jealous of me. He told me that his regiment was doing duty here, and that he would certainly come and see us in his undress, which becomes him very much. You are, I dare say, dying to know who he is; but all I can say at present is, that his name begins with S. I wish I could invite him to our fancy ball, that is to be; but I am afraid of mamma, who wouldn't even allow poor Edward Manby to be invited—but papa insisted upon it, and so did Tom, and so she could not refuse. But I quite forgot to say what I principally wrote about; which is, that the stall that Ellen and I are to preside over at the bazaar is to be called the Beauty Stall; and as it is the fashion to think your niece, Miss Mary, handsome, mamma begs me to ask you to allow her to assist in selling: there will be Charlotte Pop-

kin in addition, who, you know, we are thinking of for Tom, and she will make up our party. And mamma says, if you will have the goodness to preside over the next stall, for ours will be full, you shall have the two other Miss Popkins for your partners. Pray write an answer to this; for when we can find time in this busy, rackety place, we can think of nothing else than our bazaar. With which I remain, my dear Miss Fanny,

“Your affectionate friend,

“ANNE WOODBY.

“P. S. Pray don't tell any body that we call our stall the Beauty Stall, because they would think us conceited, you know; which is a great fault. And, believe me, I asked for you, for I did not think you a bit too old, and you know you have been very handsome; but every body said it would spoil the look of our stall;—so, you know, it was none of my fault. I hope you are hard at work for us: indeed, our principal hope for things, and pincushions, and rugs, and pen-wipers, and so on, is from your house. We shall have the selling of Edward Manby's drawings—which is some comfort.”

The perusal of these letters, as may be imagined, gave a new turn to the monotony of life and ideas which existed at Ivycote, and produced a discussion upon their contents and upon their writers which afforded matter for subsequent conversation until the return of the Woodbys to Belvedere. Aunt Barbara, who was purely a matter-of-fact person, whose thoughts never extended beyond the cares of her own family and her own village, who was accustomed to look after the necessities of the poor in the true spirit of charity—that is, rationally, and without the excitement of false sentiment and mawkish sensibility,—was as much astonished by Mrs. Woodby's intention of turning charity-children into playthings, as she would have been averse to making them objects of romantic affection. She had never looked upon them in the mythological point of view in which they were now presented before her, much less could she ever have imagined it possible that the schoolmaster and mistress could ever have been turned into the representatives of Jupiter and Juno. She, therefore, upon the first blush of the question, very decidedly opposed herself to the proposed scheme, and, in her charac-

teristic mode of argument, exclaimed, "that it stood to reason, and she was sure that she was right; that if the boys once began to think themselves Cupids, and the girls Psyches, there would be an end to all discipline among them. The object of their education would thus be defeated; for," she contended, "how would it be possible to persuade Cupids to become carpenters and labouring men? and still more how difficult to turn Psyches into housemaids!"

Uncle Abel, on the other hand, who always pleaded on the good-natured side of the question endeavoured to divert his sister's opposition by saying, "that this circumstance of the fete, perhaps, would only occur once, and that the impression it would leave upon the children's mind could only be transient; whilst the relaxation which it would afford them, their parents, and the whole neighbourhood, would produce a wholesome feeling by drawing the rich and the poor more closely together, and thus establish mutual good-will. That the charity-boys could no more understand what was meant by their being Cupids than the girls by their being Psyches; and that as for Mrs. Humphries and Merriday, their authority would only be strengthened by being elevated to such high dignities."

Aunt Fanny took no share in the discussion, for her mind was entirely absorbed by the contents of Miss Woodby's postscript. It has frequently been remarked, that one of the most fatal gifts that can be given by Nature to woman is beauty, unless it be accompanied by a sound understanding. Poor Fanny had been endowed with the first, but the reader need not be informed that she was deficient in the second. She had been beautiful, she had been much admired, and ranked among the beauties of the county; her short-sighted mind never told her that such a gift was transient and would soon pass away; she had rejected many an offer of marriage, and here she was still Miss Fanny Allnutt, the rejected of the Miss Woodbys and their 'Beauty Stall.' Her first impulse on reading the offensive hint that she was old, was to be angry—very angry; but possessing, as she did, all the meekness, the kind-heartedness, and the forgiving disposition which were the characteristics of her name and family, her secondary feeling was to sit down mortified, it is true, but resigned. As she retired to her bed-room to meditate over the contents of the letter, she could not help taking one long, anxious, scrutinising look at her face and form in the looking-glass,

as if she were determined to try herself before that uncompromising judge. She first peered straight into her eyes—examined those tell-tale wrinkles at the corners, which, diverging into angular lines, were ruled with the precision of an almanack—and then inspected those circular pouches underneath, which contained the register of many a passing year. She found her nose firm and untouched: but as she proceeded to survey her mouth, she started such a covey of little crooked figures, zigzags, crosses and re-crosses, that she became alarmed, and she would willingly have imposed them upon herself as dimples, had they not been too numerous to connive at such a fraud. Her cheeks being streaked with colour and the enamel of her teeth still fresh, she became a little restored to good spirits by their appearance, and she was proceeding with a light heart to the inspection of her hair, when a grey lock, full of evil intentions protruded itself with so conclusive an evidence against her that she almost fainted at the sight. But still, not discouraged, taking a more distant survey of her *tout ensemble*, she found her figure still so good, that at length, with a deep-drawn sigh, she exclaimed, “I’m not so bad after all.” Still those fatal words ‘too old’ haunted her eyesight and her brain as if they had been stereotyped upon them, and she found her philosophy too weak to bear up against the obstinate truth. She continued fixed before her glass for some time, looking, and smiling, and smirking, as if she could recall from its very depths those years which had so soon gone by, and which had taken with them all that beauty, the recollection of which was now the subject of her misery. “At all events,” she at length exclaimed by way of soothing her mortified mind,—“At all events, I am better than either of the Miss Popkins—nobody shall say nay to that;” and then turning her glass back from her, she fled from her room and returned to the parlour.

CHAPTER XV.

In modern ethics, 'a fancy bazaar and ball' are added to the several gifts of charity.

It is the peculiar privilege of this species of writing to enjoy an entire command over time and space, whereby people and places are brought together and dispersed again as easily as a child puts together a geographical puzzle, and then breaks it up and packs it into its box. The Gould Woodby family, after having been absent from Belvedere Hall for about six months, returned to it again, renewed in their vanity by having mixed with the heartless world, exercised in envy by aspiring at the possession of things which they could not attain, and indulging in long draughts of hatred against persons at whose hands they had received mortifications. They resumed their position in the country with increased feelings of arrogance and higher ideas of their own importance; for in vulgar minds the reaction which takes place after a mortification is not towards humility, but towards the contrary, as *Fag* in the play, after having been reviled and pushed aside by his master, vents his spleen by kicking the errand-boy.

The day was now fast approaching upon which the long-talked-of fancy bazaar and ball were to take place, and Mrs. and the Miss Gould Woodby's had returned from Brighton and London, laden with all sorts of things fitted to promote the object of the festival. Their first step was to issue their cards of invitation—called, we believe, in stationers' language, elephant cards, on account of their great size,—on which was inscribed the usual formula of words for a ball, but which made a fancy dress an indispensable requisite to the acceptance of the invitation. These cards were accompanied by tickets of admission to the bazaar, which served as hints that there was charity as well as amusement contemplated in the invitation. They were sent far and wide all over the country, and great were the expectations raised. Musicians, cooks and confectioners, and all the concomitants of a fête, were to come from appropriate distances in order to enhance its

merit and the self-devotion of those who gave it; and the ingenuity of every tailor and milliner around was taxed to invent dresses and ornamental costumes.

The bazaar was to take place on the lawn which surrounded the house; and here tents of various sizes and denominations were pitched, in which the wares were to be displayed. We will not pause to describe the various difficulties which took place during the progress of the arrangements, principally produced by the little experience which the givers of the entertainment had acquired in such matters; for they had read of such things in newspapers, but had never seen them practised. Mrs. Woodby had her ideas, Mr. Woodby his, and young ladies theirs. Mrs. Woodby's ideas of "doing the thing handsome" were at variance with those of her daughters, and in some measure with those of her husband, but they all agreed in the one resolution, "that the thing was to be done handsomely." This discordance produced a course of much wrangling and discussion. What the mother deemed sufficiently good, the daughters disapproved; and the mezzo-termine proposed by the father was pronounced vulgar. The young ladies longed for the advice of Lady Thomson, whose word on such occasions was with them law; but the father and mother, who dreaded the expense which she would have authorised, were secretly pleased at her absence.

Anne and Ellen had heard enough upon the subject of giving parties during their attempts at fashionable talk at Brighton, with the Captain Swaggles and Captain Bobadils of their acquaintance, to impress them with the conviction that every sort of costly fare, called luxuries of the season, was as positively necessary to a ball as fiddles. A hot disquisition upon wine, led to a controversy upon ices, which branched out into a debate upon jellies, soups, and French pasties, and continued upon the subjects of decorations and illuminations, until both Mr. and Mrs. Woodby began to groan under the torment which they had inflicted upon themselves, and bemoaned their hard fate that they should ever have been betrayed into committing so great a folly as giving a great ball. But the principal controversy was upon the subject of the invitations. Some opined for one person, others for another; some were to be rejected for one foolish reason, others to be invited for one equally absurd. The Talkingtons of

Chute House were not to be invited, because they had been heard to say that Mr. Woodby's new lodges were like two sentry-boxes;—then the Evelyngs of Adamston were to be got at and invited because they were a more ancient family than the Thorofields, as a matter of spite to rivals in riches. The Algoods of Badington were rejected upon their principles, which did not approve of fancy bazars, and charity which did not stand upon some stronger basis than the “light fantastic toe;” whilst the Alcocks of Henbury were asked because the Miss Alcocks could dance the fashionable dances, the objects of the charity were frequently lost sight of in the excitement produced by the ball; whilst the interests of the ball were insidiously advocated as those of the charity. In the meanwhile, however, the quantity of packages inclosing the fruits of the labour of the charitable neighbourhood was immense. The results of the examination were curious and worthy of historical record, as illustrative of national taste and character in the nineteenth century. The principal articles produced consisted of pin-cushions, pen-wipers, kettle-holders, rugs of various sizes, carpet-shoes, and embroidered bags, all characteristic of neatness and snugness. Then as specimens of vanity were produced embroidery in its various shapes, articles of dress, and fripperies of all sorts. The arts were represented by little abortive drawings in crayons and water-colour, with the exception of Edward Manby's productions.—Half-a-dozen scratches by the talented Miss Jenkins were put down at a great price, because being unintelligible, they were called spirited; and that amiable young man Mr. Simpson had been prevailed upon to bestow some of his inimitable sketches from nature, in one of which a stick resting against a barn-door had been portrayed with wonderful fidelity,—and they were also called drawings of great price. But of all those who had laboured in the cause of charity, the inhabitants of Ivycote shone conspicuous: they had employed themselves in manufacturing things really useful, (Aunt Fanny excepted, who would be genteel) and their donation was a blessing to the poor. Aunt Barbara had taken the flannel department under her peculiar management, whence issued petticoats and waist-coats in abundance; whilst Mary had made caps for the children, and gowns for the old women. To form a catalogue of the various things sent to be disposed of, would require a

larger portion of our paper than we are willing to bestow; therefore we beg the reader to bear in mind that, with some exceptions, if he can think of any one thing more useless and less called for in the common affairs of life than another, he would have been sure to find it there.

A day before the fête took place, we are happy to be able to announce the arrival of Lady Thomson, whose advice upon the general arrangement had been looked upon as indispensable, and who was expected to arrive from Cheltenham with some exquisite specimens of her work. We will suppress all her criticisms, the numerous changes which she insisted upon making, and the tyranny which she exercised in advising Mrs. Woodby to act against her own plans, and proceed at once to the opening of certain baskets in which were contained those exquisite nominal specimens of her own work. She exhibited some very handsome articles of embroidery, which she took care to say were her own, but of which in truth she had merely worked a few stitches; after they had been properly admired, she drew forth a parcel, and prefacing its appearance with a speech from Lord Demone, who professed himself sorry at his inability to attend, she added that he had sent his present to be consecrated to the interests of the charity. Every one was anxious to inspect it; but when it was broken open, mortification was expressed in all sorts of deprecating speeches.

“La!” said Mrs. Woodby; “it is nothing but a set of newspapers!”

“What can he send us the ‘Fashionable Advertiser’ for?” said Anne.

“It is one of his jokes, I suppose,” said Mr. Woodby; “but he is a poor hand at that, after all!”

Lady Thomson reddened with indignation when she heard these words. “I tell you what,” she said; “this newspaper, as you call it, will make the fortune of your bazaar. If your bumpkins have no relish for wit, I can’t give it to them; but if they have a spark of it, they will be quarrelling to buy these sheets at any price.”

“Will they indeed?” said Mrs. Woodby: “do, pray, let us read it.”

“Let me tell you,” continued Lady Thomson, “that you are not half sufficiently aware of Lord Demone’s merits. It’s a downright sin not to laugh at every thing he says; and if you have the least pretension to fashion, you ought

to be on the broad grin if you even knew him to be in the county: how much more, then, if he were in the room!"

"Do, pray, let us read," reiterated Mrs. Woodby, seconded by her daughter. Upon which Lady Thomson, assisted by Anne and Ellen, undertook to unfold its contents, and read as follows; whilst Mr. and Mrs. Woodby, in spite of their better inclination, preserved a gravity of aspect which showed how totally the powers of sarcasm were thrown away upon them.

THE FASHIONABLE ADVERTISER OR COURT REPOSITORY.

[No. 1.

LONDON, APRIL 1, 1835.

Price 5s.]

The Opera.—Samuel Shift has the honour to inform the nobility and gentry, and the public at large, that this splendid establishment will open for the ensuing season with an *éclat* unequalled in former years; and that, in addition to the first talent in Europe, he has procured at great expense the first singer from the Court of the Emperor of China, and some of the most powerful bass voices ever heard from Patagonia. He is happy to be able to announce the arrival of the celebrated howling dervishes from Constantinople, who will perform their grand fanatical choruses for the first time in Christendom, and that he has engaged that famous professor of the Turkish drum, *Alladin*, whose solos on that instrument are unrivalled.

He has however determined to devote one night of the week to representations adapted to the tastes of those who resort to the metropolis from the country in order to enjoy the pleasures of the season; and to that effect the Italian artists have kindly undertaken to devote their powers to singing the most popular English songs and ballads, and other portions of our national music; and in the ballet, out of regard to the feelings of the timid and unpractised, the lady performers have been prevailed upon to dance in flannel, and the gentlemen in drab cloth trousers and gaiters.—Particulars at the Office, and of all Booksellers of the United Kingdom.

Wanted, a Footman.—He must be a man of active ha-

bits; for in addition to his usual business he will be required to run about with notes all day and sit up all night, and he must know the Court Guide by heart.—Apply at No. 1, Gower-street.

Wanted, a Pair of Job Horses.—They must be prime Jobs, that know their work well. They are wanted for light work about town, to start after breakfast with a steady, well-regulated family, to go the usual fashionable rounds as practised on coming from the country; that is, to the Exhibition at Somerset-house, the Panorama in Leicester-square, the Tunnel at Rotherhithe, the India Docks, the Diorama in Regent's Park, before luncheon: then to the rehearsal of Ancient Music, and Howell and James's, and all the principal shops before the Park; then the Park till dinner; to be ready and fresh at nine o'clock to go to the Opera, then to three parties at least, and to finish with the usual ball, so as to be back at home by sun-rise. Inquire of A. Z. at Long's.

Found on a Sofa at Almack's.—A Reticule, enclosing a lady's reputation. All the letters and notes have been carefully read and examined, and their contents, containing the most interesting disclosures, will be most conscientiously divulged. Any body sending for the same No. 1, Squib's Alley, letters post paid, with proper testimonials, will be attended to.

Chaperons.—Several old well-seasoned Chaperons on hire. They are warranted to sit all night in one place without stirring—of course a higher rate of pay will be expected for those who can sleep standing. A few extra ones for water-parties may be had, who are not sick in a boat, and who can eat drumsticks.—Apply No. 70, Monmouth-street.

Charades.—The elegant Mrs. X being about to open her house with a course of humorous Charades, a premium is here offered for genuine puns, and for some good words with triplicate meanings. It is requested that those who are invited to this refined amusement will come with a determination to laugh.

Amateur Concert.—Mrs. Crotchet will give her first

Concert to-morrow night. Those who come for talking's sake are requested to wait for the choruses and the crashes: they are particularly desired to respect the solos.

Mr. Jeerall, Professor of Undefined Asseverations, commonly known under the name of *White Lies*, has the honour to inform the fashionable world, that having made the most profound study of his art, he is enabled successfully to adapt it to all the various purposes of life. Truth, philosophically speaking, being but a series of relative assertions, he can adapt his mode of treating it to the most tender consciences, so as to enable its owners to pass through the world with comfort to themselves, acquiring the respect and esteem of others. He has exalted the art of writing notes, from the simplest to the most abstruse subjects to the rank of a science. He will write a note of invitation with so much skill, that whether it be intended to prevent acceptance, or the contrary, he secures a certain result. He furnishes unexceptionable excuses for all the various occasions and difficulties incident to fashionable life, particularly when some pleasure greater than one accepted has happened to supervene.

He keeps a morning academy for footmen and porters, teaching them all the most approved methods of denying their masters and mistresses, giving them tact in distinguishing persons—the bore from the agreeable man, the dun from the rich uncle, and the country cousin from the park beau. In short, he requests only to be tried, and he will warrant himself as being the most useful of professors, teaching the most useful of arts, and superior to all others for advancement in the world. Direct Flam-street, opposite the Lying-in-Hospital.

Provident Love Insurance Office.

The object of this Society being new, we are sure it will powerfully attract the attention of the thinking public. It insures against Love, and its ill effects upon the human frame.

Premiums will depend upon the constitution, character, and age of the person insuring.

To those who bring certificates of ill-temper, a great abatement of premium is made. The ugly and old may insure literally for nothing.

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WANT PLACES.

As companion to a Lady.—A lady of undoubted capabilities for swallowing. Warranted to have the largest gullet in England. Never contradicts.—Is fond of salt soup.

As Coachman.—A gentleman, educated at college. Can have undeniable recommendations from his last place. Would prefer driving a Brighton coach. Pays for all fractures of limbs,—has never upset more than two coaches in his life. Inquire at Whippy the Saddler's.

As Treasurer.—A gentleman, who has run through two fortunes, would wish to become treasurer to some charity, feeling himself now to understand the value of money.

As Tutor.—A gentleman, brought up at a public school, and a graduate at one of the Universities, wishes to undertake the charge of one or two, or more pupils. Is a thorough professor of slang in all its branches; teaches the art of betting, with an entire knowledge of calculating the odds; is well versed in horse-flesh; and being a professed sportsman, is admirably calculated 'to teach the young idea how to shoot.' Smokes, and is safe at the gambling-table.

Wanted a Prime Bore.—The advertiser being afflicted with insomnolency, having in vain tried hop-pillows, essence of salad, laudanum, and crude opium, is anxious to try the effects of a bore. He must be a thorough bore; relating stories which never end, with all the proper digressions, repetitions, and want of point, with due monotony of voice and unchangeableness of aspect. He must

be thorough master of the histories of elections, parish meetings, vestry and grand jury meetings; able to discuss the poor-law question, and not unskilled in detailing all the vicissitudes of a fox-hunt. Apply to X. Y., next door to the White Horse Cellar, Piccadilly.

NEW WORKS JUST READY.

The Art of Dancing without an Ear. Cuts.
Specimens of Table Talk, or How to be Witty without Wit. By Bell Clapper, Esq.

“Full of novel ideas.”—*Tatler*.

Travels in the Back Settlements of London; with a topographical account of Tavistock and Torrington Squares. By E. Boyle, Esq., E.C.G. Author of Court Guide, &c.

“Great research—uncommon enterprise.”—*Examiner*.

Tales of a Cut-throat, 3 vols. By the Author of Kill Him and Eat Him.

“Great feeling and pathos.”—*Spectator*.

My neighbour's Wife; a Novel. 3 vols. By the Author of Paul Pry.

“A striking story—full of curious incidents—deep passion—some capital hints.”—*Domestic Review*.

To Novel Writers.—For sale, a large assortment of Skeleton Novels, upon all subjects, from the gossipy fashionable to the coarsely vulgar. Also several very interesting Plots to be disposed of, warranted possible; one, which may be had at an extra price, warranted probable. Inquire at the Manufactory, New Road.

“Well, I declare!” said Mrs. Woodby, after it had been read, having unsuccessfully tried to laugh during the operation; “I dare say it is very clever, but it is only a newspaper after all—it is just what one reads every day in the advertisements, and I think that Mr. Jeerall must be a very useful man—I should like to get some lessons myself about writing notes.”

“I dare say papa could afford us a box at the Opera,” said Anne, “and I dare say Lord Demone could say a word for us to Mr. Shift,—now wouldn't he, Lady Thomson?”

“I wish,” thought Ellen, “that I could get one of those plots for a novel: its only that which I want to enable me to write one.”

“That Love Insurance Office,” exclaimed Mr. Woodby, “appears but a poor concern—that sort of thing will never

do. I dare say it is only a hoax—I never heard of one of the directors' names before."

"What a pack of fools!" sighed out Lady Thomson in an under breath.

CHAPTER XVI.

Showing how a thing good in itself may be rendered utterly ridiculous.

AT length the day came, and the morning dawned with great beauty at Belvedere Hall. The bells of the village church rang a merry peal; all the villagers were dressed in their best clothes; and almost before the sun had risen, the children of the charity school were arrayed in their fancy costume preparatory to being exhibited. Every thing had been arranged for the sale on the day before, and at noon the iron gates which connected Mr. Woodby's lodges were thrown open to receive the visitors. About that time equipages of all denominations began to drop in; and before two o'clock had struck, the lawn was thronged by a very considerable number of people. The great and the wealthy came in state—all made the best display which their means could afford; and we need not add, that on such an occasion as this, the gold-laced hat and button-holes had not been forgotten, when honest Brown appeared driving the pony-chaise in which the good family from Ivycote made its appearance.

Although the lawn which surrounded the house was flat, and although the grounds presented but little picturesque beauty, yet still, wherever there is sunshine and verdure, and trees, and an assemblage dressed in brilliant colours, more is not wanting to produce a pleasing and cheerful picture. The white tents pitched under the trees contrasting with the various tints of green, and with the beds of flowers, which no cockneyism could rob of their rich and gorgeous colouring, added greatly to the general effect. The numbers of people constantly flocking around the stalls gave the whole scene a character of animation without which no fête can succeed; and when Mrs. Gould Woodby was con-

gratulated upon the beauty of the weather, which she took as a personal compliment, and the excellent management displayed in her arrangements, her head was so turned with delight, that she became almost independent of the question which she had so long allowed to tyrannise over her, namely, "What will Lady Thomson think?"

Lady Thomson, with protection in her looks and with satin over her substantial person, was one of the most conspicuous among the company, and took upon herself to do the honours, seeing that the whole thing wore every appearance of being successful. Aunt Barbara's new gray gown and Fanny's cherry colour again did good service, and Mary's beauty was the theme of every tongue. The Miss Woodbys looked divine in dresses exactly similar; whilst the Miss Popkins did credit by their rich attire to the wealth of which they were the heiresses. The Thorofields, the Evelyns, the Algoods, the Alcocks, and a hundred others too numerous to mention, all were there, and all beaming with the best intentions to be gay and charitable.

Mrs. Woodby was waiting with anxious expectation for the moment when her first theatrical flourish should be displayed by the appearance of the charity children, and had deferred the striking up of a certain band of music collected on the occasion until that event should occur. It appears, however, that some demur had taken place among the soberer part of the parish upon the characters allotted to the children, and to their leaders, the schoolmaster and mistress, and which indeed had been disseminated by those two personages themselves. It was said to be objectionable that they should personify Heathens, when the object of their appearance was to promote a deed of Christian charity. Therefore, instead of Cupids and Psyches, the children were turned into fairies; whilst Mrs. Humphries, who was well read in history, chose to appear as Queen Elizabeth; and Merriday, who passed for a theologian, determined to call himself Solomon. This matter being settled to their hearts' content, the procession set off from the village school amid the shouts and huzzas of the joyous boys and girls; and just as Mrs. Woodby began to despair of their appearing at all, they made their entrance on the lawn, when the music struck up and every one was gathered together to witness the scene.

This part of the entertainment had been intended by way of a surprise by Mrs. Woodby and her daughters;

and as her husband had not been made a party to it, he stood by with inquiring looks, eager to receive an explanation for this unlooked-for display. She winked and shook her head, and appeared vastly pleased with her own ingenuity; when she, in her turn, was surprised upon perceiving Merriday step forward with the greatest gravity in front of the procession, and taking from his pocket a sheet of paper, he deliberately unfolded it, and then, with a loud sing-song voice, read as follows:—

THE SCHOOLMASTER'S SONG.

Ye gentlemen and ladies all,
For such indeed you are,
Come listen to my humble call
And flock to our bazaar.

I sing of him who is a man,
And Woodby is the name;
A better show me if you can,
Or one of brighter fame.

And Mrs. Woodby, too, for she
Is such another woman;
She is the wedded wife of he,
And some thing more than human.

For Mr. Woodby he thinks right
When others they think wrong;
To build a lodge is his delight,
And make it extra strong.

Then Mrs. Woodby tends a farm
Where poultry lay their eggs;
She keeps the cow-boys nice and warm,—
They hang their hats on pegs.

More wealth he has than all the East;
He knows what makes a groat—
That two and two make four at least,
And nought from nought is nought.

Then Mrs. Woodby she is Goold,
If ever gold there be;
King Charles it was, so we are told,
Gave out her pedigree.

And since they are so conjugal,
We will them conjugate,
And teach the odds 'twixt will and shall,
Then leave them to their fate.

He's would be, could be, should be, he ;
 For what more can I say ?
 She' better than she should be, she ;
 So now huzza ! huzza ! huzza !

The last line was repeated over and over again by the children in loud plaudits, having been so tutored by their master, until the air rang with their cries ; and the song was professed to be so much admired by the company, who were happy to pay a compliment to the host and hostess, that it was encored with universal applause. Mr. Woodby took the compliment paid to him and his wife with becoming modesty, his joy at thus being an object of general interest peeping out through the medium of certain struts, complacent looks over his person, and little exulting ejaculations which he could not restrain. As for Mrs. Woodby, she was mad with delight, and went bustling about seeking for compliments, seeing how well her scheme had taken : but at length meeting Lady Thomson, from whom she expected a burst of approbation, what was her dismay when she heard her exclaim, "Are ye all turned mad ? — what could possess you to get up this trumpery ? Why, you'll make yourselves the laughing-stock of half the kingdom !"

"What do you mean ?" said Mrs. Woodby, the flush of angry mortification rising into her face and making her look any thing but an angel of meekness. "Why, the Dodds of Dandelion did it—so Mrs. Dodd told me at Brighton, and it answered very well, and I am sure ours has answered very well too."

"Who are the Dodds of Dandelion, I should like to know ?" said Lady Thomson with contempt in her accent. "It might do very well for such low persons as they are, no doubt ; but really, if you have pretensions to life, you ought to know how to live."

"Know how to live !" said Mrs. Woodby, taking up her words in anger. "If the Dodds don't know how to live, you'll allow at least that Mr. Simpleton Sharp knows how to live ; and he it was who put me up to having Roman gods and goddesses, with Jupiter and Juno, and so on ; although they forgot the best of it, which was the peacock and the turkey-cock."

"Forgot what ?" said Lady Thompson.

"Here, come here," cried out Mrs. Woodby to Merriday, who stood at some distance full of smiles and self-satisfaction at the success which had accompanied his effusion,—

“here explain to Lady Thomson all about it, and tell me where you got that song, for I never heard a word upon the subject.”

“Why, you see, your ladyship,” said Merriday, “I came out as Solomon; and Mrs. Humphries, she was the immortal Queen Bess.”

“How?” said Mrs. Woodby in utter surprise: “Solomon! did not I send my orders that you was to be Jupiter, and she Juno?”

“Yes, ma’am, so we was at first; but so please you, when we were sitting out this morning, Mr. Simkins the clerk, and Mr. Cruikshank too, they said it warn’t right in us to be Heathens, when all was doing for Christian charity’s sake; so, you see, we changed: the children all became fairies; and Mrs. Humphries, she chose Queen Bess; and I, (for I admire the character,) I was Solomon.”

“My goodness me!” exclaimed Mrs. Woodby: “well, I’m not surprised at your thinking it vulgar now,” turning to Lady Thomson. “Only conceive that they should have dared to change, all on account of Simkins’ objection! I’ll give it to Simkins for this! Mr. Simpleton Sharp, I, and the girls, made it out so clever, that nothing could be better than the manner in which we settled it: but really to get Solomon and Queen Bess for Jupiter and Juno, it is too bad! besides having neither Cupids nor *Fiskies*, (for so she pronounced Psyche,) which even you will allow to be genteel.”

“I disapprove of the whole thing,” said Lady Thomson; “it will cast a ridicule upon what would otherwise have been very good and well managed. And then that foolish song!—what could possess him to write that song?”

“Please your ladyship,” said Merriday, “it is all my own composing; and I thought, as Solomon did sing a song, I might as well sing this, and then it would be all in character: and so I hope no offence—for we expected it would be a surprise.”

“A surprise it was with a vengeance!” said Lady Thomson, turning on her heel with a look of pity, shrugging up her shoulders at the same time; whilst her friend, glad to have found an excuse for any blame that might accrue to her, resumed her active duties, and busied herself in furthering the objects of the day’s meeting.

In the mean while, the bazaar was prospering with all the zeal and liberality usually displayed on such occasions. The “Beauty Stall,” so called, was established in the most

conspicuous tent, ornamented by pink draperies, and spread over with long tables or counters on which were displayed the numerous and heterogeneous wares already alluded to. Here presided the two Miss Woodbys, the youngest Miss Popkin, and Mary Allnutt. Next to it was situated, that over which the elder Popkins and Aunt Fanny presided; and a third was superintended by some other ladies whose names it would be superfluous to mention.

The despotism exercised by the venders over their customers in demanding the most exorbitant prices, particularly by those privileged tyrants in the Beauty Stall, was only to be equalled by the submission with which that despotism was admitted: pincushions sold for prices greater than they might have fetched at the first invention of pins; a pair of scissors were prized as much as they would be in the most distant parts of the New World; and one of Edward Manby's drawings was paid for at the price of a sketch of Michael Angelo's. The lovely Mary got so animated in the excess of her zeal, and her beauty was so much heightened by the little arts which she put forth to entice the gold from the purses of her customers, that her winnings alone, it was said, were sufficient to raise the front of the future school-house. Those who only came to gaze at her beauty remained to buy her wares; and whilst they delivered their money, gave up their hearts also. She was utterly unconscious of being the cause of more attraction than her associates: her total want of vanity, her simplicity of manner, and her excited eagerness, were more interesting than even her extraordinary beauty. But the others exhibited a different conduct: they looked upon the present opportunity as one eminently adapted to show off their charms, and they did not lose it. Miss Woodby and Miss Popkin engaged in deep flirtations with every young gentleman who approached their market, and threw as many airs and graces into their speech, looks and attitudes as would have done credit to the most finished practitioners behind a real counter.

Ellen—the sentimental Ellen, alone appeared abstracted and pre-occupied. She was not heartily engaged in her work; but her eyes were ever and anon turned towards the avenues leading from the entrance of the grounds, as if she expected some one to arrive. When she was asked the price of an article, she could scarcely give an answer: her mind seemed far removed from such objects—a demand for Edward Manby's sketches alone brought her mind back

to her business, and then she asked prices so exorbitant, that could any one have dived into her thoughts, he would have discovered that the value which she placed upon the sketches was only a token of the love she felt for the artist. At length, of a sudden, her pale face reddening to the very roots of her hair, as if she had seen an apparition, she exclaimed to her sister, "Goodness, Anne! there he is!—don't you see him?"

"Whom do you mean?" said Anne, not in the least disturbed, and continuing to tumble over pin-cushions, pen-wipers, and housewives in search of a comb that had fallen from her thickly-complicated tresses.

"Why, Tom, to be sure," said Ellen.

"So he is!" exclaimed Anne; "and Edward Manby with him. Better late than never! They are so monstrous proud, those Cantabs, that they think to do us a great honour in coming thus far to see us."

Upon hearing this, both Charlotte Popkin and Mary looked up; whilst Ellen, feigning a natural surprise, exclaimed, "Oh yes, it is Edward: I thought they never would come!"

The young gentlemen in question, who were then gradually making their approach, were as dissimilar in person, character, and pursuits, as two individuals composed of flesh and blood could well be. Tom Woodby was a short, coarse, insignificant looking young man, who was always endeavouring to inflate himself into consequence, looking up with fierceness into the faces of tall men as if he would say, "I am as good as you!" and eyeing little men with a downward aspect, implying "I am taller than you!" He was full of conceit, vulgar-minded and headstrong. His future good prospects were ever before his eyes, and this conviction gave him a consequential air which he accompanied with certain gestures of pretension agreeing ill with his looks.—Edward Manby, on the contrary, was a youth of peculiarly prepossessing appearance, enlivened by great sprightliness. There was a soft, placid, and benevolent expression in his face which made it an agreeable object to look at: he was frank without being forward, humble without servility, and full of natural grace without the least affectation. The habitual cast of his features was contemplative and grave; and as he was rather more taciturn than loquacious, upon first acquaintance he wore an appearance of reserve, which, however, entirely vanished when he began to talk. Every one who knew him liked him: owing to an habitual deference of manner he

was peculiarly apt to captivate the confidence of women, because he thus raised them in their own estimation.

Having reached the front of the tent from whence they had at first been perceived, and having made all the proper speeches of recognition, accompanied by the usual demonstrations of satisfaction, we must defer to our next chapter the description of a few of the effects which their arrival produced.

CHAPTER XVII.

The country ball. First symptoms of the tender passion.

We believe that the coincidence of the affections called "love at first sight" is almost unknown in England at the present day—at least among the upper ranks of society. It may perhaps occasionally be found to take place where handsome youths rarely meet comely maidens, and, with hearts mature for the intrusion of the tender passion, suddenly encounter other hearts all prepared to receive the soft impression, and thus love and pine, and become disordered at the recollection of what has appeared to them the most divine and bewitching of beings. But as society is now constituted, where beautiful faces and engaging persons are so common that it is almost a distinction to be ugly,—where the tender-hearted Corydon meets the lovely Phyllis—not in the sequestered vale, by the borders of a murmuring brook, nor under the umbrageous wood; but in the crowded assembly, in the swarming public walk, where he meets her rivalled and surpassed in beauty and in charms by a hundred other Phillises; under such circumstances it is almost impossible that so quick an exchange can take place as to establish a passion after a few preliminary glances.

The two young men were both at the same moment struck with the extraordinary beauty and grace of Mary. The presumptuous Tom, who looked upon every thing in his father's house as exclusively his own, unobservant of Charlotte Popkin, who, he knew, had been brought there purposely for the promotion of a family scheme, at once addressed himself to the retiring Mary, as if he were secure of achieving a conquest upon his first address. He approached her in a sort of easy picktooth manner, looked at her with effrontery, spoke to her in a tone of familiar acquaintance, and then, by way of exhibiting his importance,

requested Manby to go and seek out his father and mother in order to inform them of his arrival. Mary, with that quickness of perception which characterises woman, had at one glance recognised in Tom's companion him whom she had heard so constantly eulogised and admired, and an involuntary suffusion had overspread her face, for which she could give to herself no good reason : but when she heard young Woodby's speech and observed his arrogant manner, she was at once restored to her composure, and asserted a dignity which to that moment she was ignorant of being inherent in her nature.

Manby, in the mean while, had stood aloof, scarcely heeding the more than cordial welcome with which he was received by the Miss Woodbys in the absorbing interest which Mary's beauty and appearance had already produced upon him. Nothing that he ever read in poetry, no image that had ever offered itself to his imagination, had ever come up to what he now saw before him. He gazed in silence upon that downcast look of modesty—that bloom and freshness of complexion—that symmetry of form, and was filled with that enchantment which seemed spread over every thing that surrounded her, until he was ashamed of his astonishment and embarrassed at his own awkwardness. Young Woodby's words broke the spell by which he was bound ; and totally heedless of the offensive manner in which those words were expressed, he hastened to perform his errand.

“How can you treat Edward in that manner?” said Ellen to her brother, with anger in her look : “he is not your servant.”

“Why, what's the matter now?” said Tom, apparently nettled. “Ned is a good sort of fellow, and would go to the d—l to please me. My servant indeed !—who said he was ?”

These words were scarcely uttered, before Mrs. Woodby, escorted by her husband and followed by Manby, appeared in search of her son, whom she greeted with reproaches for having arrived so late, and immediately dragged him away to present him to their several friends. Her form of introduction to her intimates was generally after this wise : “My son Tom, 'please.” To those who were entitled to more consideration, she made use of a little more involution : “allow me to 'troduce our eldest.” Upon every one of which occasions, the youth made certain contortions commonly called bows, and paraded his insignificant person, apparently proud of the gifts which Nature had bestowed upon him.

Manby, in the mean while, was passed over totally unheeded: there were no introductions for him. Mr. Woodby alone said, "Ah, Ned, how are you?" whilst his wife, full of fears lest he should be too much beloved by her daughters, and filled with a secret conviction of his superiority over her son, lost no opportunity of slighting him. Lady Thomson, who really admired, and who would have found pleasure in protecting him, had she esteemed him to be the 'genteel thing,' thought him too dangerous a person to turn loose among young ladies who were too romantic to calculate consequences, and therefore seldom bestowed upon him the light of her countenance. Abel Allnutt alone, who remarked how much he was neglected, and who was forcibly drawn towards him by the prepossessing beauty of his countenance and the modest manliness of his demeanour, went up to Mr. Woodby and asked that he might make his acquaintance. "You'll find Ned a clever fellow," said Woodby; "but he is too poor and too proud to make his way in the world." Upon which the introduction was made: and perhaps no intimacy was ever so soon formed as that which took place between these two men; for there is a freemasonry among good and generous natures which acts, perhaps, with greater force than with sympathies of any other description. Although incased in an humble and unpromising exterior, Manby soon discovered the excellence of Abel's mind: whilst Abel, accustomed to meet with little other than vulgar and worldly people in the confined circle in which he moved, was delighted to find in Manby sentiments so congenial to his own. Perhaps, on the part of Manby, the desire of becoming acquainted with Abel was more interested than contrariwise; because, although we do not pretend to assert that this was a case of love at first sight, yet true it is that Manby had been so much struck by Mary's beauty and appearance, that the circumstance, which he soon discovered, of Abel being Mary's uncle, very materially enhanced his desire of making himself agreeable to him.

Once having become acquainted with Abel, he very soon after was made known to the other members of his family. Aunt Barbara, without taking into consideration what might be his fortune, connexions, or future prospects, or in the least reverting to that chain of consequences which, like deductions in mathematics, are so sure to run through the minds of mothers and aunts, when

young men are introduced to their daughters or nieces, received him with cordiality, and soon asked him to visit them at Ivycote. Aunt Fanny sighed for those pastimes when with a look she would have ensured a conquest over so handsome a youth, and still hoped that even on that very night she might secure him for a partner in the dance (for she danced still,) and therefore her reception of him was more than flattering. As for Mary, we have already described the effect which his first appearance had made upon her. We do not pretend to say, that, in this instance too, love at first sight was exemplified; but in truth it is in vain to deny that the foundation of the tender passion had long lain in her breast, although there existed in her mind several counteracting influences to prevent the rapid growth of the feeling. Ellen was standing near her when Manby was presented to Mary; she watched Manby's looks and actions with the eye of a lynx, and the apprehension that she had always laboured under, (like the forewarning which so frequently precedes a disaster,) that Mary would be her rival, made her alive to the smallest interchange of words or looks that took place between them. What occurred on this occasion passed off like most introductions made between taciturn young men to shy young women: the young man stammered out a few incoherent monosyllables, and the young lady said nothing.

We come now to the moment when the ball was about to take the place of the morning's amusement. The produce of the sales had realized the utmost expectations of the promoters of the charity, and every thing seemed propitious to the intended result, that Mr. and Mrs. Goold Woodby's name should go down to posterity on the tabular front of a new school-house. Between the termination of the bazaar and the beginning of the ball, the principal talk was of the comparative earnings of the different stalls: the Beauties had made so much havoc in the purses as well as in the hearts of the company, that their receipts had been out and out the most considerable. Lady Thomson had so ingeniously contrived to make every one believe that they were not only the promoters of wit, but wits themselves, that she sold all the 'Fashionable Advertisers' at unheard-of prices. Every body likes to be in the fashion and therefore every body bought a copy: but it was amusing to observe how few discovered where the point of the humour lay, and how many went about

exclaiming, "How good! what excellent fun!" who were only sufficiently sentient to catch the sympathy of a horse-laugh without having discovered how that convulsion had been produced.

It will be easily conceded that wherever the mind is not interested, every amusement must end by becoming vapid and fatiguing. The success of a masquerade depends upon the wit and ingenuity of those who support the characters they have adopted; but what possible amusement can emanate, after the eye has once been sated, from a collection of fine dresses? On the occasion before us, whatever gaiety might have been forthcoming, such as is usual when the body is left to its own natural impulse in dance and mirth, here became constrained by the ponderous effect of fine dresses. Mrs. Woodby appeared in crimson velvet as Mary Queen of Scots, with a close cap of the same material, which fitting tight to her head, threw out the broad orb of her face into prominent relief, whilst the border of pearls with which it was encircled, sweeping in an easy curve on her forehead, was terminated in the middle by a large oval-like pearl, which acted throughout the evening as a pendulum over her nose. Her daughters came forward with the pretensions of vestal virgins, wearing long floating draperies of the lightest muslin pendent from the back of their heads; but, unsatisfied with the simplicity of plain white, they chose to adorn their persons with the gorgeous colourings of sultanas: thus were neither simple nor magnificent. Mr. Woodby personified the Great Mogul in a turban and feather; but he was very much put out throughout the entertainment because some one asked him with great *naïveté*, whether he had not dressed after the figure-head of the East India Company's ship the Akbar. His son enacted Sir Charles Grandison. Lady Thomson sparkled in a tiara of gold and amethysts, intending to look like Pasta, but calling herself Cleopatra, with a train of white satin, and round-toed sandals of the same, whilst a long viper-like bracelet wound up her plump arm.—As for the Allnutts, their dresses were quite in keeping with their character. Aunt Bab, by way of fancy, tied the ribands of her cap behind instead of before. Fanny ingeniously had contrived a dress of many colours from the stores of her wardrobe, and thus at a small expense was fine and flaunting; whilst Mary, with the addition of a few flowers and a few extra ribands, composed a cos-

tume which, by its bewitching simplicity, was more attractive than those of the most gorgeous, amongst whom the rich Miss Popkins shone conspicuous.

We will not tire our readers with all the vapid circumstances of a ball—of a country ball too, in which there are usually but few occurrences worthy of record. The prominent circumstances of the evening which, as far as the interest of our tale is concerned, it is our duty to point out, was the rapid progress which took place in the acquaintance so recently formed between Edward Manby and Mary. In vain Ellen kept hovering about him, endeavouring all in her power to make herself the object of his attentions; he heeded her not, but, like a moth attracted by light, he could not drag himself from the invincible attractions of Mary's beauty. He first talked to her upon all those common-place subjects which are usually discussed between young gentlemen and ladies in a ball-room; but, instead of finding one well versed in the technicalities of dissipation, what was his delight to discover that she had never before been in public, and that the pomp and circumstance of the exhibition which surrounded them, were almost as new to her as the dancing of men with tight clothes and of women with uncovered faces might be to a Mahometan! The good sense, the ingenuousness, and the good feeling of her observations, raised her in his estimation; the softness of her manner and the sweet tones of her voice charmed him, and the surpassing beauty of her smile and countenance kept his eye in a fixed gaze, which indeed amounted almost to rudeness.

She, in the mean while, was overtaken by sensations which she had never before felt. Charm of manner and general agreeableness of person are not to be defined: they are one of the greatest gifts which Nature in her bounty to man can bestow; they put him well with his fellow-creatures—they ensure him a good reception go where he will, and gather that brilliant attraction around him, which sunshine throws over every object upon which it alights. Edward Manby was abundantly gifted by these qualities; and not being conscious of their existence, they acted with greatly increased power upon those by whom they were discovered. Mary was charmed, she knew not why:—she had never before seen one so total a stranger who had in the least attracted her notice; his conversation pleased her—his attentions flattered her, and

she felt an irresistible propensity to treat him as a friend, for confidence soon becomes sympathetic between pure minds. But while she willingly gave way to the pleasure of his conversation, her satisfaction was checked by observing the sad and mortified appearance of Ellen's countenance, who sat by eyeing her with jealousy and asperity of looks. The conversation which she had had with her on a former occasion upon the subject of Edward immediately flashed upon her recollection; and the consciousness that she was the cause of giving her pain acted like a cloud passing over a smiling landscape, and a chill accompanied by constraint on a sudden came across her manner towards the enraptured youth. A middle course often engenders a false position; and thus between the fear of offending Ellen, and the desire of making herself agreeable to Edward, the inoffensive maiden only succeeded in alarming and irritating the one, whilst she mortified the other. Her last resource in this dilemma was abruptly to rise, which she did in the hope that her absence might bring on that consummation which Ellen so devoutly wished—a conversation with Edward. But she was mistaken—Edward had never loved Ellen, and still less was he in a humour now to bestow any attentions upon her: therefore, like a stricken deer which had received the shaft in its body, not knowing how to disengage itself from the smart,—so he mechanically followed Mary, pursuing her with the eyes, and longing to renew the intercourse which had been established between them. But the ball as well as the day had by this time drawn to a close, and strong symptoms of general departure became manifest.

The gay scene during its various changes and fluctuations might be compared to an exhibition on a theatre; but as it gradually glided from the drawing-room to the entrance-hall, what with huddling on of cloaks, tying up of throats, wrapping up heads, and precautionary ejaculations against cold and rheumatism, it soon partook in appearance more of the approaches to an hospital. Every one thought it right to pay a compliment to the master and mistress of the house upon the success of their day's entertainment, and they took it with the same satisfaction that successful ministers receive the praises of the public after a fortunate measure. The arrogant Tom attributed much of the glory of the fête to himself, and in consequence thought that he conferred a distinguished honour

on Mary by helping her to ascend the family vehicle—a privilege which Edward had ceded to him, satisfied with the permission he had received of visiting Ivycote the next day. The lamps and candles had scarcely begun to be extinguished ere Lady Thomson and Anne Woodby commenced the usual gossip upon the events of the day; whilst the disconsolate Ellen, who had been unhappy throughout the evening, began to regain her spirits, when she thought that Mary being gone she would now have Edward all to herself. Little did she know that the affections she wished to secure were not to be won by importunity.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A few consequences of dissipation described: the wisest may become foolish.

How various are the feelings apt to arise in every breast, male and female, after a series of dissipation! Hopes raised and depressed; anticipations not realised, pride mortified and elevated; the beginning of a new passion, the extinguishing of an old one; cold calculation and sanguine scheming; the excitement of little spites, the progress of substantial hatreds; false delight and real enjoyment, hollow professions and sincere congratulations;—in short, every smaller passion of the mind and springing of the heart are sure to be exercised during the exhibition of what is often called this rational amusement and innocent enjoyment, and are left to fructify in their consequences by reminiscence. In the case of Edward Manby, our subsequent narrative will show how much the formation of his character and the actions and fortunes of his future life were biassed by the events which we have recorded in the foregoing chapter, which, acting upon a noble and generous nature, were productive of much good.

His companion, Tom, may also be cited as another instance of the power of circumstances to bias the character, although his case was differently constituted. From what has already been said concerning him, the reader may conclude that he was one of those low-minded beings who, when brought into competition with others of a su-

perior cast at school or college, was constantly subject to contumely and mortification. Now, however, he suddenly found himself elevated into a personage of consequence: he was proclaimed and soon felt himself to be the heir of a wealthy house; his mean nature could not withstand the adulation which directly and indirectly he received, and thus he was confirmed in arrogance and in all the attributes of a coxcomb. We might continue to select cases from among the different personages who were acted upon on this occasion, particularly noticing Mr. and Mrs. Woodby's pride of success, their daughters' exacerbation of vanity amidst other passions, the first dawn of ambition in the ladies Allnutt to give a fête, and the confirmation in the mind of Abel of his distaste for worldly doings; but it would take us too far out of the path of our narrative, and we will proceed to the time when, on the following morning, Edward found himself, almost by stealth, laying his plans for a visit to Ivycote.

The discussions at breakfast upon the events of the preceding evening were carried on with great animation. Lady Thomson had been exercising her powers of criticism upon the whole fête, and particularly upon the ball, in terms which showed how much she felt hurt that sufficient attention had not been given to her injunctions. Mrs. Woodby, to ward off this attack, vented her observations upon Lady Thorofield's fancy dress, which she asserted was mean and shabby, considering that she was the wife of a lord; her daughters laughed at Fanny Allnutt, and turned up their noses at Mary's cheap muslin; whilst Mr. Woodby calculated what might be the cost of the whole affair, and expressed indignation at the drunkenness of one of the fiddlers, who, not satisfied with beer, had insisted upon wine.

Availing himself of the little heed taken of him, Edward quietly left the room, but in so doing was not unobserved by Tom Woodby; for, proceeding with a quick step towards Ivycote, he was mortified to hear himself called by name, and obliged in courtesy to await the presence of Tom, who, having made a guess at his intentions, had followed him with the determination of accompanying him to the habitation of her who engrossed both their thoughts. The intimacy—for it could not be called friendship—between these young men had been fostered, assuredly not by any similarity of tastes or dispositions,

but, by various circumstances scarcely necessary here to enumerate, Tom had found in Edward's easy disposition more compliance with his domineering temper than with others of his fellow-collegians; and Edward's position in life naturally threw him into the society of those who were acquainted with his relations, and who lived in some degree in their neighbourhood. However forbearing Edward might be in matters of no importance, he was otherwise firm and uncompromising, and so he proved to be on the occasion now before us, for proceeding towards Ivycote, Tom undertook to rally Edward with coarse and unseasonable merriment at his attempt to steal a march upon him in visiting the Allnutts, and continued in the same strain to make remarks upon Mary—remarks so full of licentiousness, that Edward was obliged to rebuke him in a manner to which he had seldom been accustomed. Tom taunting, Edward resenting—the one giving himself airs of libertine superiority, the other allowing no quarter to the coarseness of mind which was exhibited—produced an angry tone of conversation which was at its height when they reached Ivycote, and they were introduced into that peaceful abode hot with contention.

The family at Ivycote had equally been taken up during the morning's meal with discussions upon the events of the preceding evening, and they were scarcely ended ere Tom Woodby and Edward Manby were announced. Charmed and delighted at all they had witnessed, Aunt Bab asserted that it stood to reason, and that she was sure she was right when she said that the parish would be all the better for such doings, and that although there might be some doubt about the propriety of exhibiting charity children in the way they had been, (nor did she much like the school-master's song,) still they would be all the better by a good school-house. Aunt Fanny was so charmed, that she did not see why they too should not give something of the same kind, now that through John's ingenuity they had grown so rich. Mary clapped her hands at the thought; whilst uncle Abel looked thoughtful and shook his head.

When Tom and Edward entered, they were received with open arms, and the whole scene was again discussed; whilst Mr. and Mrs. Woodby were lauded up to the skies for their public spirit. Tom endeavoured to appropriate as much of the honour and glory as he could to himself—and always glancing at Mary, strove to impress the com-

pany present with his own importance. Edward, meanwhile, as he usually did, allowed himself to remain in the back-ground, quite satisfied with the hearty welcome by which he had been greeted, and with the smile of recognition which he received from Mary: but his companion, not satisfied with vapouring, must needs endeavour to establish his superiority in matters foreign to the present occasion, with a view, as he hoped, to attract Mary and to confound Edward.

Abel having doubted whether the pains which were taken now-a-days to educate the poor would fulfil the general expectations, seeing that, owing to the corruption of the human heart, man was prone to turn benefits into channels of evil, Tom, perking up his little person into the most erect perpendicular, exclaimed, "Egad! sir, I am all for the people: I don't see why a poor man may not read as well as a rich one—one man is as good as another, any day of the week."

"We are all equal, 'tis true, in the sight of God," said Abel, "inasmuch as every one of us will be tried by one and the same law; but if we were all to start fair, as in a race—all with the same advantages of education, still in a very little while some would get ahead of others by mere superiority of intellect, and then their equality would cease."

"Ah! I see," said Tom, "you are one of those who would truckle to a king, and his vile and corrupt ministers."

"As for truckling to a king," said Abel, "I feel it my duty to love, honour, and obey the king; and if that is truckling, I do truckle. As for his ministers, if they are vile and corrupt, they will get their deserts in due time, either from an earthly or a heavenly tribunal; but as long as they are in authority I obey them."

"You are a regular king and constitution boy, I see," said Tom, starting from his seat, as if pleased with his exclamation. "I dare say, now, you hate change and correction of abuses."

"With respect to that," said Abel, "I do not require changes for change's sake; but I am all in favour of them if they be necessary. I hold it for certain, that every country gradually, and according to circumstances, adapts its laws and institutions to its own peculiar wants, modes, and manners of life. A theory may be very good, but it is only made perfect by practice. So, a

shoemaker may make an excellent pair of shoes upon the measure he takes of the foot to be fitted; but he never can prevent their being a little uneasy at first, and they only become agreeable to the wearer after the leather and the foot have adapted themselves one to the other: and so it is with constitutions."

"I see," said Tom, again chuckling, "you are a regular king and constitution man. I hate constitutions as much as I do kings! Sir, give me liberty and equality—it is our right, and we will have it."

"Never mind him," said Edward, who now saw that Abel was becoming vexed; "he does not mean what he says. Ask him whether he would consent to see us walk into Belvedere Hall and help ourselves to what we liked by way of liberty, and whether he is willing to share his fortune with us in equal parts by way of equality. I think I know what his answer would be."

"It stands to reason that he would not," said Aunt Bab; "and I am sure that I would not like to give up our small house to any one who chose to come in, however I might wish to make every body comfortable, no more than the peasant would be pleased to see me settle myself in his cottage, however glad he might be to see me. I am quite sure I'm right to say, that God has assigned to every one his lot and portion in this world, and with that let him be content."

Mary, in the mean while, far from having been smitten with Mr. Thomas Gould Woodby, junior, upon a nearer acquaintance, shrunk from his advances in the same proportion that she showed herself happy in conversing with Edward Manby, whose eyes seemed to be so much fascinated by her beauty, that his tongue almost forgot its articulation whenever she happened to address him. She inquired of him whether he had lately heard from Liverpool—a place upon which the whole of her thoughts were fixed, because it was from thence she was anxiously expecting to receive news from her father, but which for some time past she had expected in vain. The family had heard indirectly that he had landed at Vera Cruz in safety, and that he had proceeded to Mexico; but they had received no direct communication from him.

"Ah, there has been a great hurricane in the West Indies!" said Aunt Barbara with a most geographical look, "and that must be the reason; and as it has blown a whole island to pieces, it stands to reason that John's letter might have been carried away in the dilemma."

“But Mexico is not in the West Indies,” said Abel very composedly, and perfectly recovered from the late discussion with Tom.

“There you’re wrong, Abel,” said Aunt Bab, “and I’m sure I’m right; for did not Mr. Wilkins, the great West India merchant, say last night that we were now in as great danger of losing our colonies as the Spaniards theirs? Now, it stands to reason that as all colonies are in the West Indies, Mexico must be in the West Indies also—any child will tell you that.”

“So be it,” said Abel with great resignation of look and voice; “but I am afraid that we must look to some more probable cause than the one you have assigned for the absence of John’s letters.”

“Nothing is so uncertain as the arrival of a ship-letter,” said Edward, wishing thereby to give consolation to Mary’s evident anxiety. “The Atlantic is but an indifferent post-road, and perhaps as many letters miscarry upon it as reach their destination in safety.”

“Time will show,” said Mary, with a tear starting in her eye, and suppressing a sigh; whilst Aunt Fanny, whose *idée fixe* had now become the absolute necessity of giving a something similar to what had been performed at the Woodbys, suddenly addressing herself to Tom, said, “Now, Mr. Woodby—now don’t you think our lawn would do vastly well for dancing upon? You see we might illuminate the back of the kitchen so as to produce a fine effect, and the musicians might sit on the top of the cistern.”

Tom seemed rather to turn up his nose at the proposal, thinking it a satire upon the grandeurs of his family mansion; but when Mary, throwing off her anxiety, joined in the scheme, and expressed her happiness at the bare idea of such an undertaking, he made an effort to look gracious; whilst Edward, forgetting their past controversies, readily entered upon the subject with zeal, and forthwith walking out upon the lawn, seemed willing to aid Fanny’s ingenuity, and helped her to plan out all the details of the forthcoming festivities.

“Now, don’t you see,” said the spinster, “that we have plenty of room? Here we will dance—there will be the fiddlers—in that corner Betty can make the tea and the lemonade,—benches will be placed under the trees for repose, and the old folks may play at cards in the parlour.”

“That will be delightful!” exclaimed Mary.

“But who will come?” said Tom in a tone of contempt; —“I should like to know who will come all this way for tea and lemonade.”

“What can we have more?” again exclaimed Mary, looking up in despair at her aunt, and taking Tom’s observation as oracular. “What shall we do? you know we cannot have a ball without dancers.”

“No more we can,” said Fanny, equally disturbed; then having, as she hoped, called up a bright thought, she exclaimed, “But we can manage something more—nothing is more easy; let us have a rout besides.”

“Psha!” said Tom with ineffable contempt, as if he would say, “How ignorant of the world are you!”

“What is a rout?” said Mary.

“Lord Demone told me, I recollect very well,” said Fanny, “that when a number of people are gathered together and fill a room so full that they can’t move, they call that a rout.”

“It is a very improper sort of an assembly,” said Aunt Bab: “it consists of people being packed close together, and it stands to reason that must be improper.”

“Indeed!” said Fanny; “I do not see that: you can’t help people being men and women.”

“What you mean,” said Tom, addressing Aunt Fanny in a tone of superiority,—“What you mean is what we call in Erench a *soiry dansang*, or a dancing evening,” pronouncing his French words with all the confidence of an academician.

“Exactly,” said Fanny; “that’s just what I meant;—we want something or other to dance.”

“You may be certain,” said Edward, “that whenever people are inclined to be sociable and good-natured, they will be happy to come to you upon any terms. As to those who are not, their absence is more to be desired than their presence wished for.”

Tom surlily quitted the house; Edward lingered on for some time after, to say a few last words to Mary, and then left the inhabitants of Ivycote to the full enjoyment of a party of pleasure by anticipation.

CHAPTER XIX.

No follies are more regretted than those produced by one's own imprudence.

WHAT at first had only been a matter of mere speculation, in the course of a short time, from the force of circumstances, became one of necessity. It was very soon rumoured abroad that the Allnutts of Ivycote were about to give a ball, for that they had come to their own again—that they were determined to turn over a new leaf; and moreover, some of the wiser heads added that the beautiful Miss Mary was to marry the heir of Belvedere Hall. The first symptoms of the forthcoming muscular exercise broke out in the very house itself: old Betty informed Aunt Barbara of having heard it from Giles the postman—who had been assured of the circumstance by Mrs. Chaw, the chandler's wife—who had been told of it by the clarionet-player—who had had it from Mr. Napkin himself, the butler at Belvedere;—in short, it was plain, she said, “that a great dance was about setting in, and that therefore it was their province to prepare for it.”

“That is very odd,” said Aunt Bab; “it is very odd that Mrs. Shaw should know what I do not know myself.”

“It may be odd,” said old Betty, “but so it is—it is the general talk all over; and what is general, as the saying is, must be partikler somewheres.”

“But it stands to reason,” argued her mistress, “that if we do not know it—we who are to give the ball, others surely cannot.”

“That may be,” retorted the old servant; “but, for all that, it is likely to be true; because, as they all say, and true enough it be, that as Master John, God bless him! has got all the mines in Mexico on his hands, and so has got all the gold in the world, it is but right that the family

should hold up their heads again, and let the poor folks partake of their good fortune."

Aunt Barbara, who had hitherto allowed her sister and her niece to amuse their minds by planning the entertainment without ever having in her mind given her consent to it, was struck with the concluding observation of her old servant; and as any thing which could conduce to give pleasure to the poor was always certain to have great weight with her, without further balancing the expediency of the act, all at once she became favourably inclined to its execution. On that very morning at breakfast, the time when most family projects were discussed, she gave a hint that the one in question was not so impossible as at first was imagined. Abel stared, and again shook his head, as his sister made known her views; but Fanny's delight and zeal taking fire, she did not allow the subject to drop, but at once opened the whole scheme, in a speech which, had it been made in the assembly of the nation and upon some graver topic, might have given her fame and immortality. Mary seconded the motion, more by happiness of looks and charm of countenance than by words; and after an animated discussion upon what the nature of the festivities was to be, and upon those knotty points, the who and the how, and the where and the when, the determination might be said to be conclusive.

"I have been thinking," said Aunt Bab, "that we may begin the day's amusement by distributing flannel waistcoats and petticoats and worsted stockings to the old men and women of the parish, and giving roast beef and plum-pudding to the charity children, which will be very pretty among the potatoe-beds in the kitchen garden; and then, after that, we may dance on the green and drink syllabubs.

"But what shall we call it?" said Aunt Fanny, whose whole heart was set upon gentility. "It must be called something. We hear of archery meetings and musical meetings: we could not call it a flannel-petticoat meeting, could we? It would be new perhaps; but I do not think it would sound genteel, somehow. You know we must put something on the cards of invitation."

"Call it simply a ball," said Aunt Bab. "It stands to reason that when people are invited to dance, a ball is the consequence: they must know that, in order to put on dancing-shoes."

"Could we not call it a dance," said Mary very hum-

bly, "since it is to take place on the lawn? A ball, I believe, is generally performed in a room."

"I like your idea of syllabubs very much, Bab," said Fanny to her sister. "A cow may be introduced with great effect, with the tallest charity-girl dressed as a milk-maid. We might put syllabubs in one corner of the card, and dancing in the other: that, I think, would do very well, and be reckoned smartish."

"If that was the case," said Aunt Bab, "we might as well put 'flannel petticoats' in the middle: then all would be right."

"I tell you what," said Fanny, struck by a bright thought; "we had better consult Lady Thomson—she is at Belvedere now; and as she knows all that is right and proper to do, I am sure she will help us with her advice. Suppose Mary and I were to drive over to her this morning, and consult her and the Woodbys?"

"I think you would do very well," said Aunt Bab: "don't you think they would?" she said, addressing herself to Abel, who to this moment had not opened his lips.

"I think," said Abel, "if they were to consult some wiser heads than theirs, such heads would tell them 'Give no ball at all.'" He said this in a half-smiling, half-serious manner, not willing to check the spirits of his sisters and niece on the one hand, and still unwilling to conceal his own real sentiments on the other; for, in truth, he always had a misgiving that the prosperity which they actually enjoyed was not yet founded upon a sufficiently firm basis to allow of their launching out into expenses which might throw them out of their depth.

"My dear Abel," said Bab, who having acquiesced in the scheme, thought herself called upon to defend it,—
 "My dear Abel, surely you cant think of opposing yourself to what is likely to do the parish so much good and to give us so much pleasure! There is John, who is now making his fortune, and who, every body says, is likely to be one of the richest men of his day—surely he would not object to it: on the contrary, would not he be the first to set our plan going, and to insist upon our not living higger-mugger for ever in this corner of ours without making others partake of our plenty? It stands to reason that nobody will invite us out if we do nothing for them in return; and have we not been at the Woodbys'—and is not dear Mary to be seen a bit—and arn't

the poor to have something to keep them warm in winter? Surely it stands to reason I'm right, and I am sure you think so too, only you dont like dancing yourself."

Abel, who was not in the smallest degree selfish, when he heard himself accused of so odious a feeling would have retorted with anger, but his usual mildness and forbearance coming to his aid, he said, "Bab, I was going to be angry, but I will not. If you lay my opposition to my distaste to dancing, I have no more to say. I thought you knew me better; and I also thought that you would have discovered the motives of my opposition to have been grounded on something more than a mere selfish feeling. Let the ball take place for pity's sake, and I will say no more against it."

Upon which Mary, whose affection for her uncle was one of the leading feelings of her heart, went up to him, and throwing her arms round his neck, kissed him with the most tender demonstrations of love and respect.

Aunt Fanny, and Mary by her side, drove to Belvedere in the course of the morning. Engrossed as they were with the object of their visit, it was only when they began to approach the house that Mary recollected suddenly that she was about to see Edward; and the blush which overspread her face, had a keen observer been present, would have disclosed to him what she yet scarcely knew herself—that her affections were in a fair way of becoming irretrievably engaged. Her apprehensions that her visit might be interpreted otherwise than it was meant, were quieted on perceiving at a distance several sportsmen with dogs and fowling-pieces gliding through a distant wood, in one of whom she recognised Edward; and this discovery giving her confidence, she and her aunt alighted at the door, and were soon ushered into the presence of Lady Thomson, Mrs. Woodby and her daughters.

These ladies, with that quickness of comprehension belonging to women, having already received intimation of the project in contemplation, exchanged glances when Aunt Fanny and her niece were announced, and received them with every demonstration of a hearty welcome. After a certain proportion of deviations from the straight line, Fanny all at once came to the point by saying, "We have been so much delighted with our day at Belvedere, that we have been thinking that we might do something also, and we want you to give us your advice: it would

be very good-natured of you, Lady Thomson—you who know these matters well, if you would just look in upon us and see what can be done.”

Mrs. Woodby looked grave at this appeal to Lady Thomson, when she esteemed herself the higher authority; Lady Thomson began to swell with increased dignity at receiving so great a compliment to her judgment; and the two young ladies started up in rapture at the prospect of the proposed gaiety.

“I shall be charmed, I am sure,” said Lady Thomson; “for in justice to myself I must say, that having had a good deal to do in that line both at Cheltenham and at Bath, my hints may not perhaps be entirely useless.”

“How charming! how delightful!” exclaimed Anne Woodby.

“I dare say it will be very nice,” sighed Ellen.

“I don’t see where you can ever find room,” sternly pronounced Mrs. Woodby, “to give anything beyond tea and cards,—and that does not require much management.”

“Of course,” said Aunt Fanny, venturing her scrap of French, “it can only be in the *petit* way; but we think, with a little coaxing, we can make it *joli* also.”

“Let us see,” said Mrs. Woodby: “you have got a bit of lawn, a quarter of an acre of kitchen-garden, some cucumber-beds that run up to the back of the pig-sty, and your green-house; you can’t do much out of that.”

“But we have trees on the lawn,” said Aunt Fanny, rather bridleing up at this attack upon their premises, “and we have benches under them; and everybody agrees they look pretty. Then we have a great deal of laurel at the back of the kitchen, with some very pretty ivy that covers the long chimney: all that will come in very well with lamps and festoons. Then, you know, when dancing is going on on the green, cards and tea may be going on in the parlour; and a very good place may be managed for the music on the great cistern. And then you know——”

“Nothing can be said,” observed Lady Thomson, cutting Fanny short, “until we have seen the place; and although its dimensions may be small, still much may be done, when good taste and judgment are brought into its aid,”

“Taste and judgment, and all that sort of thing, do very well in a place like this,” said Mrs. Woodby, evi-

dently quite sore; "and although I say it who should not, nobody will deny that it was very well done here and handsomely too: but really at Ivycote, it is too much to expect great things there"

"La! mamma, you mistake," exclaimed Anne Woodby. "Miss Fanny, you know, said it was to be in the *petit* line; and that is the contrary of great. You know we danced in the great vat at the brewery at Liverpool—at Edward Manby's uncle's, I mean—and that was small enough in conscience, and still we were all very merry."

"Well, well, we shall see," said her mother; "I am sure any thing we can do we shall be happy to do, and welcome; and so, Miss Fanny," addressing her with a protecting air, "pray let us know when you can receive us, and we will drive over and hold a consultation on the spot."

It was settled accordingly, that on the following day the ladies present should proceed to luncheon at Ivycote, and there decide what might be done.

When Aunt Fanny and Mary were gone, Mrs. Woodby exclaimed, "Well, I can't think what can possess some folks, who have scarcely got enough to make both ends meet, to be thinking upon giving of balls!—they must be all stark staring mad. I always thought Aunt Bab, as they call her, to be a sensible sort of body; but she is as great a fool as her sister, I declare! As for Mary, the niece, she is a poor simpleton, and of course would dance any where when she could meet our Tom: but *that* will never do—that's what it shan't."

"I wish it were so," thought Ellen in her inmost mind.

"La! mamma, how you do talk," exclaimed Anne. "I declare Mary has no more thoughts of Tom than she has of the Lord Mayor; she is a simpleton though, and if love is, it is not there."

Lady Thomson wound up the conclave by one of her knock-me-down speeches, in which she put herself forward at every turn of sentence, destroying all Mrs. Woodby's vapourings by quoting great names and authorities—Cheltenham and Bath, and by deciding "that every body knew their own affairs best, and that in justice to herself she must say that she made it a point, and she laid it down as a rule, never to meddle in the affairs of others."

The next day proved to be one of those hot, suffocating days which occasionally seem to make up for a long succession of chilling damp weather by a short exhibition of concentrated heat. At twelve o'clock Lady Thomson and Mrs. Woodby, both presenting a superficies over which the sun delights to shed its beams, and the two Miss Woodbys, ascended the carriage. It was long since so hot a day had been known. The carriage was open, their parasols were open, and so were their pores. During the drive, the heat, the dust, and their own unexplainable miseries so co-operated to derange the good humour in which they had set out, that by the time they reached their destination they were more like beings condemned to undergo punishment than reasonable creatures proceeding to decide upon the affairs of pleasure. Although Bab had spread her cleanest tablecloth and her most alluring of luncheons, nothing was talked of but the heat, the dust, and the miseries of driving to such a distance on such a day.

"Oof!" exclaimed Mrs. Woodby, blowing freely from her lungs, and at the same time using her pocket-handkerchief as an absorbent. "Well, I declare, if I had known this, nothing should have taken me out this day!"

"Really," said Aunt Barbara with her well-bred quaintness, "I am quite sorry that you have been incommoded—pray take something to cool you. And you, Lady Thomson," addressing that lady,—is there any thing that you would like after your hot drive? 'Twas so good of you to come!"

"The carriage was so small," said Lady Thomson, "that really my sleeves have been quite flattened into regular frights;" and then, dusting herself the while, her face being in its bright crimson a counterpart of Mrs. Woodby's she continued, "I do believe that you have more dust in this part of the country than in any other: your roads ought really to be endited—it is such white dust too!"

"My bonnet will be spoiled," exclaimed Anne as she blew off the dust and adjusted the ribands."

"I am sure I don't care about mine," said Ellen.

The falling of the wind stops the raging of the sea: so a cool parlour and appropriate refreshments helped much to allay the heat of body and irritation of mind of the oppressed ladies. But as a swell continues to upheave the waters long after the storm has ceased, so did the

soothing attentions which they received mitigate, but not entirely remove the irritation. That this was the case was evident as soon as Aunt Fanny led Mrs. Woodby and Lady Thomson to the spot where their ingenuity was to be exercised.

“Did not I tell you that there was not room enough here to turn about in, much less to dance? I don’t think you ever can make any thing out of this.”

“Then allow me to say you’re mistaken,” said Lady Thomson. “Have not I seen a *fête champêtre* given in a little back garden in many a street in Bath? and why it should not be given here, I do not see.—We shall do vastly well,” she added, turning towards Aunt Fanny, “and you ’ll be able to get up something mighty tasty. I think you might throw out a temporary room out of that window (pointing to the one which threw light upon the homely staircase,) which might be filled up with draperies, and statues, and candelabras, and those sort of things. But, my dear, to do that you must pull down that horrid fright of a chimney—that stands terribly in the way.”

“Pull down the kitchen chimney?” exclaimed Aunt Bab in an agony of fright.

“Ay, my dear,” said the inexorable Lady Thomson, standing with her hands resting on each hip, “indeed you must—down comes that chimney as sure as fate.”

“But it can’t be,” said poor Aunt Bab, turning with dismay towards Mrs. Woodby; “you know we must have our chimney.”

“Your chimney! ah, to be sure,” exclaimed Mrs. Woodby, tossing up her nose in triumph, “to be sure you must have your chimney! It does not signify talking, Lady Thomson; I told you before, and I say so now, that you might as well try to dance in the pigsties at Belvedere Hall as to get up a ball here.”

“You surely are not going to put your judgment in competition with mine!” said the other; “upon such matters mine was never doubted. I would not allow that chimney to stand if I were to die for it: in justice to myself, I would not.”

“Some people may think themselves mighty clever,” retorted Mrs. Woodby, “and knock people’s chimneys about as if they were so many nine-pins; but I am sure they should not knock mine about. After having given a thing myself, I may be allowed to have an opinion.”

In this manner did these two authorities upon taste debate, until they had excited their respective tempers into such a state of animosity that it made the quiet possessors of the chimney in dispute seriously wish that they would leave the house without further discussion. Aunt Bab undertook to sooth Lady Thomson by admitting that the chimney was in the way; Aunt Fanny agreed with Mrs. Woodby that the place was small, and gave every superiority she could desire to Belvedere; whilst Mary entertained the Miss Woodbys upon such subjects as are apt to fill the minds of young ladies when dress and dancing are in the wind, until the carriage was ordered, and the visitors returned whence they came.

CHAPTER XX.

When misfortunes occur, they are often sent at such times as to produce the strongest impression.

ALTHOUGH Aunt Bab had been not a little frightened at the destructive propensities exhibited by Lady Thomson as a preliminary to the festivities in contemplation, and out of affection for the old family chimney had almost resolved in her mind to give up all idea of carrying the project further, yet, upon canvassing the subject more in detail, she found that the village and the country in general were already so much 'up' about it, as it is said, that she found it impossible to secede without incurring all sorts of discreditable imputations. To knock down the chimney was impossible,—in short, the whole family cried out shame at the very idea; but Aunt Fanny's mind had been so much bitten by the alluring prospect of a temporary room with draperies and festoons, that it was determined, instead of turning the great cistern into an orchestra, to erect the said piece of finery upon it, and dismantling the staircase window, thus give an easy access, and secure an appropriate place for the display of the supper. They also hoped thus to conciliate Lady Thomson, and at the same time to secure the quiet possession of the chimney. Uncle Abel shook his head as he turned over the costs in his own mind; but the event was now become

inevitable: reason, common sense, and, what was still more urgent, the banker's book—every thing opposed it; but what fortitude was ever able to stand against the wishes of women, influential servants, the butcher and chandler and baker's wives, and, what is still more irresistible,—“What will the world say?”

The peaceable mansion of Ivycote all at once became the abode of noisy masons and carpenters; the lawn and grounds were usurped by arbiters of taste; drapers and dealers in tinsel hung about the unpretending apartments, and cooks took possession of every avenue leading to the kitchen.

The important affair of invitations and the issuing of cards occupied the inmates. The discussions to which this subject gave rise were, as usual, long and various. Aunt Bab was for asking every body, for her generous heart scarcely would admit of distinctions, particularly of those distinctions which afflict the souls of those whom the world call select; but Aunt Fanny was determined to be genteel, and therefore her exclusions were advanced with the utmost pertinacity. When Mary, with all humility, put in a word in favour of little Betsy Cruikshank, the village attorney's daughter, who she avowed, had never danced but to the sound of a boy's whistling, and who longed to be present at a real ball, Aunt Fanny exclaimed that that could never be; because that, if little Betsy came, then the Silverstops and Thickenales would expect to be invited too; and if they came, all the parish must come, and then all the neighbourhood would be offended. The utmost she could grant to Mary's petition was, that Betsy might be allowed to come in and help to 'wash up;' and then if an opportunity should offer, she might be thrust into a country dance and welcome, provided always that her hands were not too hot, and that she did not make too much of a clatter with her heels in footing it.

It had been settled by the authorities of Belvedere that the most appropriate word as applied to existing circumstances would be a 'breakfast;' and with that indefinite designation the invitations were issued. It would require the jargon of a newspaper writer to describe the complete transmutation that took place both in the exterior and the interior of the homely cottage of the Allnutts, now that it was prepared for the promised festivities. He would inform you “that the tasty and elegant suite thrown

open on this occasion consisted of the hall, the drawing-room, the breakfast-parlour, and the dining-room; the one ornamented with exotics of the most costly character; the next fitted up with draperies *à l'antique*, resplendent with mirrors and or-molu; the third, a bijou, fascinating the senses by its exquisite models of art and virtù; and the fourth exhibiting to the astonished eye all that could entice the palate and excite the appetite, the viands being provided without any consideration to expense, the wines of the first-rate description, and the fruits so choice and various that none but royalty could ever expect to vie with either their quality or profusion." He would then go on to describe the temporary dancing-room where Terpsichore was expected to appear on the 'light fantastic toe,' and the lawns laid out more like the Garden of the Hesperides than any thing that could at present be produced in this sublunary scene.—But we will return to plain prose, to say that the snug cottage had been turned into the most tawdry, vulgar, and uncomfortable habitation that the imagination can conceive, but which to the eyes and imagination of its possessors appeared the *ne plus ultra* of fashion and magnificence. Aunt Bab applauded the surprising art of the cooks; Fanny roamed with exultation through the flowers and draperies; Mary bounded about with all the joyousness of a child; and even Uncle Abel himself seemed to catch the infection, and wondered how the decrepid mahogany, the old black-bottomed chairs, the threadbare carpets, the washed-out curtains, had disappeared, and how they had been replaced by bright colours and shining furniture. As for the servants, they seemed to be at their wits' ends. Old Betty did nothing but escort the gaping neighbours in long processions to view the wonders of the place; whilst honest Brown looked more alarmed than charmed at an event which seemed to place his humble exterior at variance with the splendour of the house. Mrs. Chaw, as she viewed the display, promised to herself to increase her prices; the butcher's wife hoped for a future increase of custom; and Mrs. Humphries flattered herself that she might demand an advance of salary. Merriday, the schoolmaster, planned a copy of verses; and Cruikshank looking grave, thought that something might be forthcoming for his profession.

The morning at length came, and every thing beamed with pleasure and gaiety at Ivycote. Aunt Bab wore her

grey gown; Aunt Fanny did her best to revive the last remains of her beauty by enlisting every bit of finery which her wardrobe could afford to her aid; and Mary, whose thoughts would involuntarily revert to Edward Manby at every glance which she cast on her glass, came to the scene of action brilliant in youth and beauty, and graceful in simplicity of attire. Lady Thompson, who gave herself the airs of lady patroness, accompanied by the Woodbys, were the first to arrive, and were soon followed by a long train of company, who all seemed to be bursting with curiosity to see what could be done by the Allnutts in their nutshell. Various were the speculations on foot regarding this new position which they had taken; for they had hitherto lived in such perfect seclusion, that their names, which once were well known throughout the country, had almost been entirely forgotten. Some of the old people who remembered the family well went through their genealogy, their marriages and intermarriages, with learned exactitude; gave the history of their ruin and downfall, and now wondered at their rise. Others criticised with all the candour of envy and malevolence, and while they professed to admire, finished by condemning. The good-natured hoped that their liberality would not be misplaced; those who were not so, condemned this display as ostentatious and ill-judged, and, considering their scanty means, as even wicked.

“If they think to catch Tom Woodby for Mary,” said one Mrs. Candour to Mrs. Gossipall, “although she is no doubt a pretty girl, they will be wofully mistaken;—Tom is not such a fool. Besides, Mrs. Woodby and Lady Thomson are determined he shall get something in return for the fortune he is to have. No family knows better how many ounces go to a pound than the Woodbys.”

“She is pretty,” said the other; “but, la! what is beauty after all? doesn’t it come one day and go the other? Look at old Fanny—she was once a beauty, but what is now left only serves to make a fool of her and the laughing-stock of all the county.”

In the mean while, the business of the day began with every appearance of the most decided success. The pleasures which it was about to bring forth were sanctified by acts of charity to the poor, and by a substantial meal to the charity children, in the superintendence of which Aunt Bab shone conspicuous, whilst she left the care of the gaieties to her sister and niece. As the day wore away,

and when the time for dancing had arrived, the music struck up, and the scene assumed an appearance of the most lively gaiety and bustle. Edward, to the mortification of his rival Tom, had secured Mary for his partner; and never were two mortals happier than they during the time which they passed in each other's society. So exhilarating was the scene, that Abel himself, forgetting the cold calculations of prudence, seemed to have been changed into another being. He was attentive to every body's wants, and seemed to take pleasure in doing all in his power to promote the pleasures of the day.

He was in the very act of plunging his knife into a large pasty, when honest Brown, without any of that tact which men of his cloth are apt to possess, thrust into his hand a letter, which had been brought by the postman. Abel glanced at it, and discovered that it bore upon it the London post-mark, and that it came from his banker. Mr. Woodby, who was present, and who had been eagerly waiting for his share of the pasty, also cast his eye upon the letter, which, practised as he was in such matters, equally told him came from a London banker. Had any keen observer been present to have watched the countenances of both these men upon a circumstance which apparently was of small importance, he would have remarked expressions very remote from those of indifference. Approaching misfortunes frequently cast their shadows before—the mind, apprehensive of evil, is ever on the watch—Abel looked disturbed, and without exactly knowing why, he almost feared to open the letter. Woodby put on a look of entire carelessness, and vociferated for his share of the pasty with unusual merriment. Neither Bab nor Fanny had seen the arrival of the letter—Abel alone, besides the bearer thereof and Mr. Woodby, was aware of its existence, and he had sufficient power over himself to continue his duties at the table until he could unobserved absent himself: he then glided into his bedroom, and locking the door after him, read as follows:—

“Lombard-street.

“TO ABEL ALLNUT, ESQ.

“SIR,—We have the honour to inform you, for your government, that by a recent communication made to us by Messrs. Baggs and Bubbleby, agents for the Mexican Loan, of which you are a shareholder, they inform us that

the payments on account of the dividends upon that loan have been suspended, and will so continue until further notice.

“ We are, Sir,

“ Your obedient humble servants,

“ LONGHEADS & Co.”

His eyes scarcely served him to read to the end of this short letter: they seemed to have lost their power; as he held it in his hand, it appeared like a blank piece of paper, and he stood like one dreaming with his eyes open. The scene which he had just left, the noises which rang in his ears, the transition from merriment to despair brought on by the reception of this letter, had so bewildered his senses, that in vain he endeavoured to recollect himself—could not shake himself from the conviction that he was dreaming. At length, slowly recovering, the whole truth broke upon him in all its horror: all that he had so often in the silence of his heart anticipated, was come to pass; their short-lived prosperity was over, and ruin had overtaken them. He read the letter over and over again, slowly meditating over each word; and then, when satisfied that he could not be mistaken, he sank upon his knees and poured out his heart in feelings of resignation to the Author of his being. He prayed earnestly for a renewal of strength in support of the weakness and frailty of his nature, and much did he require it at that particular moment; for the noise of music and revelry which rose from below, acting upon his frenzied mind like the spur applied to the sides of the galled and distressed steed, would nearly have deprived him of reason, had he not had recourse to that only effectual source of comfort. He arose calm and collected, folded up the fatal letter with firmness of demeanour, and then returned to the festive scene with the determination to allow nothing to disturb its continuation to the last. He would have looked gay, had it been in his power; but he could not shake off the grave look which, in spite of himself, had taken possession of his face. On his return to the table, Mr. Woodby was the first to read his looks, and he could too well explain the cause of their altered appearance; but instead of respecting the grief which he knew must exist in his breast, the unfeeling, vulgar-minded man, by way of a blind, exclaimed as he filled a bumper, “ Ladies and gentlemen, allow me to propose a toast: here’s a health to Major Allnutt, and success to Mexico!”

These words were caught up and echoed back with enthusiasm by every one present, for all were anxious to express feelings of good-will towards their hosts; but they acted upon Abel like a shock of palsy. He could scarcely master his wounded feelings: the sense of the ruin which hung over him and his sisters, and which was so much accelerated by the heavy expenses which they had incurred on this occasion, rushed upon his mind with such hideous forebodings of imagination, that, instead of returning Mr. Woodby's compliment and the kind greetings of his friends, he sat insensible and unmoved. He only recovered when he heard Barbara's voice exclaiming, with an unusual tone of merriment in its accent, "Abel, what is the matter with you! don't you hear?—arn't you more than flattered? It is your turn to speak: if ever you were merry in your life, now is your time."

The stricken man, making one desperate effort over himself, filled up to his own drinking a bumper of wine, which on other occasions he never touched, and drinking it off, roared out in a manner which astonished every one, a rhapsody of words more like the ravings of a madman than the calm self-possession of an orator; and these having been received as an expression of his thanks, all the world were agreed that gaiety had done Mr. Allnutt a vast deal of good, and that there was nothing like dissipation to bring out a man's latent energies. The wine, however, which he had thus drunk produced a useful effect—it brought on heavy stupefaction, which kept his senses in a dreaming state, and thus preserved him from dwelling upon the sad reality of his position. He soon became a source of merriment to the more sober guests. His sisters were surprised; but attributing this excess to the temptation of being convivial, they smiled, when before they would have been horrified, and therefore left him to himself. But Mary, whose whole heart was wrapt in her affection for her uncle, and who, having seen him return to table after his visit to his bed-room, had remarked the change which had taken place in his countenance and appearance, and had also paid attention to his subsequent conduct. She felt a bitter pang on perceiving his situation, and became alarmed that all was not right—that something of serious import must have happened so suddenly to produce such a change. Forgetting the delight of Edward's conversation, she hung about Abel for the rest of the evening, and endeavoured by her questions and entreaties to discover what could have

happened. Was he well? had he received any bad news? had he heard any thing from her father? All these questions she asked in their turn; but she received no other answer than a doleful shake of the head.

At length the festivities with the day drew to a close. As the last carriage drove off, Aunt Fanny, as if anticipating futurity, exclaimed with a sigh, "It's all over!—Well, it has been our first, and I suppose will be our last."

Aunt Bab was overflowing with joy, for she had received Lady Thomson's and Mrs. Woodby's warmest approbation; the former of whom assured her she had never seen any thing better done even at Cheltenham; and the latter, without showing the least envy, exclaimed, "I declare I could not have done better myself had I set about it—and all too without knocking down the chimney!"

Abel had retreated to his room as early as he could with decency; and when his sisters inquired after him, Mary with a dejected look remarked that she was afraid that her uncle was not well, for that he looked miserable, and had gone to his room, she was afraid, with a bad headach.

"It stands to reason," exclaimed Bab, "that he is not quite right—he has never been accustomed to such gay doings; and that bumper of wine, which he took off like so much water, it was too much for him! But he will be well to-morrow; a good dose of camomile will set him to rights if nothing else will, and he shall take it to-morrow morning the first thing on getting up."

Mary shook her head; Fanny took one long survey of the scene of the expired gaiety, and went to bed; Bab lingered till the last lights were extinguished, and the cottage was again restored to its usual quiet.

CHAPTER XXI.

The Allnutts catch a glimpse of the ruin which awaits them. The simple-minded are helpless before the worldly wise.

ABEL passed a sleepless night; his mind was filled with apprehension for the future, and owing to his inexperience of the world and his ignorance of what is called business, he was uncertain what might be the extent of the misfortune so inopportunately announced to him. The length of time which had elapsed since he had received tidings of his brother added much to his present affliction; for to his advice he would naturally have had recourse. Trying in vain to seek some relief to his anxiety by sleep, almost ere the day had dawned he arose, dressed himself, and leaving his bedroom, with noiseless steps descended into the rooms below; and there the traces of the late scene of gaiety and feasting were spread far and wide as if to upbraid him for having sanctioned so much folly, waste, and extravagance. He wandered over the deserted, dusty, and gaudy rooms, and glided by the disordered tables spread over with the remnants of the supper, like the Genius of Desolation hovering over departed grandeur. "What will become of us all!" he would frequently exclaim in mental agony; and then recovering himself, would again with folded hands reverently exclaim, "God's will be done!" He apprehended evils greater in magnitude than perhaps they really were, and looked upon immediate starvation as a matter of course after the immediate loss of revenue. In his own mind, so far as regarded himself, he determined to gain his bread without shrinking from the humiliation; but when he reflected upon the situation of his sisters and niece, he wrung his hands in despair—for what could they do?

Mary was the first to make her appearance; but as she came bounding down the staircase into the parlour, her steps were suddenly arrested by observing the wan and woe-stricken looks of her uncle. She paused, and approaching him with caution, took his hand, and inquiring after his health, looked into his face with a beseeching look. Abel was not prepared to answer her questions, but inquired whether her aunts were likely soon to appear. Mary immediately ran up to hasten their steps, saying "that she

was afraid her uncle was not well, and that he required their immediate attendance." Barbara very soon appeared, followed by Fanny; the one bent upon exerting her best medical skill, and the other fearful lest so doleful a result should be a bar to future gaiety: but they no sooner began to ascertain the nature of his disorder, than he stopped all further proceedings by taking the fatal letter from his pocket and desiring Barbara to read it.

"What can this mean?" said she; catching the apprehension expressed in Abel's face: "what has happened? Is John dead?"

"Read," said Abel; "you will soon see."

Barbara read aloud: "Sir,—We have the honour to inform you for your government—"

"*For your government!*" exclaimed Bab; "that can't be for you. You may be certain that here is some mistake."

"Read on," said Abel.

Barbara read to the end of the letter, and then pondering for some time, she said: "You may be certain that you are under a mistake. You are told here that the information given is '*for your government.*'—Does it not stand to reason, that if it is for the Government, it is not for you?"

"What have I to do with Government?" said Abel despondingly.

"Who knows?" said Bab; "you may have a great deal to do—you may be somebody without your knowing it. Why should these men tell you that they write for your Government?—they must have some meaning in what they say."

"It may be a banker's phrase," said Abel, "the meaning of which you know nothing about. But the long and short of it is, that the payment of our dividends is stopped, and that we have at present no means of paying for our daily bread: we are paupers."

"Paupers!" exclaimed Fanny in utter dismay.

"Paupers?" echoed Bab; and then pausing awhile, she continued, saying: "But this can never be! Abel, you must be out of your senses! Consider a little. This letter does not come from John. When we hear him tell us that we are paupers, then I will believe it, but not till then; he surely never would have planned our ruin, and therefore why should we believe what the foolish bankers write? Believe me, you must be a Government man without your knowing it."

"What have the bankers to do with John?" retorted Abel;

“their business is with us and our money. If they do not choose to make us any more payments, which they here say they will not, then we starve: nothing can be clearer.”

“But this can never be!” again exclaimed Barbara, apparently struck by a bright thought: “if somebody is not to be paid, it is Mr. Woodby: he it was who managed the business for us, and he ought to suffer—it stands to reason that he ought.”

“My dear Barbara,” said Abel with the deepest tone of resignation, “if it be God’s will that we meet with misfortunes, do not let us repine, or lay blame where none exists; but rather let us receive the blow with fortitude. As for Mr. Woodby’s share in the transaction, he advised us for the best; we sought him, he did not seek us: and as I dare say he will advise us for the best again, being conversant in money transactions, it is my opinion that we immediately lay our case before him and be guided in our conduct by what he may advise.”

“Let us go instantly,” said Barbara, highly excited by apprehension of the impending ruin, but still secretly cherishing a conviction that her first impression upon reading the bankers’ letter was the true one. “I am sure there is something more in those words about the Government, Abel,” she added, “than you are aware of. I should not be surprised if John had made you a man of consequence without your knowing it. Who knows! you may be treasurer, or overseer, or some such thing to Mexico; and the bankers may be privy to it although you are not. But let us go to Mr. Woodby: I dare say he will know all about it, and tell us how we may take the law of the Mexican Government; for it stands to reason that something must be done.”

During this conversation Aunt Fanny’s face had gradually been lengthening its features, until scarcely able to control her feelings at this sudden prospect of ruin, she exclaimed, “Barbara, you wouldn’t surely tell Mr. Woodby? Why Mrs. Woodby, and Lady Thomson, and all the parish will know it before the day is over. What will they say? and just after the balls, too!”

“Fanny,” said Abel, “be not a child! the first step towards the diminution of misfortune is to know how to bear it. Of what use are all the lessons of submission and resignation which our parents taught us from our infancy if they are not to be put into practice? Let the world do and say what it pleases—let our care be to do what is right.”

Fanny sat down, looking around her upon the relics of yesterday’s gaiety, the picture of despair. Mary crept to

her uncle's side, and with tears shining in her expressive eyes; although a melancholy smile was on her face, she seemed to say—for she was silent—“Depend upon me for my endeavours to do credit to your instructions!” Her mind involuntarily glanced at the thought of possessing in Edward Manby a friend who would never desert them in their need, and a bright gleam of consolation darted across her mind as she made an inward appeal for protection to the Author of her being.

As soon as the necessary preparation for their excursion to Belvidere Hall could be made, Barbara and Abel took their departure, much to the astonishment of old Betty and the servants who had already begun to suspect that something of importance had occurred.

They arrived at the house when the family were at breakfast, and were straightway ushered into the breakfast room, much to the astonishment of every one present excepting Mr. Woodby, who no sooner perceived them and caught a glimpse of their solemn features than he immediately guessed the nature of their errand. Mrs. Woodby and Lady Thomson exchanged glances of astonishment, and then began a course of inquiry which extremely puzzled Aunt Bab in framing such answers as might at once save her veracity and preserve her secret. She entrenched herself in general assertions, saying that something had occurred which had made them seek Mr. Woodby's advice upon a point of business; that the South Americans had behaved in such a shameful manner to them, that they ought to be sued in the court of chancery without loss of time.

Mr. Woodby, having had time to reflect upon the part it was expedient to take, and having finished his last cup of tea, invited them to follow him into his closet; where having duly pressed them to be seated, he inquired of Abel in what manner he might serve him.

Abel immediately unfolded the bankers' letter, and placed it in Mr. Woodby's hands; but before he could even adjust his spectacles or throw himself into a proper attitude for giving advice, Aunt Barbara exclaimed, “Now this letter can't be for Abel, Mr. Woodby; it is '*for his government.*' He is either a Government man, or it is nonsense; now is it not so?”

“Let Mr. Woodby read,” said Abel calmly.

Woodby read the letter through, and then looking alarmingly grave, shook his head and said, “This is an awkward business.”

“ But what is the meaning of the words ‘*for your government?*’ ” said Barbara with the greatest eagerness of look and voice.

“ That is a mere commercial phrase,” said Woodby, “ one that is now almost gone by in good writing, and has nothing to do with the main business.”

Barbara’s face fell into a look of hopeless dejection; for greatly as she had been excited by hope, so much the more did she now sink into despair.

“ What is to be done?” said Abel.

Woodby, making one of those faces which so often indicate a ponderous oration, and pulling off his spectacles at the same time, said, “ Why, you see, these new States have as yet but little idea of the sacred nature of loans, or public credit, which is the same thing; and therefore if they can’t pay their dividends, why they won’t. A rich country like England where the consols yield but little for one’s money, and where there is a great accumulation of capital, or indeed cash, jumps at a new country that wants what she has got, and lends with her eyes blindfolded, as one may say; although Mexico in truth is good security, because she has mines, or gold and silver in the raw state, and will, I make no doubt, pay all in good time, although at present she may be a little hard up or so. Therefore, you see, you may feel safe about your money ultimately, although you will get none just now.”

“ But it is just now that we happen to want it,” said Abel; “ for the whole of our fortune is involved in the Mexican funds, as you well know.”

“ Yes,” said Barbara, who began to rouse from her state of dejection—“ Yes, you must well know it, for you recommended us to place it there, and you insisted upon yielding to us your shares.”

“ Yes, madam,” said Woodby with great self-complacency, “ I did so; and happy I was to be able to serve a friend, particularly after the recommendation of your own brother: but everybody is aware that foreign stocks are not like our own: they yield more, ’tis true; but then they are ticklish— one can’t lay one’s head upon them and go to sleep.”

“ But you told Abel, Mr. Woodby,” said the pertinacious Barbara, “ that putting one’s money in the Mexican funds was like eating one’s cake and keeping it too. Now, I am afraid that we shall never see it again.”

“ As for that, ma’am,” said Woodby, looking a shade less composed, “ it is true that I thought well of Mexico, and

do so still, for the country is as full of gold and silver as an egg is of meat; but I trusted in their good faith as a nation or government, and if they don't know what public credit means, am I to blame? if they won't pay, I can't make them. We should call it being bankrupt, whatever they may do."

"We are quite aware," said Abel in a tone of great conciliation, "that you did for the best, and advised us for the best; and as we are quite sure that you will do so again, we are come to seek your advice and to request you to tell us what we ought to do. We are ignorant of the nature of money transactions, and we request you to instruct us in the fittest course to pursue."

We do not wish our readers to conclude that there was anything in Mr. Woodby's conduct in the money transaction in question which might have been objected to on the Stock Exchange, or which would not have been fully acquitted before any commercial tribunal; but when he came to consider that it might be canvassed to his disadvantage in the country, and a wrong light thrown upon it, we must be permitted to assert that the advice which he now gave was very much biassed by selfish considerations.

"Why," said he, again making up a face, "this is an awkward business, there is no doubt of that—misfortunes at a distance always look greater than they really are. Here are you at Ivycote, and your bankers, and your money, and all your means of living, are in London, some hundred and eighty miles off; and you will be fretting and fussing yourselves, daily anxious for news, and daily being disappointed. Now, my advice is this: go straight to London—make the bankers your object—watch events—wait there till things take a turn. In my various transactions in the City, I have always remarked, that if things go wrong at one time they are sure to come right at another, and particularly in stocks: like buckets in a well, if the Bulls were at the top at one season, the Bears were sure to be looking out of the bucket in the next. So is your business: you may be depressed now, but all will come right in time. Go to London without loss of time—look after your own concerns; and although I shall be distressed to lose you as a neighbour, yet still it is better to know you are happy at a distance than miserable next door.

When this speech was over, Abel and Barbara looked at each other with mute significancy, so total, so new, and so unexpected was the change which such a proceeding would

produce in their whole being. They sat dumb for some time, until at length Barbara exclaimed, "Go to London! Why, how shall we ever get to London?—and when we are there, how are we ever to find our way to the place where our Mexican stock is?—we know no one there. Besides, how can we ever leave Ivycote? have we not lived here almost all our lives? Every tie we have in the world is here—we know no one except those who live here and hereabouts. It will break our hearts to leave our dear home—and at my age how am I to acquire new habits? Must we positively leave it?" she said with tears in her eyes and with a face that would have melted a heart of stone.

"We must go, I see that," said Abel after a long and affecting pause: "there is no help for it."

"Indeed," said Woodby, "there is nothing in London that a child might not do. Why, you will like it when you have been there a day or two; and a change of scene will do you all good for a little while, when let us hope that you will come back again to Ivycote better than ever."

"Fanny will like it for one, I see that," said Bab more composed.

Upon this, the brother and sister took their leave, with their hearts and minds full almost to bursting of conflicting emotions, but with their determination made up upon the necessity of leaving their long-cherished home. Woodby saw them depart with no little satisfaction, for in his speculating mind he could foresee in their absence many circumstances which would turn to his own advantage.

CHAPTER XXII.

The first introduction of the simple and unpractised to the ways of the town.

WHEN Barbara and Abel returned to the cottage, they found Fanny and Mary, with old Betty and honest Brown, waiting for them with outstretched necks and faces anxious to learn the result of their visit.

"We must go to London this minute," said Bab: "there is nothing else left for it!"

The extraordinary sensation which this announcement

made upon those who heard it may be more easily imagined than described, when it is recollected that scarcely one of them had ever stirred beyond the immediate neighbourhood of their village. "Go to London!" was echoed and re-echoed by every mouth, whilst each person was impressed by a different sensation in saying it.

Fanny cried and laughed by turns with nervous excitement and bewildering thought; Mary looked at her uncle and aunts to catch their feelings, and to adapt herself in ready obedience to their wishes; old Betty thought the end of the world was about to take place; and honest Brown stood stiff, with his hands down his sides, like one impaled.

Before the day was over—ay, before an hour had elapsed, the news had spread all over the village, that the South Americans had used Miss Barbara so ill, that she and Mr. Abel were going to London immediately to have them up before the Chancellor. This having taken place precisely the day after the ball, naturally made every one suppose that this untoward event had occurred during the entertainment; and to those who were unpractised in geography, it appeared that these unmannerly savages had actually been insolent to the lady in her own house.

The character of Abel by this event seemed all at once developed into manliness and activity, and he became an instance of the useful influence which responsibility exercises upon the mind. Impressed with a sense of the duties that had devolved upon him as the protector of his sisters, he at once shook off those habits of seclusion which he had so much cherished, and bestirred himself the first and foremost to meet with firmness the ruin that now stared them in the face. He directed everything, provided for every contingency, and showed himself as full of sagacity as he was, alas! of inexperience in the ways of the world. It was concerted between them that he and Barbara should first proceed to London in order to ascertain the position of their affairs, and that then they would decide whether to return to Ilycote, or, sending for Fanny and Mary, to quit that place entirely and establish themselves in London until they could reinstate themselves with comfort and respectability. They thought it right to take old Cruikshank, the village attorney, into their councils; who, when he heard of their position, immediately recalled to mind his own prophetic exclamation upon inspecting the preparations for the ball; and, attached as he was to them by long acquaintance, he determined to do his best to serve them. He was installed as

their agent in case of need; and as he knew that Abel had no acquaintance in London who could help him upon a first arrival, he gave him a letter to a nephew of his, one Mark Woodcock, a youth established as clerk to an eminent solicitor in Lincoln's inn.

The short time which elapsed between their determination to depart and the moment of getting into the coach that was to convey Abel and his sister to London was passed in an unceasing expression of hopes and fears, of anticipations of pleasure, of apprehensions of danger, such as may be supposed to come from innocent minds ignorant of the modes and practices of life in a capital city, and in making preparations for a journey which in imagination appeared as full of difficulty as an expedition of discovery into the interior of Africa. Fanny conceiving that the town men whom Barbara was about to encounter were like so many famished monsters lying in wait for her, never ceased urging the necessity of taking every precaution against their wiles. Old Betty only thought of highwaymen and footpads, and conceived it impossible that her mistress could ever get safe to her journey's end without being robbed of her trunk, and of everything it contained. Abel himself did not exactly know what was likely to happen to them on the road, and was fully determined to keep his own council upon the business which was taking him to London, lest, should he divulge it, the nature of his distress might have some effect upon the price of stocks. Aunt Bab's volubility had almost forsaken her, owing to the many cares which revolved in her mind, in this great undertaking which she was about to achieve.

At length the morning arrived when they were to leave their long-cherished home. The coach which was to take them up passed by early in the morning on the high-road that skirted the village, and thither the whole family went in order to witness the phenomenon of Aunt Bab getting into a stage-coach. Little was said—their hearts were too full to speak; they walked on almost mechanically, each wrapped up in melancholy thoughts. Barbara alone seemed full of immediate care, for having abandoned the responsibilities of housekeeper; she was still so full of her old avocation, that she did not cease giving directions of what was to be done during her absence. When at length she and Abel, with their trunks and bundles, were deposited in the teeming vehicle, she would have paused on the very step with more last words touching a pair of woollen stock-

ings for an old woman, had not the impatient coachman urged her in; and before she could finish her speech, she was snatched from before the uplifted faces of Fanny, Mary, old Betty and honest Brown, with the swiftness of the wind—her last words dying in the air as she rolled away.

Being duly seated, they found only one other passenger in the inside. He was a sort of person new in his appearance to the eyes of both our travellers—a commercial coxcomb, aspiring to look like a groom and to speak like a pickpocket, overgrown with hair, wearing a coat dotted over with pocket-flaps, and squaring his elbows whilst he turned in his feet. He was very forward withal; and no sooner had he made a survey of the persons of his fellow-travellers, than he addressed them in a familiar, off-hand manner. The road led in sight of Belvedere Hall; and with scarcely a single preliminary observation, he at once commenced his observations on all that came before him.

“Oh, that’s Belvedere Hall, I believe they call it,” said he, addressing himself to Abel; “it belongs to a sharpish old chap, one Goold Woodby, who has coined more gold by his wits than ever the slaves in Mexico have done by hard labour.”

“He has the reputation of being a rich man,” said Abel.

“Did the gentleman say anything about Mexico?” said Aunt Bab.

“Yes, ma’am, I did,” said the stranger; “and I say, too, that old Woodby there, in that house we have just passed, has jockeyed more people in those outlandish funds than can be counted, and has in consequence been promoted from the Stock Exchange to this flash house.”

“But the Mexican funds have always been thought very secure?” said Bab, notwithstanding the jog which she received on her knee from Abel.

“None but a *spoon* would ever think so,” said the stranger.

Bab’s curiosity once excited, she could not stop. “And pray, sir, how can a spoon think! I never heard of such things before.”

“Oh, ma’am,” said the other, “if you don’t know what a spoon means, why then take a *flat*.”

“And pray, sir, what may a flat be? I am afraid I am ignorant.”

“Why, ma’am, whatever you like: a *gawk*, a *nun*, a *ninny*—any one of these names will do as well.”

Bab looked at Abel for an explanation, and still appeared confused; when the stranger, making a vulgar contortion of his mouth at her ignorance, at length exclaimed, "Why a fool, ma'am: you'll understand that maybe?"

"Indeed!" said Bab, making a significant exclamation, which she would have followed up by more observations had she not been stopped by Abel's admonitory knee. The stranger having fallen upon a subject with the nature of which he was fully conversant, (for he was a professional traveller for a commercial house,) was happy to be listened to as he became communicative. He described the nature of the foreign loans then so much the rage throughout the country, the juggles to which they gave rise, the rapid fortunes made by the wary and the ruin entailed upon the ignorant; he exposed in vulgar, though significant forms of speech, the tricks, the lies, the impositions which were practised by the designing upon the weak, and so proved the truth of the saying, that 'a fool and his money are soon parted,' that poor Abel and his unhappy sister positively cowered under the conviction of their folly. They sat silent, deeply ruminating upon their situation; and so absorbed were they in their own thoughts, that they scarcely heeded the stranger, who never ceased exhibiting his knowledge of the road and of the country as they were rapidly whirled along.

On any other occasion, had Abel and Barbara been free from care; and their minds open to observe all that was passing around them, their reflections would have been worth narrating, for there is nothing more amusing than to learn the effect of first impressions upon new minds; but theirs, upon reaching London, remained almost the same blank sheet of paper to which they might be compared upon their departure from Ivycote. Having passed the night in the coach, they felt very much jaded as they approached the term of their journey, and began to long for the moment of their release. The stranger left them at the very beginning of that interminable labyrinth of streets through which a traveller winds at whatever avenue he may enter the great metropolis; and upon his exit, when the coachman asked Abel where they would please to alight, Barbara would have said, "At the bankers' in Lombard-street," so anxious was she to attain the object of their journey, had not her brother checked her by saying they would go wherever the coach stopped, as all inns for the present were alike to them.

Thus they drove on through one never-ending thoroughfare into another, until they thought that fate had settled them for ever in a stage-coach. In vain they extended their necks through either window seeking their long-expected resting place—nothing like it was seen: crowds for ever succeeded crowds—shops for ever succeeded shops—houses for ever succeeded houses—the further they advanced, the deeper they seemed to dive into the chaos, until having passed a bridge such as their imagination could never conceive to exist, and seen more masts of ships than could be counted, they at length drew up at an obscure inn, ominous in name, and mean in appearance, called the Fleece, in the Borough. They entered through a narrow gateway, inscribed all over like a geographical register, and found themselves in a dark, dismal court-yard, without perceiving a single object within to cheer or enliven them. The heavy atmosphere was rendered doubly gloomy by rain, and everything wore a prison-like appearance. Abel and his sister, jaded, depressed in spirits, bewildered by noise and novelty at length slowly descended from their confinement. They were handed out by a waiter, who received his orders from the mistress of the inn, a species of Patagonian Medusa—with this difference, that instead of snakes writhing about her head, there protruded a variety of stiffened ribands, which darted from her coarse and flushed face like rank weeds springing from a foul soil, and she for the present became the dispenser of the destinies of our travellers. She first inspected them from head to foot, cast her eye over the quantity of luggage by which they were accompanied, and having given a contemptuous glance at the texture of Aunt Bab's gown, and the fashion of her bonnet, she allowed them to take possession of a small front parlour looking into the noisy, disquiet street. Here they inspected everything with a sort of dogged curiosity, first the miserable prints, then the inscriptions on the panels, and looking-glass, then the obsolete furniture, until, like mice in a trap, they began to peep from behind the green perpendicular blinds, and observe what was doing without. Their attention was soon diverted by perceiving the lively drama of Punch being performed in a little perambulating theatre directly before their window, which, by dint of blows inflicted, and exclamations of passion, and the gravity of an accompanying cat, managed to extract the first smile that had broken over the features of the unhappy pair since they had left their home. From this they were drawn away by

the appearance of breakfast, a meal which they much required to recruit their exhausted spirits, and this having been duly demolished, Abel insisted upon his sister going to her bed-room and taking a few hours' sleep before they sallied forth to seek the abode of the bankers, the one object of their thoughts and wishes.

Barbara struggled hard to persuade Abel to do the same; but he was so alive to the necessity of acquiring some information concerning the relative position of places, in order that he might not be entirely lost in the excursions they were about to make, that he refused her entreaties, although in matters of health he was usually tractable to her wishes.

He then rang the bell for the waiter, a stolid-looking youth, with hair growing almost out of his eyes; and with a tone of business-like inquiry (for he did not wish to be taken for a bumpkin) he said, "Pray, can you tell me whether Longhead the banker lives near here?"

"Longhead?" said the waiter, with his hand to his hair. "No, sir, I can't say I do; but there's Mr. Broadhead lives over the way, if he will do for you."

Abel did not quite make out whether the youth intended to make game of him or not; but, nothing abashed, he continued, saying, "No, it's Mr. Longhead of Lombard-street, that I want."

"Ah, this is Broadhead of the Borough; so he won't do."

"But there *is* such a street as Lombard-street," said Abel as if he would himself be giving information. "You know that, don't you?"

"I believe there is too," said the waiter; "and I wish I had the picking of it."

At length Abel was fairly obliged to ask his way to Lombard-street; which obliged him to make the discovery that he was one totally new to London, and thus at once opened the eyes of the waiter as to the sort of personage he had to deal with.

"Maybe you are a stranger here," said the waiter. "If so, I say mind your eye, for London is but a queer place for the like of you. If you be going to Lombard-street, let me recommend you to take care of your pockets when you are coming out of it."

Abel took the hint, and passed his time until his sister should be ready in ruminating over his views. He was ever slow to think evil; yet still the conversation which he had held with the stranger in the coach concerning Woodby had produced an impression which taught him how ne-

cessary prudence was in trusting even one's best friend in pecuniary matters. The caution given to him by the waiter also checked those feelings of universal philanthropy which he had ever cherished, and he began to suspect that the love of one's neighbour, particularly in a capital, was a duty which required restriction. He was confirmed in this as he took his first walk along the street in order to try how he could pick his way, upon hearing some one behind him exclaim, "Sir, you'll lose your handkerchief!"

"Abel immediately felt in his pocket for that commodity; but not finding it there, exclaimed, "But it's gone!"

The only consolation he received was the sound of a hoot and a laugh from some one who had rapidly disappeared round a sharp corner.

CHAPTER XXIII.

*An insight into one of those City commodities called
'a bubble.'*

BARBARA, refreshed by sleep, sallied out about two o'clock with Abel from the Fleece Inn, to seek out Messrs. Longhead the bankers in Lombard-street. They took the proper direction; but on passing London Bridge, their eyes became so fascinated and their attention so riveted by the new and various objects which presented themselves, that they had almost forgotten the object of their search. After having attracted much attention from the passers-by owing to their primitive appearance, and after much inquiry, they at length succeeded in reaching a dark, unwashed, begrimed-looking mansion in Lombard-street, into which they entered through a greasy door and found themselves in front of a battalion of busy men, not one of whom took the least heed of them, but who continued counting out and paying money writing and making calculations, as if they were not present. Abel stepped up to one whose face wore a civil expression, and having inquired for Mr. Longhead, he was desired to proceed into an inner and still darker room, where several men were seen also busy in the various labours of the pen. As soon as our travellers appeared, a well-bred gentleman, the acting partner, stepped forward,

and having offered them seats, seemed by his inquisitive look to inquire the object of their visit. Barbara felt relief by this act of civility, and Abel seemed to revive from the weight of care which oppressed him. They squared themselves in their respective chairs as if announcing their intention of setting in for a long consultation, although the gentleman by certain indications of impatience and hasty mode of speech wished to indicate how valuable time was to him.

“Our name is Allnutt,” said Abel and Barbara both in the same breath.

“Very happy to see you, Mr. Arnold,” said the banker.

“I beg your pardon,” said Abel with great modesty; “my name is Allnutt.”

“The Allnutts of Ivycote,” added Aunt Bab.

“Extremely happy to see you,” said the banker, casting his eye towards a book in which he had been writing. “Can I be of any service to you?”

“We come,” said Abel, “in consequence of a letter I received;” at the same time drawing from his pocket the well-known document, and handing it to the banker, he added, “We wish to be informed what is to be done.”

“Oh!” said the banker, opening and glancing on the letter; “I see. Yes, just so: there has been a great fall in Mexican securities—the panic still continues, and I do not believe that you would get anybody even to look at your stock although you might be willing to give it away for nothing.”

“Give it away for nothing!” exclaimed Bab *sotto voce*.

“This is truly unfortunate,” said Abel, looking very serious, “for it involves our whole fortune. Pray, sir, how has this come to pass?”

“You must be quite aware, sir,” said the banker, “from your knowledge of the world, and of the English world in particular, that any novelty accompanied by hope of profit, encouraged and abetted by the Government of the country as this has been, is sure to turn the whole community, otherwise sober, into a nation of madmen. What is good in the abstract, becomes vicious in the hands of rogues and adventurers. So great was the illusion, that whilst the madness was raging, had a project of a loan to any place known or unknown in the world—even to the planet Mercury, been set on foot, I make no doubt that it would have been taken up and filled. With a country holding out the specious advantages which New Spain did, there was not a mo-

that no one could exist in such a scene of confusion, she again exclaimed, "But where was John?"

The well-bred banker being at length struck by this often-repeated question, turned to the imploring Bab, saying, "I beg your pardon, but pray who is John?"

"Dear me!" said Barbara, "don't you know who John is? Major John Allnutt, our brother, who went out to take possession of the mines, and to civilise and introduce steam and all that into Mexico—he is John. How is it possible that all this should take place and he be there?"

"I now recollect," said the banker; "he went out director of the Anglo-United-Coffer and Jalap Company—Major John Allnutt—I recollect very well—a major of engineers—a very ingenious, scientific, enterprising officer." Barbara and Abel both cheered up at hearing these words. "He went out with excellent prospects—a large capital subscribed—shares at a premium—great quantities of steam-engines and Cornish miners also were sent out; but something, I think, happened to that company—what was it? I recollect something about it." Then addressing himself with an exertion of voice to Mr. Shovel, who sat at a distance, he said; "Mr. Shovel, what happened to the Anglo-United-Coffer and Jalap Mining Company? I think so they called it."

Mr. Shovel, just raising his head a little from his desk, said, "There were no such mines to be found, and therefore the company was dissolved;" and then went on again with his occupation.

"The company was dissolved;" said the banker, "and therefore, I suppose, you will soon see your brother back in England."

This circumstance still more involved Abel and Barbara in perplexity, keeping up their spirits, on the one hand, in the hope of seeing their brother, but, on the other, destroying all the brilliant expectations they had formed of his prosperity and increasing wealth. At length Abel, totally unable to decide for himself what he ought to do, and seeing in the gentleman before him one who showed every inclination to be kind and considerate, in that exuberance of confidence which the wretched are so apt to bestow upon those who they think can protect them; said, "Sir, I beg your pardon for venturing to speak so boldly to you; but might I venture to ask what you would do if you were circumstanced as I am?"

The banker, who really was a kind-hearted man, answered after some hesitation, "In truth it is always difficult

to give advice in individual cases; but so far as the Mexican question concerns the shareholders, I would say that they ought to remain on the spot to second and assist by their endeavours the furthering such petitions as they might present to parliament to induce the king's government to interfere with the Mexicans in order to procure redress. Things may change; but experience tells us when the credit of a country has once been shaken, as in this instance, it takes long to restore confidence. Therefore, I would not have you be too sanguine in the hope of being speedily reinstated in your funds; but I would remain on the spot, and any assistance which we can afford you, I am sure we shall be very happy to put forward." Upon which making an impatient turn in his chair towards his desk, and Abel thereby taking the hint to depart, the parties separated with mutual expressions of civility and compliment.

The brother and sister upon leaving the banking-house walked on in silence for some time, both absorbed in thought at all they had heard, until Abel stopped short, and taking his sister's hand, said, "Barbara, we must send for Fanny and Mary immediately: we must stay here."

"Does that stand to reason, Abel?" said Aunt Bab.

"I am afraid it is the only thing we can do, circumstanced as we are," said he, whilst he endeavoured to suppress a deep sigh that rose from his breast.

Barbara in her secret mind partook of his feelings; but whether from the kind and civil manner with which they had been treated by the banker, or whether from the prospect of soon seeing John, it is true that at that moment she did not view the state of their affairs with the same desponding eye that Abel did. She hoped by her brother John's presence that things would all come right—for she argued, as he knew so much more of worldly matters than they did, so he would soon find some means of restoring their fortunes, and therefore she was infinitely more elated than Abel. She freely communicated her hopes to him—dwelt most emphatically upon the offers of assistance made by the banker, expressed great confidence in the never-failing resources of John's genius, and with all the self complacency of ignorance acting upon a sanguine temperament, had imagined her road to wealth and distinctions before they had paced half their steps back to their inn.

Abel, however, would not permit his sister to live in such a state of illusion; he solemnly warned her that she must prepare her mind to meet with all the privations and misery

that in order to understand him it was necessary to be educated in the same school. He had a sharp snipe-like face, hair growing straight down his head—a freckled, fair complexion—light blue eyes, and possessed a cross-made person, which he attempted to adorn by the dress of fashion, but which he in fact succeeded to turn into a most exquisite piece of caricature. His uncle had educated him for the profession he had adopted, with the exception of superadding the knowledge of the French language—a precaution, as he said with prophetic foresight which would prepare him for whatever might turn up, and which, by the bye, persons in the middling ranks of life are apt to look upon as an introduction to gentility.

Mark, although vulgar in the extreme, who, if he were tried at the standard of refinement, would be called in round terms a blackguard, was nevertheless a good-hearted, well-disposed, and serviceable youth. On the occasion now before us, he did not hesitate for a moment in obeying his uncle's request to make himself as useful as possible to the persons recommended to his care. He hastened with great zeal from his lodging, near Lincoln's-inn, to the Fleece in the Borough; and when he got there, feelings of indignation rose in his breast when he perceived the obscure place in which his friends had settled themselves—for in the City, as elsewhere, there are various degrees of comparison touching the gentility of situation. He had no sooner made himself known, than he insisted upon Abel and Barbara accompanying him immediately in search of lodgings. Then making several curious interjectional exclamations, he said addressing himself to Bab, "But it's a burning shame that they have shoved you into this dog-hole!—why, it's just fit to keep cat's-meat in, and that's all!" He then asked them where they would like to live. Finsbury square he recommended as the *flash* place in the City, and Tower-hill he thought handsome; Broad-street was good, but he deprecated Cateaton and Threadneedle-streets, or Mincing and Philpot lanes; but asserted that there were neat things to be had in the City-road and about Peerless-pool.

Abel and Barbara, who knew as little of one place as they did of another, said they did not much care where they lived, provided they could occasionally see their bankers, and be ready to catch John whenever he appeared; and they were soon ready to accompany their guide. Barbara, however, having expressed an opinion, that since they were

likely to be some time in London, they ought to live in a place where their friends might come to see them, Mark, all at once striking his head as if a bright thought had enlightened him announced that he had a friend who lived in Silver-street, Golden-square, in the West end, which was the genteelest place of all; and he was certain that by applying to him he would get them lodgings in his neighbourhood, or perhaps in his very house.

Barbara was pleased with the sound of these names: to live near a Silver street and in a Golden-square appeared to her a circumstance so ominous of good, that she almost jumped at the idea, and she urged Mark to conduct them thither as soon as possible. They fought their way through the crowded streets, stopping open-mouthed to look at the shops, then turning back to expostulate for being rudely pushed about, until they reached the corner of St. Paul's Churchyard, when Barbara, arresting Abel's progress, came to a stand and pulled him on one side to keep him from the press, which was more than usually overpowering.

"What are we standing here for?" said Mark, turning back to seek his companions.

"We'll only wait a bit," said Barbara, "till the people have come out of that large church."

Mark was amazingly tickled by this piece of information; but, instead of breaking out into a horse-laugh, he contented himself out of regard to good manners, merely to exclaim between his teeth—"The old girl *is* a rum one, however!" and invited them to follow him without more delay.

At length they reached the house of Mark's friend, who took them at once to a house in Golden-Square, a respectable-looking tenement, with three windows in front and a brass-knocker on the door, and here they hired a suite of apartments as their future home.

Whoever has seen the approaches to Silver-street—dismal from the surrounding objects, unclean from a neighbourhood of miserable dwellings, and abounding in bad scents—and brings to his imagination the fresh, cleanly, fragrant, and cheerful Ivycote; will perhaps have some notion of the virtue and self-denial exercised by Abel and Barbara in relinquishing the latter for the former abode. But Abel had fully made up his mind to put up with every privation and to relinquish all comforts until he could retrieve their fortune; and, moreover, in his own person to do his utmost to gain a livelihood for himself, his sisters and niece. Bar-

that flow from poverty, and to face not only with boldness, but with meek resignation, the trials which it was evident were preparing for them: his mind, habitually imbued with the most serious and religious thoughts, seemed to expand into a wider field of gratitude towards the goodness of Providence for deeming him an object sufficiently worthy of notice that he should be thus tried in his principles, and he endeavoured to instil the same feelings in the mind of his sister, who, although an innocent-minded, well-disposed creature in the abstract, was apt to be carried away by the family failing—a too sanguine hope of enjoying by quick transitions the sweets of worldly prosperity.

Upon reaching their resting-place, Abel determined upon sending a note together with old Cruikshank's letter to Mark Woodcock, requesting him to call at the Fleece Inn, for he found that without his assistance it would be difficult to secure proper lodgings, and whilst he was so doing, Aunt Bab passed her time in writing a letter to her sister Fanny. The reader may perhaps like to see this production: it ran as follows:—

“MY DEAR FANNY:—As soon as you receive this letter, you must begin to prepare to leave Ivycote. We have met a most civil, charming, amiable man in Mr. Longhead the banker of Lombard-street, who knew John, and called him an ingenious officer, and everything that is nice; but he said that he was coming home immediately, because he could not find the mines that he was sent about. This appears strange; but this excellent banker told us, that for the present our stock is not worth even giving away—there has been such a fall in Mexican securities, as he called them—and recommends us to fix in London in order to send petitions to the Houses of Parliament that they should attack the South Americans for us. Therefore, as we cannot do this at Ivycote, we must all be here; so begin to prepare: get the plate, linen, and clothes together—the groceries too—but never mind the cheeses and the bacon, as they must be sold with the furniture. Abel will write to Cruikshank about selling our things, with the pony, the pigs, and the cow; and then we will settle the day when you must set off, for we have not got our lodging yet in this immense city, which is something more wonderful than I ever thought of, or you either. We have got into the Fleece Inn, in the Borough, and have written to Cruikshank's nephew to come to help us taking a lodging. Do not think of setting off till you hear from us

again. You cannot think how well Abel is!—he sends you both a thousand loves. I am ever,

“Your affectionate sister,

“BARBARA ALLNUTT.”

CHAPTER XXIV.

A cockney described. The advantages of a friend in need.

THE next morning found Abel and Barbara struggling with a London fog—a phenomenon it may well be called to those who see it for the first time. They groped their way from their bed-rooms to the parlour, where they sat scarcely able to distinguish each other, enveloped in the dense vapour like persons passing through the purifying smoke of a lazaretto. Oppressed as they were by this darkness over the visible world, as well as by the sense of their own miseries, they were not a little relieved as the fog cleared away to observe their old friend Punch again performing his antics before their window: it seemed as if he had divined their misfortunes and was endeavouring to relieve them. They were lending all their attention to the humour of his jokes when Mr. Mark Woodcock was announced, and in walked the nephew of old Cruikshank the village attorney. We must present him as a rare specimen of the true cockney, in mind as well as in person and manners; being endowed with every prejudice to the most frantic degree in favour of his own country, and feeling and expressing a corresponding contempt for all things that related to others. He held it almost as part of his religion, that one Englishman could beat three Frenchmen ‘any day of the week,’ as he would say; that roast beef and plum-pudding, as representatives of English fare, were dishes which put to the blush the genius of French cookery; that all other nations were pigs compared to the cleanliness of the English; that we rode better and sang better, and had better fruit and better vegetables—in short, that we were in every respect more civilised than other people, and that London was the largest and the finest capital in the universe. He spoke a language replete with expletives, and so intermixed with words and idioms to be found in no dictionary,

that in order to understand him it was necessary to be educated in the same school. He had a sharp snipe-like face, hair growing straight down his head—a freckled, fair complexion—light blue eyes, and possessed a cross-made person, which he attempted to adorn by the dress of fashion, but which he in fact succeeded to turn into a most exquisite piece of caricature. His uncle had educated him for the profession he had adopted, with the exception of superadding the knowledge of the French language—a precaution, as he said with prophetic foresight which would prepare him for whatever might turn up, and which, by the bye, persons in the middling ranks of life are apt to look upon as an introduction to gentility.

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bara, taking Mark's word that Golden-square was the head quarters of gentility, easily acquiesced in the eligibility of her lodgings; and having made their arrangements for taking immediate possession, they retraced their steps whence they came; in order to return accompanied by their goods and chattels.

Having reached the Fleece, they ordered a hackney-coach, and then called for their bill. The waiter brought in that inevitable document with a self-sufficient smirk, and delivered it with a flourish into Abel's hand. The sum total amounted to a great deal more than he had expected. Casting his eye over the items, he discovered, the first day, "To Punch, 1s." and the second the same charge. "Barbara," said he to his sister, "did you take punch? I am sure I did not!"

"Punch!" exclaimed Bab; "what punch? I have drunk nothing but water since I have been here!"

"They have charged punch twice!" said Abel; "here must be some mistake." Upon which he rang the bell for the waiter. "We have had no punch!" said Abel in a mild tone of voice; "why is it charged?"

"I believe you have, sir," said the waiter; "but I'll inquire." He went out and returned an instant after and said, "Yes, sir, you've had Punch twice—once yesterday morning, and once this."

"This can never be!" said Abel. "Pray tell me, where had we it?"

"Why, you had it at the window there," said the waiter. "I saw you."

"At the window!" exclaimed Bab and Abel both at the same time. "This is a gross imposition—we cannot allow this!—how can you prove it?" said Abel.

"The man outside saw you, as well as me," said the waiter. "Why, you wouldn't enjoy Punch without paying for it, would you?"

"What do you mean by punch?—you surely don't mean the puppet-show in the street?" said Abel.

"Yes, sir, that's the Punch I mean," said the waiter with the greatest effrontery.

"Blow me!" exclaimed Mark, if I ever heard the like of this!—this is doing business with a vengeance! She is a good one at a pun, however—I will say that for her!"

"Call in your mistress," said Abel to the waiter; "we must settle the matter with her."

She soon appeared, and flung into the room with such an

air of defiance, and with so red a face, that it was evident she was armed at all points for war. She stood with one hand on the door, and with the other on her hip, and begged to know if anything was wrong. Abel soon told his griefs in mild expostulation; asserted that what was done for the amusement of all in the street could not be brought as a specific charge to him in the house, and finished by announcing his determination not to pay such a bill. This declaration was answered by a burst of invective and abuse, expressed in language so totally new to the ears of Abel and Barbara, that they shrank from her presence like pigeons before the hawk. She had recourse to the same line of argument which low people invariably adopt—that is, in the first place, of giving a definition of the word ‘gentleman,’ and then starting from that point to give large and varied views upon things in general.

“You call yourself a gentleman, I dare say now,” said she to Abel, her face and action bespeaking anger and brandy—“there’s that” (snapping her fingers at the same time) “for such gentlemen!—A pretty gentleman indeed, as won’t pay for what he’s had! You’ve had Punch, and therefore you must pay for Punch—that’s flat. I should like to see you—ay, and a great deal better than the like of you, try to leave my house without paying that bill—ay, and every doit of it too!—you’d find that we are not such nincompoops as you take us for! And I, a lone widow too, to be insulted by such as you!”

She would have said much more, had not she been stopped by Mark, who, like one hearing a tune which is familiar to him, immediately falls to singing it himself, was so roused by the sounds of a language which formed part of his vocabulary, that at length, unable to contain himself, he poured forth all the energies of his eloquence in such a manner that it startled the landlady, and tended in a great measure to check her violence.

He soon gave her to understand that he was a lawyer; a circumstance which blanched her cheek, but fired her eye—for the effect which such a person produces upon one of the lower class is very much the same as spitting upon hot iron, causing it to hiss and to cool at one and the same time. She continued her violence, but it was violence on the defensive, until at length fairly beaten by the sounds of certain talismanic words which lawyers are apt to pronounce, she retreated under a volley of the most intense abuse. The charges of the bill were properly abated; and Abel and Bar-

bara, conducted by their successful champion, having mounted the hackney-coach, left the Fleece Inn under the full conviction that that emblem had been adopted by some conscientious scoundrel of an innkeeper, who had determined to tell no lie, not even by sign.

It need not be suggested that the landlady, having concluded from Abel and Barbara's rustic appearance, and being confirmed in her judgment by what she heard from the waiter, that they were totally new to London and ignorant of its ways, had ingeniously contrived the trick of Punch to increase her charges. Let it be said that this circumstance served as a warning to the new-comers to be on their guard in all matters portentous of a bill; and as they took possession of their new lodgings, they took care to be duly informed upon every point which involved to them so weighty a consideration. Mark was of the greatest use in making their arrangements for housekeeping: he went and came, fetched and carried, with the most zealous attention; nor did he quit them until he had seen them fairly installed and surrounded by the various necessaries of life. He then left them after receiving a pressing invitation to return the next day; whilst they lost no time in writing letters to Ivycote, to give the last instructions to Fanny and Mary for the pursuit of their journey, accompanied by the address of their present abode.

Abel wrote to Cruikshank, giving him instructions to proceed immediately with the sale of the furniture, provisions, live and dead stock, at Ivycote, and to dispose of the lease of the house upon the best terms, reserving only such things as his sister might want. He calculated that with the money so produced he would be in possession of a sufficient sum to enable them to live on in London until some turn should take place in their affairs; whilst at the same time he determined to discover and to pursue the best mode of increasing their means either by the ingenuity of their brains, or the industry of their hands. He was deeply affected as he wrote this letter; for, during its composition, he could not omit revolving in his mind the possibility of their being reduced to the greatest straits. Unknown in a large capital, and ignorant of its ways, usages, and resources, he felt how great were the chances of their being thrown into the lowest abyss of poverty, and becoming beggars and wanderers in the streets. At the same time, hope would spring up and dart a ray of consolation athwart the dark fears of his breast; for he would cling to the cer-

tainty of being encompassed in his path by the power of a protecting Providence, and would ever and anon call up those words, the constant refuge of the wretched, in which the holy poet asserts that from youth to old age 'he had never seen the righteous man forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread.' He attempted all in his power to conceal his feelings from his sister, who, excited as she had been by novelty, and by the many cares incidental to their new situation, had almost forgotten their miseries in their hurry; but when she came to a recollection of their true state, and when, pen in hand, she was about putting the finishing stroke to their former happiness by writing to her sister and niece to abandon all and join them, she became quite overwhelmed by her grief, and ere she had written five lines, she burst out into a violent paroxysm of tears. The brother and sister had sat in silence each over their letter; but when this burst of woe came to Abel's ears, so corresponding to his own, he could contain himself no longer, and he also wept aloud.

CHAPTER XXV.

Simplicity and silliness combined are the best ingredients for making a fool.

WHO, that has ever lived in the small community of a country village and its neighbourhood, but must feel how great a sensation would be produced by such an incident as the breaking up of an establishment like the one at Ivycote, and the dispersion of its inhabitants. Ever since the memorable day of the abrupt departure of Aunt Bab and Uncle Abel, the subject matter of gossip and conversation among the high and low, rich and poor, was their motive for such a hasty step. The most simple occurrence in a city is a subject of marvel to a man in the woods; a dozen respectable people may be ruined in one street without its being known in the next: whereas, if an old woman loses her hereditary pair of bellows in the village, it raises a hue and cry all over the hundred. The plain fact of Mexico having refused to pay her dividends, when transported into

the country, was distorted into every absurdity or exaggeration which ignorance could devise.

As soon as Fanny had received her sister's letter, she found herself supplied with so excellent a pretext for leaving their old abode, and the breaking up of their household, that she did not fail to make use of it to whoever chose to hear her. Wherever she went, her first words were, "I am going to London in a few days to petition parliament;" and thus along the road, at the alehouse-door—at the chandler's shop—at the blacksmith's anvil, and at the plough-tail, nothing was spoken of but that Miss Fanny was going to London to petition parliament. The object of the petition seemed to be entirely absorbed in the high-sounding fact. Every one had heard of the losses sustained by the family; but as no one could make out the complicated reasons involving the history of foreign loans, dividends, and national securities, no one ventured to explain them; therefore they remained satisfied with the solitary explanation above mentioned.

The only approach to the truth was made by Betsy Cruikshank, who, having heard her father the attorney discourse upon the subject, thought that she might speak her mind, and therefore the next time she saw her opposite neighbour, Mrs. Humphries the schoolmistress, she was heard to say across the road, "Have you heard the news? Miss Fanny is going to London to petition parliament."

"What for?" said Mrs. Humphries.

"Because they say the Mexicans have seized all Mr. Abel's stock."

"What stock?" said Mrs. Humphries.

This question puzzled Betsy, who, pausing a moment, said "His live stock, to be sure."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Humphries, apparently quite satisfied, and then very soon after left the care of her school to spread about the report; and thus Betsy's news, by the end of the day, having run through as many variations as a simple tune does in modern composition, at length stopped at this fact—that the village stocks had been run away with, and that Miss Fanny was going to London to petition parliament for a new set.

Ever since the absence of Abel and Barbara, Edward Manby had not failed to call constantly at Iyycote. He came and went daily, more and more enamoured with the charms and virtues of Mary; but Fanny always cherished a secret something that those old long-acknowledged beauties

of hers would work their way into men's hearts in spite of every obstacle, and that Edward was gradually becoming their victim. He was, it is true, very attentive to her; but whilst his tongue in accents kind and gentle addressed the aunt, his eyes and heart were all with the niece. Mary, however much she might be charmed with Edward, and however much she might be pleased with his conversation, still, in the present circumstances of her family, she felt how imperative it was to check those feelings which, if indulged, might still add to their miseries; and she determined to watch the emotions of her heart with the most scrupulous care, lest in giving way to her partiality she might hold out false encouragement to the object of it. She was, moreover, oppressed with anxiety concerning her father, from whom it was long since she had received any intelligence.

Edward was seated in the parlour with Aunt Fanny and Mary when Barbara's second letter arrived. As soon as Fanny had read it, and fully understood the pressing nature of its contents, although well prepared by the first letter, she was seized with one of those hydra-headed fits of fussiness which are so apt to disorder a weak mind, and in this instance so weak that it had not capacity to take in more than one thing at a time. London, a stage-coach, her trunk, petition to parliament, her bandbox, a handsome banker, Golden-square, her brother John, groceries and packing—all these things in rapid confusion arose in her mind, and produced such a bewilderment of ideas, that although she sat fixed in her chair, yet she seemed pulled about in fifty different ways at once. She willingly would have got up and done all that was necessary at one and the same time; but, after a long struggle, she was so fairly overcome by the nervous excitement which this call for immediate action produced, that all she could do was to burst into tears, and for a time she freely gave way to violent weeping.

Mary, too, was distressed: she would fain have given consolation to her aunt, but it was out of her power to help her, so agitated was she by the thousand cares which had all at once burst upon her mind. Edward, perceiving that women in so forlorn a situation require the prop of man's assistance to carry them through their difficulties, determined instantly to make an offer of his services to escort them to London, and not to leave them until he had deposited them in the hands of their relations. This he did in as delicate a manner as possible (for he feared to appear

too forward), but at the same time with such a warmth of sincerity, that Aunt Fanny and Mary both received immediate consolation from his proposal.

There was that in the frank character of Edward which inspired unlimited confidence; and ere a quarter of an hour had elapsed he formed a plan of proceedings for them which rendered the whole business of the journey easy and agreeable. He moreover made himself eminently useful in furthering Abel's instructions to old Cruikshank with regard to the disposal of the property; and so indefatigable was he in his exertions, that on the third day after the receipt of Abel and Barbara's letters they were ready to take their departure. But before they did this, Fanny thought it right to take leave of their friends at Belvedere Hall, and accordingly drove there for the last time in the expiring splendour of their pony-chaise, with honest Brown for her coachman. Mary accompanied her; and although a close observer might have observed a deep shade of melancholy on her countenance, still that did not diminish the brilliancy of her beauty or the charm of her natural and artless manners.

Those afflicted with extreme, and therefore inconvenient sensibility, would have remarked a tone of protection in the ladies of the family of Belvedere in their manner of reception, which marked how much the depression in Mexican securities acted upon their political horizon. Mrs. Woodby, in lieu of that large and well-expanded hand which she was wont to thrust forward in former greetings, was satisfied on this occasion to adopt the *monodactylon* form of recognition. The young ladies embraced without fervour; Miss Ellen scarcely went through the form towards Mary, for reasons easily to be guessed; whilst Anne allowed her affections for Aunt Fanny to be transferred to her bonnet, which part of her head-dress meeting that of the more aged spinter's resembled a shock of helmets rather than the recognition of friendship. As for lady Thomson, she scarcely took any notice of them as they entered the room; for in her inmost thoughts she asserted that it was a duty she owed to herself on no occasion to increase her acquaintance with those who were never likely to be of the least use to her. Tom Woodby, on the other hand, since the fall in their fortunes, had put himself forward as a great admirer of Mary, criticised her beauty and person with the disgusting tone of a libertine, and to all the vulgar raillery with which he was assailed by his sisters he only answered by a knowing shake of the head and a licentious leer.

When Aunt Fanny, in announcing their immediate departure, had entered into some particulars of that necessity which was now so well known to all the country, she excited the smiles and significant looks of her auditors, for she had been a theme of ridicule rather than an object of pity ever since the day of the ball and the family misfortune. She still endeavoured to make the whole occurrence pass off with high-minded indifference; and talked of mines, and securities, and Mexico, and her brother John, with that sort of air which might have made those believe, who did not know the true state of the case, that it only required a petition to parliament to set the whole matter to rights. She also made known, with perhaps the same sort of air that a lady of fashion announces to her friends her having taken a house in Grosvenor-Square, that her brother and sister had fixed upon *the* Golden-Square (as she called it) as their future abode; never in the least suspecting that a place possessing so dazzling a name was scarcely ever known in the polite circles.

“Golden-Square!” exclaimed Mrs. Woodby; “is that anywhere near the Minories?”

“I never heard of the name before,” said Anne; “it can’t be one of the fashionable squares.”

“Oh, indeed it is very fashionable,” said Fanny: “it is close to Silver-street!” giving her word an emphasis which denoted great topographical knowledge.

“I never heard of Silver-street either,” said Anne; “I wonder at which end of the town it is?”

“It is at neither end,” said Fanny, quite bristling up; “it is in the middle, where it ought to be.”

“Then I suppose it may be near one of the inns of court,” said Anne.

“It is near no inn whatever,” said Fanny still more irate; “it has nothing to do with an inn or the court of an inn. It is where all genteel people live, so Bab tells me; and so Mark Woodcock told her, and he knows, for he has lived in London all his life.”

Poor Fanny only got herself well laughed at for her assertions, in the making of which she was mainly impelled by the desire of upholding the family dignities and advocating the measures taken by her brother and sister. During this discussion, the arrogant Tom had been endeavouring to engage Mary’s attention, inflating his insignificant person into as much importance as it was capable of assuming, and amusing her as he thought by malicious re-

marks upon persons of their acquaintance, in which sly calumnious hints at Edward Manby's poverty, parentage, and dependent situation were not omitted, and purposely brought forward in order to produce comparison with his own great expectations and personal merits.

Mary and Fanny rose at the same time to take their leave, not very well pleased with the result of their visit; although Mrs. Woodby and her daughters said that they hoped soon to meet in London, for that it was Mr. Woodby's intention to spend the next season there, as Ellen was to be brought out; and she added, "Since their last visit to Brighton, it became quite a matter of duty for them all to go to court, noticed as they had been by the king and queen."

Mr. Woodby, who had become shy of the Allnutts since the catastrophe in the Mexican funds, had designedly absented himself during this visit, fearing that he might be called upon to make explanations; and when he heard that the country was likely to be clear of them for the future, and that their house and land were to be disposed of, he rejoiced, as it had been a favourite project of his to get possession of them, in order to complete the boundary of his estate.

Fanny and Mary having returned to Ivycote, nothing now further remained to be done than to make preparations for immediate departure. In the contemplation of their reduced circumstances, Abel had thought it right to discharge both old Betty and honest Brown; but when the moment of the ultimate migration arrived, old Betty announced that nothing would prevent her from accompanying Aunt Fanny and her niece; and that, if they could not afford to pay her wages, she would serve them for nothing, and wait like them with patience for better times.

This being agreed to, we will spare the reader the last parting from the beloved home of the Allnutts—in which he would have sympathised with the grief of Mary and the deep regrets of Aunt Fanny, who, wandering about the house and premises with aching hearts, bade adieu to every spot as if taking leave of old friends—and request him to exert his imagination in forming a succession of pictures in which the faded spinster with her niece by her side in the coach, with Edward Manby assiduous and attentive to them both, with faithful Betty in the remaining corner, are first driving with reckless speed along the turnpike-road—then catching hasty mouthfuls from tables spread at stated intervals—then becoming jaded and way-worn at the close of day—then

nodding with unrefreshing slumbers during the night—until at length the day having dawned, they are aroused from sleep by a friendly hand pointing to a dark, yellow, sluggish-looking mass of heavy vapour, and exclaiming: “There—there is London!”

At length the coach stopped in London itself; and whilst Fanny and Mary were opening their eyes at the strange things which surrounded them, and at the variety of new faces which were collected, on a sudden they were greeted by the sound of a well-known voice, and then, to their extreme joy, they saw Uncle Abel. Mary would have jumped into his arms, and almost screamed with delight; Fanny collected herself into as becoming an attitude as she could before so many strangers; while Edward Manby was unceasing in his exertions to collect their luggage, to satisfy the numerous demands for shillings and sixpences, and at length to deposit them in the hackney-coach which was to convey them to Golden-square.

We will not, for the present, advert to the thousand and one things which the brother, sisters, and niece, had to say to each other upon their first meeting; although in truth, admirers as we are of genuine feeling and unsophisticated nature in all its various shades and departments, we would willingly have collected their remarks, exclamations, sayings, and doings, for the gratification of those who might sympathise with us in our admiration, but we wish to put the reader right upon the state of feeling which existed between Mary and Edward.

From the commencement of their acquaintance to the present moment, their admiration had been progressive and reciprocal; and it had stopped at the point where lovers profess that they feel like brother and sister. Edward, however, had in truth proceeded beyond that point in his love, and so intense was his admiration, and genuine his sincerity, that we believe he would willingly have subjected himself to any test to prove it; but the present forlorn situation of the family, and the position of Mary herself, who, without the sanction of her father, he knew would not bind herself to any one, combined to keep his feelings in check, and he restricted himself to demonstrations of the greatest devotion to her and to those who surrounded her. Mary, as we said before, watched over her feelings with circumspection; but her prudence served only to smother a flame which might break out upon the first great excitement.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Misfortune sharpens the wits. Need makes the old wife to trot.

BARBARA and Abel, ever since their settlement in Golden-square, held daily conferences upon what they could do in order to procure themselves the means of gaining an independent livelihood. When they came to cast up the result of their different capabilities, they ascertained that Barbara had excellent notions of cookery and could make perfect pickles and preserves: that Fanny had a great knack at fancy-work, and showed much talent for the inventions of pincushions; that Mary might, with some teaching, become a governess; and that Abel could undertake to teach the German flute.

Mark Woodcock had been called in to give his opinion; but his powers of invention were small, and did not reach beyond the mode of making attorneys and attorneys' clerks. However, when he exerted his recollection, it occurred to him that, by great exertion among his friends, he might possibly secure to Abel the situation of secretary to the club of Jolly Fellows, held weekly in a tavern in Covent Garden, where he would have an opportunity of forming a wide acquaintance which might assist him in his views. Abel was fearful that his abstemious habits would render him ineligible for the situation; but still, rather than allow his sisters to starve, he was ready to undertake the necessary acts of conviviality: the scheme, however, was allowed to lie over for further consideration.

When Edward came, he also was asked to assist them with his suggestions; for although he did not habitually live much in London, yet he was acquainted with its ways and means, and had acquired some knowledge of the literary market, in which he had occasionally been himself a speculator. Happy would he have been to share his small pittance with his friends, for small indeed it was; but his prospects also consisted mainly in his own ingenuity and industry; and although for the present he was poor, yet still he hoped in time to hit upon some mode of gaining an independent livelihood. Having, like many young authors, made his first essays in the periodical publications of the day, he stated it as his opinion, that a very tolerable livelihood might

be gained in literature, provided talent and industry went hand in hand; and, moreover, furnished the direction of a bookseller living not far from Golden-square, who was ever ready to offer fair remuneration for the lighter kinds of composition,—poetry, tales, pointed anecdotes, or descriptive sketches. “At least,” added Edward, “I found him so disposed three years ago!”

This hint was sufficient to set the brains of the sisters, the brother, and the niece, immediately at work. They thought long and oft, but nothing came. The process of sitting down to make a fortune without any more materials than a head, pen and ink, and a piece of paper, seemed to them so very simple that they all decided it was much more agreeable to do so than to cross the seas to dig for gold in Mexico. What so charming, thought they, as getting, in return for a few sheets of paper, pounds of gold! As for invention, knowledge, powers of description, judgment, and the various qualities of the mind requisite to the production of a successful work, they asserted that no one could know what share of them he possessed until he tried. Abel, for aught they knew, might prove a second Milton,—Barbara might shine forth as an Austin,—and Fanny rival Miss Edgworth. It was amusing to remark the silence evident in the household since this suggestion of Edward Manby; every individual that composed it was deep in cogitation; each in their turn had “sunk from thought to thought a vast profound,” until their heads perfectly seemed to ache with cogitation.

Several days elapsed, and not a single idea had crossed the four collected heads of the family, when Aunt Bab one morning came out all radiant with joy from her bed-room asserting she had been visited by a happy inspiration during the night,—that by chance she had dreamt of roasted hare, and, as she awoke, she asked herself why she should not put into verse the whole of Mrs. Rundell’s book upon cookery? She thought that such a work must be a desideratum in the world; for that it stood to reason it would be much easier for a cook to carry in mind the precepts which it contained in verse, than to retain them in prose. She said that she had been so much impelled by this thought that she could not refrain that very morning from trying her skill, and that she had selected Mrs. Rundell’s recipe for making hare-soup (out of compliment to her dream) as her first essay. She had, however, found the truth of the saying, ‘that dreams were to be interpreted by contraries,’ for that

in exerting her wits to the utmost, she could not get beyond the first two lines, do all she could. She had succeeded thus far:

When hares are old, and fit for nothing else,
Then is your time to make them into soup.

But where the rhymes for *else* and *soup* were to be found she for one could not tell, therefore it stood to reason that she must try something else. She had been more successful in her second essay, it was on the subject of beef; the rhymes were easy and almost spoke for themselves. She thought she had succeeded, and that she might give it as a specimen of the whole work. Upon which she produced a fragment of paper, from which she read as follows:

TO STEW A RUMP OF BEEF.

Wash it well and season it hot,
Bind it, cram it in a pot;
Fry three onions, put them to it,
Carrots, turnips, cloves and suet;
With broth or gravy cover it up,
Put in your spoon and take a sup.
Soft and gentle let it simmer,
Then of port throw in a brimmer.
With judgment let the ketchup flow,
Of vinegar a glass bestow.
Simmer again for half an hour;
Serve at six, and then devour.

Various were the observations made, and all seemed to say that it was much better than anything they could have expected from the sort of subject, which, to say the least, was not very poetic. Aunt Bab, in describing the process of composition, asserted that the book and its materials would be very much improved by being in verse—"For," said she, "in this very receipt, I have increased the excellence of the dish to be dressed, by adding an ingredient which it did not possess before—namely, suet. I wanted a rhyme for 'to it,' and up came 'suet' as a matter of course; and therefore it stands to reason that I have added to its value."

Edward was mightily diverted by this essay, which he thought was quite original, and perhaps might hit the public taste, which he asserted was ever the first consideration in the mind of publishers. The most divine poem, the most learned disquisition, the profoundest research, the greatest

compass of invention, he said, were looked upon as so much refuse by the booksellers if they were not adapted to public taste.

“What then can be better adapted to the public taste,” said Aunt Bab, not giving those words the intellectual meaning which Edward had intended to convey, “than a book of cookery? It stands to reason that, with so many dishes described before him, everybody will find one at least to his taste.” She then announced her intention of going on with her work, and Edward promised that he would submit her labours to his friend the publisher as soon as she should have collected a few more specimens.

Not long after Barbara’s exposure of her plan, Uncle Abel was observed to be more than usually oppressed with thought; and it was remarked that he occasionally had recourse to scraps of paper upon which he wrote by snatches, and seemed to be intensely interested during that operation,—in fact, he exhibited every symptom of composing a poem? When he was spoken to, he did not answer; he became absent in mind, and, little heeding the gross and dismal objects by which he was surrounded in the dark atmosphere of Golden-square, he appeared to breathe in an ideal world of his own creation. At length, one morning after breakfast, he announced that he had done his utmost to put together some lines which he conceived, with their approbation, he might submit to the publisher; and although he was quite diffident about their success, yet, having been impelled by what Edward Manby had said, and by the sense of their necessities, he had laboured hard to make himself a poet. “Read! read!” was exclaimed by all present.

“I wonder what he can have found to write about in this dull hole!” said Fanny.

“I wish I could write something too!” said Mary despondingly.

“Read!” said Bab, putting on a most critical look.

Abel drew forth a paper, and read as follows:

ON INNOCENT PLEASURES.

Away for e’er ye vain and vicious joys!
Ye haunts of vapid mirth and idle noise!
For me no more your revelry shall please,
Your banquets sicken, or your coxcombs tease.

“I see,” said Bab, with a sigh, “you have been thinking of our doings at Ivycote!”

But come, thou sober harmony of soul,—
 The passions' bridle, and the heart's control;
 Come calm delights, pure as the heavenly ray,
 Cheerful though serious, temperate though gay.
 Oh! how I love each simple scene to trace,
 And from rude Nature snatch each artless grace;
 'Midst fields, and woods, and steepest wilds to rove,
 Pause on each bank, and muse in every grove!
 To watch the glimmerings of th' approaching day,
 The solemn shades of dawn, the shooting ray,—
 Nature all sparkling from the midnight rain,—
 The long bright gleams that flash across the plain.
 To meet the flocks freed from th' impatient pen,
 In fleecy train winding across the glen,
 Whilst lowing herds, slow moving from the shed,
 Break the still air, and o'er the pastures spread.
 Or, at the evening's close, from some tall brow,
 To mark the sun's retreat from all below,
 The thin blue vapour's harmonising dye,
 Blending the distant landscape with the sky—
 To hear the pipe enlivening the vale,
 And peals of laughter swelling on the gale,
 For new delights each rural sound provokes—
 The ploughman chiding loud his sturdy yokes—
 The busy mill and streams that dash along—
 The shepherd's shout, the milkmaid's artless song—
 The cock's response—the caw—the chattering jay—
 The honest bark, and e'en the distant bray—

“Stop!” said Bab; that won't do Abel!”

These are thy joys, sweet Innocence; and these,
 Where virtue fills the heart,—

“Stop!” again exclaimed Bab; “the bray will never do—how can you say that you have received pleasure from the bray of an ass? That alone will make the publisher reject your work.”

“I think that any sound, be it what it may,” said Abel, “which brings rural images before the mind, is pleasing; and therefore it appeared to me that I might class the bray with the other sounds which I have mentioned.”

“Nothing can reconcile me to a donkey's bray,” said Fanny.

“It was only this very morning,” said Mary, with great deference of manner, “that I heard an ass braying in the square; and I could almost have cried, it put me so much in mind of Mrs. Humphrey's donkey at dear Ivycote, with which we were all so well acquainted.

“There!” said Abel; “Mary has explained my meaning

at once. It is not that the braying itself is an agreeable noise but it is the association of ideas thus produced, which is the cause of the pleasurable feeling, and indeed one may say of all poetic feeling."

"Well, said Barbara, "you'll see I'm right, for it stands to reason that I am. We will refer to Edward Manby when he comes, and you'll see that he will say I'm right. How any poetry can be extracted from the bray of an ass, is to me incomprehensible!"

They argued for some time on this subject until they had thrown themselves into a sufficient degree of party heat; and when Edward Manby appeared, one and all they rushed towards him each with a question on their tongue, of which the words "ass" and "braying" were heard distinctly above the rest. When he could sufficiently abate the violence of their zeal, and ascertain the object of dispute, like all moderators, he took the middle line, and said, "that for his part he must avow, that the braying of an ass in Golden-square appeared to him as much out of character as might be the singing of Braham (let us say) in a field, or a farm-yard; but that the one no more precluded the sweet recollections of rural life and scenery, than did the other the calling up the whole fascination of an opera-house.

With this all parties were satisfied, and harmony was restored, though not before Aunt Bab had insisted upon receiving Edward's opinion whether her own particular observations upon Abel's poem were well or ill founded. Edward read it over with much attention, and expressed himself quite satisfied with the propriety of the image which Abel had used, however low it might appear: he observed that the word 'neigh' might have been adopted instead of 'bray,' and would have answered the rhyme just as well; but that the image which that word produced was rather of too elevated a character for the others which preceded it, and would have destroyed the humble and homely cast of the picture. Barbara gulped down no slight feeling of mortification at this decision against her judgment; but she did not allow it to disturb her good feeling towards him who pronounced it. On the contrary, when he proclaimed himself ready to proceed to the publisher in order to propose the two productions, hers and Abel's, for insertion in one of his next publications, she could not sufficiently express her gratitude; for if there be one feeling more impelling than another, it is the desire which every one has, who has any pretensions to write, to see himself in print for the first time.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Writing for one's bread seldom answers unless one is bred to writing.

AUNT BARBARA having given the finish to some pathetic lines upon the best mode of scalding a sucking-pig, with a spirited address to those who are about to choose fish, presented them to Edward as he was about to conduct Abel to the publisher's, saying, "These specimens must do for the present, and will show what my intentions are."

Edward and Abel were about leaving the house, when Aunt Fanny came rushing after them flourishing a sheet of paper in her hand, and saying that she had just finished a tale which she hoped might be thought worthy of being added to the family productions: she avowed that it was a hasty sketch, and hoped it might be classed among the light literature of the day. Edward, with the greatest good-nature, took it from her, and said that they had better read it before they proceeded further, and as it appeared short it would not take up much of their time. Without making any formal sitting, they stood round him whilst he read as follows:

"THE STORY OF THE SWEET CURRANJEL,

AN EASTERN PRINCESS.

"IN a deep sequestered wood, totally secluded from the busy haunts of men, and quite impossible to be pierced by the sun's rays, lived the sweet Curranjel, in a most beautiful cottage entirely covered over with ivy entwined with honeysuckles, and darkened into the coolest freshness by the number of odoriferous plants which grew quite over her windows. She passed her whole existence in sitting on a mossy bank, tending a lovely little lamb, white as the driven snow, which she always kept beautifully washed with the best brown Windsor soap, and tied with a pink riband to her waist; whilst she held a crook in her hand and read a book with the other. She was always dressed in the cleanest white muslin pelisse imaginable, with pink ribands and bows in her sleeves and round her waist, and with a lovely Leghorn hat on her head, and white kid gloves. She was so extremely beautiful, that every-body who saw her, as they passed by, would turn round and stare at her, and

say to themselves, 'La! I wonder who is that?' Although she never stirred from the repose of her luxurious residence, yet she was the talk and admiration of all the neighbourhood; and people would come from a great distance just to steal a peep at her from behind the trees, and dodge round and round just to get one single glimpse of her astonishingly powerful coal-black eyes. One day, as the sweet Curranjel was partaking of a cold collation by the side of a murmuring stream, composed of some nice clouted cream, with some raspberry jam in it, and some very nice macaroon biscuits, to her great surprise all of a sudden her dear innocent little lamb made a jump, and breaking its pink riband from her waist, ran away. She was puzzled at first what to do with her clouted cream and macaroons; but at length, with great presence of mind, she laid them down upon the bank, and like a young mountain goat, fleetier than the winds, she took to her legs and ran after her innocent little lamb. She had not run many steps, when, just as she turned round a corner, she perceived straight before her a most accomplished young Eastern prince, extremely handsome, with auburn hair curling all over his head; teeth of astonishing whiteness, and with piercing eyes darting from behind an aquiline nose, and very red downy cheeks. He was dressed in the most beautiful manner in a Polish dress, with tassels hanging from his curiously embroidered cap, and held a flageolet in his hands, upon which he could play divinely. She stopped in the greatest confusion—he stopped in utter dismay. She looked away and down on the ground at the same time—he stole side-glances at her, but dared not speak. They would have remained so for a long time, perhaps to this very hour, had not the little innocent lamb come bleating and hopping by; when the sweet Curranjel, forgetting her awkward situation, made a dart forward to seize the pink riband—the youth also made a dart forward to seize the lamb—and these two darts having brought them close together, they stood close to each as if they had been fixed by one dart:—there they stood, the innocent lamb between them, the picture of virtuous love and Arcadian simplicity. Their respective breasts heaved—their respective tongues faltered—the lamb bleated, until overcome by the intensity of his feelings, the young stranger at length exclaimed with the most impassioned accents, 'I love thee!' which struck with such deep vibrations in the inmost heart of the sweet Curranjel, that she, no longer able to contain her emotions, answered in these simple but expressive words: 'Do you?'

and the lamb being an emblem of the purity of their affections, they were immediately married by a Roman Catholic priest who lived in an adjoining cell, and were very happy ever after."

Edward scarcely knew which way to look after reading this specimen of Fanny's idea of an Eastern tale. Fearful of hurting her feelings, he composed his features as well as he could into proper gravity, and assured her that he would offer it to the notice of the publisher, and without more ceremony, accompanied by Abel he led the way to his habitation. In his recollection it had been a mean-looking shop; but when he approached the spot, to his surprise he found a front so ornamented, glazed, and painted—so resplendent from without with the promise of every literary luxury within, that he scarcely ventured to enter. When he did so, instead of those overlaid counters and dusty shelves which he well recollected, he found a handsome apartment, carpeted, decked with mahogany counters, glittering with books in brilliant bindings, and exhibiting a magnificence which bespoke what in fact was very nearly the truth, that all the genius of the times was rather expended upon the surface of things than upon their intrinsic merits.

Edward, followed by Abel, was introduced into a small sanctum; still more beautifully fitted up than the main shop, where, seated at a handsome table covered with papers, books, and manuscripts, sat in great state, and in a handsome easy chair, the owner and director of the establishment.

When Edward first knew him, he was all smiles and welcome; his appearance at that time was without pretensions, and there was a musty complexion on whatever surrounded him, very different from his looks at the present moment; for now everything wore the appearance of gentility—he was dressed with the most scrupulous precision, and might have vied in appearance with the great of the land. Instead of wearing a soft and supplicating look, he now appeared to be on the defensive—he was buttoned up and mysterious—he had adopted the manners of one given to protection. When Edward was introduced, he scarcely rose from his seat, and then formally offered him and Abel chairs. Scarcely acknowledging that he had known Edward before, when the business of the visit was explained, he immediately put on a doubting face, and after considerable hesitation, turning over the papers which had been put into his hand, said

“These sort of things did very well some time ago; but we do nothing now but what is high—quite tip-top.”

“Ah! I suppose that the world has been so accustomed to read the beauties of Byron,” said Edward, “that it can bear nothing else. I am afraid, if that be the case, our productions can have but little chance.”

“It is not that I mean,” said the publisher: “pray, may I ask who is the author of these things?”

“This gentleman, Mr. Abel Allnutt, is one,” said Edward, pointing to his companion, “and his sisters, the Miss Allnutts, are the others.”

“They will not do,” said the publisher; “we deal entirely now with the nobility and with persons whose names are known in the world. I never heard of Allnutt before—it has never been before the public in any shape.”

“But why should not these productions stand upon their merit alone, and not upon the name of the author?” said Edward.

“Merit is all very well in its way,” said the publisher; “but who waits now-a-days to find it out? The publications in which these sort of things appear, require no merit but that of names; and when my Lord This, or the Duchess That, condescends to write, it is taken for granted that there is merit. Why, sir, I make no doubt that if the chancellor of the exchequer would appear as the editor of a new edition of Cocker’s Arithmetic, or if I could induce the lord chancellor to write a history of the great *seal* which is now exhibiting at Piddock’s, and put his name to it—I am confident that I could make a great deal of money by such a speculation.”

“Then, sir, am I to understand,” said Edward, “that you publish nothing which has not got a great name attached to it?”

“We give money for nothing else,” said the publisher: “we pay in proportion to the position of the author, and I fear that we can afford nothing in the present instance.”

Upon which, regaining possession of their proffered productions, they took their leave, Abel from the beginning of the conference having given up all hope of obtaining success in the literary line, and determined to turn his thoughts to to other things.

Upon reaching home he found a letter from Cruikshank, which he and his sisters had been expecting with great anxiety, for its contents were likely to be of considerable consequence, inasmuch as it would inform them of the result

of the sale at Ivycote. The sum which thereby they were to realise would form their only visible means of subsistence for the present, and therefore the amount of it became a matter of intense interest. They conceived their calculation to be much within the mark when they fixed a moderate sum as the amount of their expectations; but what was their mortification, and we may add, their consternation, when they found that the money which Cruikshank had to remit to their bankers but very little exceeded half that sum!

Exaggerated expectations are always sure to produce exaggerated disappointments. Because the cow and the pigs had been sold to Mr. Woodby at half the price which Aunt Bab had expected, she immediately exclaimed that there must have been some foul play in favour of the rich man; and when they discovered by Cruikshank's accounts that the wash-tubs and laundry gear had been knocked down to the Silvertops literally for nothing, they were sure that the auctioneer must have played some trick, because they well recollected that the Thickentales always said how much they longed to have them. There was no end to the discussions, the endless remarks, and the gossip produced in Golden-square by the sale which had taken place at Ivycote. Old Betty raised lamentations that were heard all over the house, because the new coal-skuttle which she had bought only a month before they came away for twelve shillings, had been sold for three and sixpence; and Aunt Fanny would not allow herself to be consoled, because Mrs. Humphries, the school-mistress, had got the parlour looking-glass; for she said, "what business could she have with a looking-glass? and was it not setting a bad example to the girls, if they ever saw her inspecting her ugly face in it?"

Were not the subject too important to the well-being of our simple friends to be turned into a joke, we would willingly continue to amuse our readers with all the circumstances resulting from this event. Abel's courage almost fell to despondency when he looked into the state of their affairs and the difficulties of their situation. The rent alone of their lodging would swallow up a great portion of their means: although they lived as sparingly as possible, allowing themselves nothing but the merest necessaries, still those inexorable things called weekly bills came round with despotic exactitude, and lessened their store in spite of the most rigid economy. Abel always endeavoured to bring back his mind to that steady repose in the ways of Providence which he had ever cherished, whenever he found it

deviating into anxious apprehensions for the future; but with all his philosophy he could not help feeling downcast and oppressed. He did his utmost to appear cheerful before his sisters and niece, and talked with confidence of what might be done in a city so full of resources as London, but when left to himself, his true feelings would break out, and the only mode of relief he could devise was to walk about the streets, and so endeavour to dissipate his mind from the distracting contemplation of his necessities.

The defeat of their literary scheme had not made the deep impression which perhaps it otherwise would, owing to the matter of major importance contained in Cruikshank's letter; but that subject having been discussed with Edward Manby at the same time as the other, he thus, indeed, became a party concerned in this and in everything which related to the family. He entered heart and soul in the discussion of every question as if he were a member of it, and thus day after day, and almost hour after hour, he passed his time in company with the object of his affections, until his whole being was so identified with her image that he could scarcely live out of her presence.

In misfortune, springs of action are touched which in the flush of prosperity are not heeded. Sympathies are then created; whereas, in the sunshine of happiness, the heart is too apt to conclude that no distress can exist. Mary's feelings melted into gratitude towards Edward when she reflected how great and visible was the support which he afforded her uncle and aunts in these their days of misfortune;—his frank and smiling face came amongst them like a warm gleam acting upon a cheerless gloom: difficulties which appeared insurmountable, when they came to be talked over with him were deprived of half their perplexity; he always looked upon the brightest side of things—a quality of the mind which, in truth, can be outbalanced by no power of wealth.

It was impossible for two such beings to meet so constantly, and under the peculiar circumstances which drew them together, without mutually feeling those sentiments which, in the hearts of the virtuous and the high-principled, tend to develop the noblest qualities of the heart. Mary would frequently confide to Edward her desire to make herself useful to her family by hiring herself out as a governess, and she modestly hinted that what she wanted in abilities, she might make up in assiduity and attention to her duties. "She was ready," she said, "to go for the smallest sti-

pend, provided that stipend went to her relations; and by this means waiting for some favourable turn in their affairs, she hoped to ward off that desperate want which might assail them if something were not done." Edward opposed this with all his might. As soon as he could be of use, he insisted that his services might be made available. He did not depend, it is true, upon himself; but still his uncle at Liverpool, to whom he looked up from every feeling of affection and duty, was generous and ever ready to listen to any reasonable scheme that he might propose, and he trusted that through his means something would be struck out which might at least relieve them from the more immediate horrors of poverty.

These struggles of generosity did not fail to feed the flame of that pure love which was burning within their breasts; and although neither dared to own its existence, still it now formed as much a part of their being as the breath which came from their nostrils, or as the blood which circulated in their veins.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

One of the distresses incidental to human life are poor cousins. Happy they who go through the world so unafflicted!

THE Allnutts in Golden-square lived totally ignorant of what was going on in the world, and even more so than in their seclusion at Ivycote. They knew no one—they never read a newspaper, and they were too much absorbed in brooding over their own calamities to care about politics, or to heed the hard race that was running between the two parties which then divided the country. Mark Woodcock was the only man who occasionally paid them a visit. Like every one who had ever seen Mary, he too had been captivated by her beauty; and whenever he could steal from his desk at Lincoln's Inn, he would always contrive some good pretext for visiting Golden-square. One morning he came earlier than usual, and as he entered the room where the family were assembled, he exclaimed in a tone of exultation, "Well, have you heard the news?"

“What news?” said Aunt Bab.

“Why, the change of ministry, to be sure,” said Mark: “the Tories have served it out properly, and the Whigs are floored.” Upon which he explained himself in as intelligible a jargon as he could command, and exhibited a list of the new ministers as it stood proclaimed in a morning paper.

Little did either Barbara, Fanny, or Abel, and Mary still less, heed what he was propounding, or give ear to the names of the persons appointed to fill the different offices of the state, which he read *seriatim* with great emphasis. Their attention, however, was arrested when they heard him say, “Minister for foreign affairs, Earl of Knutsford.”

“Abel! did you hear that?” exclaimed Barbara.

“I did indeed,” said Abel; “but what then?”

“What then?” cried Bab; “a great deal, to be sure! Why you are an Allnutt as well as he—and why should he not help us?”

“I see no good reason why, I am sure,” said Abel, smiling, “if *he* does not.”

“If *he* does not!” said Barbara;—“and wherefore should he? If he does not know how near we are related, he must be informed of it; and then I am sure, if he possesses one ounce of the blood of an Allnutt within his veins, he will be too happy to help us.”

“I for one,” said Abel, “am ignorant how nearly we are related. I have always heard that we were of the same family as Lord Knutsford; but of the particulars of the relationship I know nothing.”

“Then I’ll tell you how it is,” said Bab, “for I have often heard our dear father speak upon that subject. The present Lord Knutsford’s father and our father had each of them three great-grandmothers.—No, that is not it—that is, that the first Lord Knutsford had three wives, and they each had children; therefore there were established three great-grandfathers—no, I mean three great-grandmothers. Well, each of these great-grandmothers had grandchildren——”

“They had children too, I am sure of that,” said Fanny.

“I am not quite certain of that,” said Bab: “however, that has nothing to do with the matter, because it stands to reason that if they had grandchildren, those children must have had fathers, anyhow. Therefore, as the present Lord Knutsford’s father and our father had each of them the same great-grandfather, although a different great-grandmother, they came from the same stock, and as we are children of

our father, we come from the same stock too, and we become cousins, but of what numerical affinity, as our dear father would say, (and so would John too,) I really do not know."

"But still," said Fanny, after a moment of deep thought, "if the great-grandmothers were different, the great-grandchildren must be different too, and they can only be great-grandcousins on the father's side; and that's what Lord Knutsford is to us."

"There's no father's side or mother's side in cousins—they are all of one side," said Bab with great quickness in her accent.

"Well, then I am sure," said Fanny, "if we are all on the same side, the present Lord Knutsford ought to do something for us, and Abel ought to apply to him immediately."

"Yes, he ought," said Bab, "and will too. Let us see—Minister for foreign affairs—that is to say, that he can do all he likes about foreigners, Frenchmen, Turks, Spaniards, and East Indians—ay, and with Mexicans too. He may appoint John to direct the mines: and he could make Abel, I dare say, a Roman consul if he chose it."

"Not a consul," said Fanny; "for the ancient Greeks only did that; but I dare say he might make him an ambassador anyhow."

"I fear, my dear," said Abel, "that you are too sanguine in your hopes; but this I do think, that through his influence he may persuade the Mexican republic either to pay us back the capital which we have put into their funds, or at least continue to pay us the interest for it. This would not be much to ask from a distant cousin."

"That of course," exclaimed Bab, "is the least he can do for us: but he must do a great deal more, that's what he must. Let us ask Edward Manby what he can do;—I dare say he will know, as he does most things."

Mark Woodcock, after having created the sensation we have just described, took his leave, or, as he would say, "cut his stick;" and not long after appeared Edward, who was soon informed of the prospects which had all at once dawned upon the family. Having been asked in every sort of tone of inquiry what were the powers of a minister for foreign affairs, he professed general ignorance upon the subject; but he ventured to say what he thought he could not do.

When Barbara asserted that he ought to appoint John to

be the director of all the Mexican mines, he answered that as mining speculations were private or joint-stock speculations, they of course appointed their own officers, and that the king's minister could have no voice on the subject *ex officio*. Then, as to making the republic refund, he was obliged to destroy the castle which Abel had built, inasmuch as the government professed to take no part in foreign loans. But he thought that Fanny's scheme of making Abel a consul was more in his power than either of the two others, and therefore expressed it as his opinion that Abel might boldly venture to apply to him for some appointment of that sort, or for something at home.

This dictum of Edward's immediately became the subject of all their thoughts and the theme of all their talk. Barbara, little understanding the gradations of diplomatic rank and service, insisted upon it that they ought not to demand the consulship at first, as that might be too much—but that perhaps they might begin by making Abel a simple ambassador.

Fanny was soon in the clouds, and had already settled in her mind the foreign princes and counts who would be quarrelling among themselves to make an offer of their hand; whilst Mary sighed at the possibility of being separated from Edward. Abel, however, still steadily kept his eye upon their money in the Mexican funds, hoping that, being restored to it, he might again return to his beloved country retirement. But the result of their conference was that Abel should present himself to Lord Knutsford, and making known his relationship, state the situation of his family and ask for some sort of employment.

In order to put this scheme into execution, it was necessary to make Abel a little more presentable in his appearance than he usually was; for, with the view of economising to the utmost farthing, he did not allow himself the smallest luxury in dress. His sisters obliged him to have his hair cut, a new cravat was provided for the occasion, he exhibited a larger expanse of white linen than usual, and his coat was inspected, mended, newly buttoned and brushed. The day having been fixed for putting his scheme into execution, the whole family were busied in preparing him at least to look well. His boots were well polished, and with Aunt Bab's chain round his person, and with Fanny's best pocket-handkerchief in his pocket, he at length sallied forth, accompanied by Edward, to seek the regions of

Downing-street, where the new minister was known to transact the business of his office.

When they came in sight of the sentry stationed at the door, Edward left Abel, who, as soon as he found himself alone, felt possessed of new energies. He passed the sentry, and, with his heart in a flutter, opened the door, walked in, and being confronted with the porter, boldly inquired whether he could see Lord Knutsford. The porter, to his surprise, received him with becoming civility, and introducing him into the waiting-room, asked him for his card—an article which owing to Edward's foresight he was enabled to give. "Mr. Abel Allnutt, Golden-square," was inscribed thereupon in all proper form; and when the porter looked at it, Abel thought that his face betrayed approbation.

Having taken possession of an arm-chair, he sat for some time well satisfied to have an opportunity to collect his thoughts. He settled in his mind everything that he would say to his cousin;—first the passing hint of their relationship, and the short history of his branch of the family, then his brother John's schemes, and particularly the one which at his instigation they had adopted, of transferring their fortune from the English to the Mexican funds; then the ruin that ensued thereupon—the sale of their house at Ivycote—their migration to Golden-square—their present difficulties; and consequently their recurrence to his assistance. He was disturbed in his cogitations every now and then by some one putting his head within the door and drawing it out again; but otherwise he was left entirely to himself, and for so long a time, that he began to feel uneasy lest all was not as it should be. However, after he had sat two hours and a half, suddenly a well-dressed man entered, and calling him by name, invited Abel to follow him. Instantly all his coolness and self-possession forsook him—his heart beat strong, and he followed his conductor in a great state of perturbation, so entirely new was he to such scenes. He was conducted across halls, through passages, up and down staircases, into rooms, and at length came to a door which was opened with a certain degree of deference by his conductor, and soon he found himself in the presence of one whom he took for Lord Knutsford.

The person before whom he stood was one calculated to produce awe in the breast of a mere man of the fields more by the manner in which he was surrounded than by his own personal appearance. He was seated before a large and

massive writing-table, heaped over with every implement of writing that the imagination can conceive: papers of every description lay about in heaps, some carefully tied up with red tape, and others open as if under inspection. Every contrivance for the assortment and classification of letters and documents was here seen; whilst innumerable leather-covered boxes of every size, colour, and denomination were strewed about in heaps ready for use. In distant corners of the room sat two other persons apparently absorbed in the papers before them; whilst the chief was at his post ready to superintend the work that was going forward. He was a man of pleasant aspect and agreeable manners, and when Abel approached, received him with as much politeness and urbanity as if he were honoured by his visit.

There was an appearance of mystery and secrecy in this apartment so pregnant with business, so fitted up with everything relating to matters of serious import, that Abel's heart quite sank within him when he recollected the insignificance of his own poor affairs. All his preconcerted speech fled from his memory; he made an awkward bow, and mechanically seated himself on the chair which was presented to him. He was, however, so much relieved by the ease and charm of manner in the person who received him, that he began after a short pause to find himself restored to his self-possession. Still taking the individual before him for Lord Knutsford, and thinking that in him he saw a relation, he very soon entered upon the history of his family, and went into a series of intricate details relating to the different individuals composing it, which he thought might be interesting matter of information. He was beginning to touch upon the histories of his brother and sisters, when his auditor gradually led him off the subject to inquire what might be the real object of his visit.

Abel, having acquired confidence, was not disconcerted, and giving a simple statement of his personal difficulties, he asked for employment—in short, for a situation under government. The gentleman having heard him out with exemplary patience, considering that he was not Lord Knutsford, and therefore little interested in the Allnutt genealogy, then addressed him in a few words,—told him of the immense number of applications with which the government was beset for places, descanted upon the pain of public functionaries in being constantly obliged to refuse the claims of merit, avowed how happy he would be to serve him were it in his power, said something about private family

claims—"a subject," he said, "upon which he was not competent to judge,"—and with a variety of agreeable-sounding words, accompanied by smiles and a slight though gradual pressure towards the door, he succeeded in guiding Abel to that orifice; into which having once successfully secured him, he made him a bow, and the door shutting Abel on the out side and himself within, the conference thus came to an end.

Having once more reached the street, Abel walked down it with a slow and thoughtful step. He had gained nothing by his visit excepting the certainty of the loss of his former hopes; nor was he quite certain whether or not he had seen Lord Knutsford. During the visit, he considered himself as being in his presence; but when it was over, he recollected certain occurrences which made him doubt whether it might not have been somebody else. In this state of perplexity he returned home but little pleased with the result of his morning's work, and almost afraid to meet Barbara and the inquiries which she would not fail to make. But there was one thing which he was not afraid to encounter—and that was the scrutiny of his own breast. There, amid all the cares, the disappointments, and the vexations which surrounded him, he was sure to find a still, small voice, which, as it were, from the inmost recesses of his soul would speak the language of comfort and encouragement, and tell him to persevere to the last.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Abel Allnutt offers himself for a tutor, and proves the disadvantage of homely looks.

As soon as Abel rapped at the door, Mary, who had learned to recognise his mode of announcing himself, cried out, "Oh, here is Uncle Abel!" and he very soon after appeared.

"Well, Abel, what has happened?" cried Barbara.

"What sort of a looking man is he?" said Fanny.

"My dear uncle," said Mary, "I am afraid you want something to eat—you look sadly tired!"

Abel was inclined to say but little; Bab, however, soon

let him know that he had much to undergo. "Have you seen Lord Knutsford?" she said.

"I believe I have," said Abel: "but really I cannot say for certain whether I have or not."

"You *believe* you have!" exclaimed Barbara. "How! do you only believe?—arn't you certain that you have seen him?"

"I was introduced to a most agreeable man whom I took for him. I told him the whole of our story—I talked to him of our family, and initiated him into all our family matters: he heard me patiently. I conceived all the while that I was talking to Lord Knutsford; but when he remarked, 'that as for family claims, he was not competent to judge of them,' and informed me that owing to the great number of prior applicants I had no chance of employment, I began to suspect that he was not our cousin; and somehow or other, agreeable and pleasant though he was, in some unaccountable manner I suddenly found myself without the door. That is all that I can say for myself."

"Well, I never heard the like of this!" exclaimed Barbara. "You spoke to a man for half an hour, and you say you do not know who he was! How did he look? It stands to reason that an earl and a minister must be different in appearance to other men. Did he not wear robes and garters, as we hear they all do?"

"He looked exactly like any other man," said Abel, "only a great deal more polite. I felt somehow entirely at my ease before him, and could not help being pleased with him, although he told me that he could do nothing for us."

"Then certainly he was not our cousin the earl," said Bab. "You must have been taken in by some swindler—some one must have practised a hoax upon you—that is quite clear: an earl has always a silver star on his breast and a large riband over his shoulder—his hair is always well-powdered—he always wears silk-stockings, and a sword by his side. Now, if you did not see such a man, it stands to reason that you have been hoaxed."

"All I can say is this," said Abel,—"that when I walked in, I asked the servant for Lord Knutsford: he seemed very well to know who he was. Then I waited two hours and a half in a room by myself; and afterwards, I was taken into another room, where I saw a courteous gentleman, and him I took to be our cousin."

“You may be certain that during those two hours and a half,” said Bab, “the hoax was got up against you: I wish Edward Manby were here—he’d tell you the same thing. Nothing can be so wicked as these Londoners—you know that Mark Woodcock has warned us against them; and notwithstanding the lesson you got from that odious woman of the Fleece and her Punch, here you are the first to fall a prey to their tricks.”

“I doubt very much,” said Abel, “whether the gentleman I saw could act like a swindler if he were to try, he was so well bred.”

“I recollect very well,” said Bab, “when I was a little girl, going to the family seat and seeing the family pictures; and all the Earls of Knutsford were dressed in the manner I have described, only some had robes and garters on. It is quite plain you did not see the present lord.—But here comes Edward, and he will enlighten us.”

Edward arrived in anxious expectation to hear the result of Abel’s visit; and when the progress of it was related to him, he said at once that he could not have seen Lord Knutsford, but evidently had been taken to the under secretary of state, for he recollected that a friend of his had told him that he had been treated in the selfsame manner at the Foreign Office.

Barbara would not be satisfied with this explanation, but insisted upon her view of the hoax being the right one; whilst Aunt Fanny immediately instituted a general inquiry upon under secretaries of state, and endeavoured to ascertain whether they were all as agreeable as the one Abel had described, and where they could be seen.

A strong principle of action founded upon a right basis is like the beacon to which the mariner returns when he is out of his reckoning, in order to take a fresh departure. Abel cherished that species of hope within his breast which was not to be extinguished by disappointment: he was confident, although the aspect of his affairs was at present dark and threatening, that sooner or later it would brighten up and give him happier days. But still he was distressed at his total want of success, which he would have borne with greater fortitude, had he no other cause of anxiety; but his mind was disturbed by apprehension at not hearing from John. Since the account of his arrival at Vera Cruz, not a line had been received from him: there were no tidings of him in the city among the Mining Companies; and al-

though he was supposed to be on his way back, yet nothing certain concerning his movements had been ascertained.

Edward scarcely ever passed a day without making inquiries upon that head, so anxious was he to bring consolation to Mary, who, ever since she had contemplated the possibility of soon seeing her father, could scarcely think of anything else. In the mean while, the small sum which the family had in store for their immediate necessities was daily diminishing, and they looked with dread upon the day when the rent of their lodging would be due.

The family frequently discussed their miseries and their schemes in the presence of Mark Woodcock, who, being a good-hearted, serviceable youth, took great interest in their welfare. Some time after the failure we have just described, he one morning came in great haste to inform Abel that his chief, Mr. Fairfax by name, a solicitor of eminence, had been desired by one of his clients, a man of fortune, to seek a tutor for his sons, and conceiving that the situation might suit him, he had requested Mr. Fairfax's permission to make him an offer.

The proposal was received with the greatest joy by Aunt Bab, who, looking upon Abel as a property of which she might dispose without an appeal to his will, would have agreed to it upon the spot, had she not been stopped by Abel. His conscience always chose to become very tender whenever it was required of him to assert his own merits, and accordingly on this occasion he avowed that he did not feel himself qualified to undertake such an office.

"Give me one good reason for your refusal," said Barbara, "and I will urge the matter no more."

"I am not sufficiently well educated myself to be able to teach others," said Abel: "I cannot set up for a tutor when I am myself untutored."

"How can you say that!" said Bab. "You know very well that I myself taught you to read and write; and as for your Latin, I am sure you know enough of that at any rate to puzzle Merriman our schoolmaster; not to mention your flute."

Mark put an end to this discussion by asserting that the gentleman in question was more anxious to secure a trustworthy person who would look after the morals and conduct of his pupils, than one who could teach Latin and Greek; and again expressed his own opinion, as well as that of his chief, that the place would exactly suit Abel: the salary

would be handsome, the labour small, and the youths were reputed to be everything that was desirable.

Under such circumstances, Abel could no longer object to the proposal, and he begged to know when and where he could present himself. In making this decision, his self-devotion may perhaps be appreciated by those who reflect what had been the happiness of his former life, and what is too frequently the lot of a tutor; who, often with the feelings and education of a gentleman, drops, as it were, from the clouds into a family circle, and straightway forms a sort of connecting link between the master and the domestics—belonging to neither class, but partaking of the nature of both;—who in the midst of society is generally left in solitude, whose only associates are his pupils, and who, besides, is often the victim of caprice and malevolence. To meet such a prospect requires great magnanimity, when the motives which impel him who accepts of the situation are similar to those which actuated Abel. He perhaps did not know all he was about to encounter; but this he foresaw,—that he would be separated from those who were dearer to him than life—that he would be obliged to acquire new habits, and conform himself to the wishes of others, when he felt that he would fall very far short of the expectations that might be entertained of his abilities.

However, upon receiving a notification from Mr. Fairfax of the name and address of the person to be visited he prepared himself for the ordeal he was likely to undergo with all the courage he could muster. Mary almost cried when she saw him sally forth in quest of this situation, so fearful was she of a separation; and Barbara hoped that the necessity for this step would only be temporary; whilst Fanny consoled herself with the hope of making new acquaintances.

Abel reached a large handsome house in Portland-place just as the clock struck ten: he had been told to call early, and as he always rose himself at seven, he thought that hour must be quite proper. He was received by a footman and introduced into the dining room without perceiving the smallest circumstance of distinction in his mode of reception. He was requested to wait until the master should be apprised of his arrival: this was but a short interval, for the same servant again appeared and desired him to follow. He accompanied him up stairs to the drawing-room floor, and thence to the bed-rooms; and without further ceremony was introduced into a dressing-room, in which were displayed

all the apparatus and preliminaries of a toilet. At the farther end stood a tall man, dressed in a morning gown, who apparently had just risen from bed. When he saw Abel, he made him no sort of compliment, but kept him for a moment in attendance whilst he adjusted part of his dress, and then said, "Well, are you ready?"

Abel looked astonished; but as humility was his great characteristic, he thought that it was the usual fate of tutors to be treated with contumely, and answered, "Yes, sir, I am ready—I am at your service."

"So am I," said the gentleman: "I wish that you had come at least a week ago."

"I did know of your wishes before yesterday," said Abel, "or I should have been happy to have waited upon you."

"You are not to blame," said the other; "but they have grown uncommonly this week past, and wanted your assistance."

Abel again was surprised—How was it possible, thought he, that his pupils could have grown so much in so short a space of time; and why was his assistance so immediately necessary! "Have they?" said Abel. "I hope we shall soon make up for lost time!"

"I hope you will," said the gentleman, who all this while seemed taken up in the inspection of his feet, which were naked and only protected from the ground by a slipper. "They will require all your skill, I can tell you," said he; "for they are very difficult to deal with."

"I will do my best," said Abel, beginning to be more and more surprised at this sort of preliminary talk, and which he expected would lead to some severe examination.

"You are come prepared I hope?" said the gentleman, turning round upon him and looking well at him.

"Yes, sir," said Abel; "I hope that you will approve of me."

Upon which the other, taking one foot from out of his slipper, tossed it into the air, and twirling it about, said to the astonished Abel, "You see, they are good large ones!"

"Yes," said Abel with awkward hesitation—"Yes, they are large;"—but not able in the least to understand what a man's feet could have to do with a tutor's duty.

"Well, sir," said the gentleman, "begin."

"Begin what?" said Abel, doubting the sanity of the individual's brain, and taking possession of the handle of the door, as a precaution.

“Begin what!” said the other: “why to cut, to be sure!—Come, sir! cut away—cut them off at once!”

“Cut away! Cut what?” said Abel; when seeing the gentleman flourish the other foot and walk towards him, he no longer doubted that he had got into the house of a madman, and straightway rushing out, shut the door after him, ran down stairs with all possible speed without once looking behind, and gaining the principal entrance, got into the street with the activity of one pursued. Neither looking to the right nor left, he only stopped when he reached his own door; and then, quite out of breath, finding himself face to face with his sisters and niece, to their utter astonishment, he burst out a-laughing. This, so rare an occurrence, produced an uncommon sensation among them, and they in their turn thought a temporary derangement must have seized him. They gathered round with anxious faces—for ill timed merriment seldom produces sympathy—and began to inquire the cause of his so speedy return and of his extraordinary conduct.

After some little time, having at length collected his scattered ideas, he gave a full and complete narration of his adventure, the result of which puzzled his hearers as much as it had done himself.

“He was preparing to kick you down stairs?” said Bab.

“What could he mean by flourishing about his nasty naked feet?” said Fanny.

“I am so glad you’re come back to us!” said Mary.

Had they, however, been acquainted with the real story, they too, perhaps, would have been partakers of Abel’s merriment, although it would have been at his expense; for be it known that the worthy gentleman in Portland, place had made an appointment with his corn-cutter at the very hour that Abel arrived, and as Abel’s appearance, without any great stretch of imagination, might very well have made him pass for what our French neighbours have dignified by the name of *artiste pédecure*, it is not extraordinary that the footman took him for that useful personage, and that his master adopted the mistake. It never occurred to them for a moment that Abel was the tutor announced by Mr. Fairfax, for he did not look like one; and besides, so exalted a person would not have appeared so early, and would have been announced more emphatically. Even when he made his abrupt exit, the mistake was not discovered; for the gentleman in question actually

remained with one leg in the air with surprise, and concluded, in his turn, that the corn-cutter had suddenly run clean out of his wits—and as he thought that he might be running all day, so he took no trouble to run after him.

CHAPTER XXX.

The family are both cheered and mortified in their misfortunes. A lesson on economy.

THE situation of the Allnutts may be compared to that of a crew in a ship becalmed under the line, their provisions running short, with every prospect of starvation before their eyes should the calm continue. They felt the same sort of despondency, the same apprehensions of being reduced to the greatest straits, and the same hope of some favourable gale springing up which would drive them out of their present embarrassment and take them into more favourable latitudes. The merriment which we recorded in our last chapter was of short duration: it only served to make the despondency which succeeded more deep, and they daily more and more began, as it were, to touch their future destiny. Spring had now advanced;—the few black bushes in the enclosure before them, as if to put them in mind that Nature, which they all so ardently adored was immutable in her work, and dispensed her gifts to the wretched as well as to the prosperous, began to exhibit a new dress; and the vivid green starting out of the smoky branches appeared as the work of a miracle, were it not that a miracle of every day occurrence is no longer such in the eyes of unthinking mortals.

Mary was standing at the window, sighing over the recollections of Ivycote, admiring the beautiful colour as it burst forth almost perceptibly to the sight, and hoping that by some kind dispensation of Providence they might be released from their present confinement, when all at once a flaring, gaudy carriage, well bedaubed with escutcheons and bedizend with plated ornaments, drove into the square, and, strange to relate, stopped at their door. A stout footman staggering under a long cane and matted tags, and with difficulty waddling in his stiff plushes, applied his hand to the

knocker and inflicted a succession of resounding blows, which made the hearts of the inmates jump in their breasts, and caused a reverberation throughout the square.

“What in the name of goodness is that?” said Bab.

“I declare it is a fine carriage!” exclaimed Fanny, taking a peep over Mary’s shoulder. “Here, put away these things—quick!” Upon which she rushed about the room, thrusting Abel’s stockings, which Mary had been darning, under the sofa-cushion; disposing of her own petticoat, which she had been piecing, by throwing it into the adjoining room; taking the kettle from off the fire, and hiding it behind the screen; smoothing down her locks, adjusting her gown, taking off her apron,—in short, doing that which is almost part of an Englishwoman’s religion—making herself tidy.

Mary watched the motions of the carriage and the footman like one on the look-out to espy the approach of some great personage.

“They are talking to the footman,” she said. “There are ladies in the carriage. I think it is the Goold Woodby livery—the servant is now saying something to Betty—Betty is making curtsies—they are giving cards.”

“Arn’t they coming up?” cried Fanny in astonishment.

“No, I think not,” said Mary;—“yes, they are—no, they are not—yes, they are—no—yes:—the servant is just going to open the door—no, he has shut it again:—they have left a whole pack of cards—Betty is making more curtsies—the footman is getting up behind;—there they go!—they are gone!” The carriage was heard to rumble away, and Fanny was left all bewildered with agitation; Aunt Bab became thoughtful, and Mary was both amused and astonished. Abel came in soon after followed by old Betty, who made a display of the cards she had received, on which were inscribed the names of Mrs. Goold Woodby, attended by a whole catalogue of daughters, and the place of abode, Baker-street.

“Did they know that we were at home?” said Aunt Bab to Betty.

“Yes, sure,” said the old servant. “I told them that you were all here, and that you were purely, saving Miss Fanny, who had been rather queer of late.”

“And did not they ask to come up?”

“Why, they all talked together; some wanted to come, others did not,” said Betty: “until I heard the old lady say, ‘Cards will do,’ and they drove off again.”

“Well, I do declare!” exclaimed Fanny, “there never was anything so unkind.”

Bab held her tongue, for she would not venture to trust herself with an expression of her feelings, but Abel, thinking this a proper moment to make a solemn impression upon his sisters, and to attack that pride of heart which every day told him still hung about them, said, “This is only the first specimen which we have had of the way of the world. We have read of it, and it has passed into a proverb—but this is it, now we see it. The prosperous shun those who are in adversity—this is as it should be; for the one assimilates as little with the other as a lighted taper with the close air of a cavern: it is only those privileged by the possession of superior minds and of hearts exalted by benignity, to seek the abodes of the poor and the rejected, and make their misery their own. My dear sisters, let us learn by the instance we have had this morning how hollow are those sort of intimacies which go by the name of friendship. The Goold Woodbys have made us a parading visit; and I should be inclined to feel the comparisons to which such a parade naturally lead as strongly as I see you do, had I not already taught myself to expect neglect not only from them, but from all those who were our associates in our better days.”

“Considering that they are the cause of our present misfortune,” said Bab with suppressed anger, “I think they might have asked to see us.”

“I should like to know,” said Fanny, “how they venture to give themselves such airs!—odious, purse-proud shopkeepers! thinking they are doing us an honour by sending us these bits of pasteboard, with their ignoble names inscribed upon them!”

“My dear Fanny,” said Abel, “in God’s name let us not lose all the advantages which the lesson now dispensed to us by adversity ought to afford! If properly received, it cannot fail of producing the most beneficial results—results by which we shall be purged from that most hateful vice, pride; and from which we may hope to reap the benefit of that most inestimable virtue, humility. It is a great privilege to be so visited—it may be our salvation: when this world and all its fascinations shall have passed away, and when we shall be where every one born of woman must sooner or later be—on the verge of the grave and of eternity, then we shall bless the hand that chastened us, and brought us, ere it was too late, to a proper sense of the utter nothingness of this life!”

These observations had their due effect, and tended very much to remove the angry feelings which Mrs. Woodby's ostentatious visit had excited. They could not, however, abstain from discussing the matter at full length as soon as Edward Manby appeared; and after he had received a full and detailed account of the whole transaction, he told them what they did not know,—that it had become very much the fashion to make a card perform as proxy the whole business of a visit, and that the visiter's name upon a piece of paper was considered to stand in lieu of 'How do you do?' 'Very well;' 'It's very fine weather;'—'I'm your humble servant;'—which is generally the sum total of one of those unmeaning visitations, a morning call.

This piece of information tended still more than Abel's homily to pacify them; and they had scarcely done forgiving the supposed unkindness, when another loud rap at the door was heard, followed up by the appearance of Mr. Thomas Goold Woodby, junior, in person, to pay his respects. This visit altogether calmed the irritation, because he confirmed what Edward had asserted, by saying that his mother and sisters had scarcely yet had an opportunity to announce their arrival in town, and that they had that very morning sallied out for the first time to leave their cards."

"They might as well come up," said Bab, "to see their old friends, although we have nothing to give them now excepting a hearty welcome."

"Indeed," said Fanny, adopting the same tone, "it would have been but kind to take a look at us, although we haven't as good a luncheon to offer as we had at Ivycote."

Tom threw as much softness as he could into his bulldog countenance, glancing all the time at the unconscious Mary, and said, "London being so different from the country, nobody could expect to see each other except by snatches at uncertain times; but," he added with a certain pomp and emphasis, "in order to secure a meeting, I am come to invite you to dinner, which, after all, is the surest way in London to meet."

This piece of attention entirely dispelled any remains of ill-feeling; and Bab and Fanny looked at each other uncertain what to answer. Many considerations would make them pause ere they could consent to so unexpected a proposal, for much was to be considered—expense—dress—and mode of conveyance. The general desire was to go, for Barbara wished once more to meet old Woodby, to give him a piece of her mind upon Mexican bonds; Fanny

was always for an outing; and Abel, whose whole heart and soul were engrossed in providing for his family, thought he might find an opening for proposing himself as a teacher of the flute, which was now, as he thought, their almost last resource. Mary was the only one who gave a dissentient voice, for she shunned every opportunity of being in company with Tom Woodby.

As soon as this young gentleman had taken his leave, which he did saying that his mother would send the proper card of invitation when the day was fixed, the family council opened their deliberations. They talked long and took enlarged views of the case. Abel thought the proper way of looking at the question was to balance the certain expense which they must incur with the uncertain advantages; for his part, he was of opinion, in their needy situation, that friends were absolutely necessary to them—friends who would further any scheme they might have of gaining a livelihood: he wished himself to give lessons on the flute, which he felt fully competent to do; and therefore by accepting the proposed invitation he expected to find a good opportunity of opening his plan to such friends as he might meet. Barbara applauded his scheme, and moreover added, that she, perhaps, might have an opportunity of hinting to old Woodby, that as he had been such a gainer by the Mexican bond transaction, he ought in justice to help them. Abel entreated her not to buoy herself up with such a hope and not to expect generosity from one who could have so taken advantage of ignorance. Providence and their own exertions, he asserted, must now be their main dependence; and he made no doubt that however distressed they might become, yet still if they exerted their best energies, and kept their conscience clear, they would not fail to enjoy peace of mind, in itself a greater blessing than all that the Woodby wealth could bestow. Fanny remarked, were it only for health's sake, they ought to seek a little dissipation and that it was unfair to let a young person like Mary sit moping all day long in the house unknown and unseen. Mary did not allow herself to give an opinion, excepting to assure Aunt Fanny that as far as she was personally concerned, she was perfectly contented and happy never to stir from home.

When the card came, it was paraded with great state into the drawing-room by the astounded Betty, who having received it from a brilliant lackey, eyed it as a mandate from royalty itself. The consequence was the acceptance of the

invitation, and Aunt Fanny was empowered to send a proper answer. Thence ensued an animated discussion upon dress. As a week would elapse ere the event took place sufficient time was left for preparation. Fanny's ingenuity was required to compose new dresses out of old ones; and she exercised it so effectually, that unless to those who had witnessed the *début* of the gray gown and the cherry-coloured silk at Belvedere Hall, no one could imagine that they had already seen a summer in the country.

The greatest difficulty to be overcome was the acquisition of a pair of new pantaloons for Uncle Abel. By no contrivance could drab be made to look black at night; and as it has become part of a man's system of ethics to dine out in black pantaloons, so it became imperative upon Abel either to procure such a commodity, or not to go. Chancing to walk through a by-lane thinking over this subject, his eyes fell upon the notices in the shop-window of an obscure tailor, and there he found that the very thing he wanted was pressingly offered for twelve shillings. This was so inviting, that he made up his mind immediately to accede to it, walked into the shop, was well received by a small oblique-looking man, and straightway was measured. He returned to his sisters triumphant, and told them how well he had been aided by fortune, and that all difficulties were now overcome.

In the course of two days arrived the tailor, the bill, and the pantaloons. Abel hurried to try them on; but what was his dismay when, having succeeded in introducing his legs, he stuck somewhere in the same part as Gulliver did when he was thrust into the marrow-bone at Brobdignag! At length, at the risk of splitting, he managed to get entirely in; but having done so, he could not move—a step would have ripped open every seam, and he expostulated to the tailor in these words:

“This will never do—these things are a great deal too tight.”

“Are they?” said the tailor.

“Yes; don't you see?” said Abel.

“They *are* a little tight,” said the tailor; “but they'll soon stretch.”

“I can scarcely walk in them,” said Abel.

“I think they will do very well,” said the tailor.

“No, they won't do at all,” said Abel; “I can't straddle in them.”

“Straddle!” said the tailor; “no, I didn't suppose you

could! Who ever thought of straddling for twelve shillings?"

This was a view of the question which Abel had never taken, and to which he knew not what to answer; but it gave him an opportunity of making this reflection—that things which are extravagantly cheap, are on the whole dearer than things extravagantly the contrary.

CHAPTER XXXI.

“C'est l'occasion qui fait le larron.” Love, like murder, will out.

SINCE the first commencement of the rivalry for Mary's favour, Tom Woodby and Edward Manby had never been friends. Tom, vain of his person and proud of his expectations, was also envious and implacable. He could never conceive that one so poor, so lowly, and of such little note as Edward could be preferred before him, and he lost no opportunity of exhibiting the bitterness of his dislike and the meanness of his spites. He was the cause of his not being invited to the dinner; a slight which Edward felt as young men are apt to feel on such occasions, particularly when their friends are few and their fortunes small. Everything was in progress in Golden-square in preparation for the dinner, and the hour was fast approaching.

On the day before this event was to take place, Edward arrived greatly agitated in Golden-square. Abel was not at home: he met Aunt Bab and Fanny on the stairs just going out to purchase some necessary bit of dress: they stopped him, and observing his hasty and perturbed look, inquired what was the matter? “I am obliged to go to Liverpool immediately,” said Edward. They requested him to wait for them in the drawing-room, saying that they would soon return. When he entered that room, he found Mary by herself. He had never yet had an opportunity of seeing her alone, and in truth he had always dreaded it—so full of undefined apprehension and secret misgiving is the real passion of love. He had been a thousand times on the point of disclosing to her by writing what she must long have known, the ardent sentiments of his heart; yet he always

checked himself by those cogent reflections which we have before described: but now his heart was too full, and the opportunity too inviting to allow the control of the dictates of prudence. She evidently discovered, by his manner and countenance, that something unusual had happened; and as she saw him approach, her heart beat violently, whilst her face was covered with blushes. He began by informing her of the necessity of his speedy departure; that he had that morning received a letter from his uncle, in which he was upbraided for his long absence; and informed that his affairs required his immediate return, and in short, that various other reasons urged were too powerful for him to resist. He said that he was too much indebted to his uncle for his constant kind behaviour not immediately to attend to his wishes, and therefore he was determined to obey his call.

Edward perceived that at the first announcement of this piece of intelligence to Mary, she was visibly affected: its sudden disclosure had taken her unawares, and she could not conceal how much she felt the loss she was about to sustain. This tacit acknowledgment of the interest she took in his fate entirely overthrew the little power he still retained over himself; and ere a minute had elapsed, he had made a full and passionate avowal of his love, and opened to her, in simple, sincere, and unstudied language, every thought and feeling of his heart, entreating her by all that was pure and tender to allow him to live in hope that he might one day call her his own.

How could Mary conceal from him what every look and action had so long disclosed? She fully avowed her sentiments; and having done this, she said, "But, Edward, when I have told you thus much, I feel that there I must stop!—Her eyes filled with tears, and her bosom swelled with strong emotion; and then exerting evident violence over herself, she continued: "I cannot and will not bind myself to any other being in this world so long as I see my uncle and aunts in this state of want to which they are soon too likely to be reduced! Putting the promise I have made to my father never to marry without his consent out of the question, everything tells me that I am theirs as long as this state of trial to which they are exposed lasts. God's will be done!—He alone knows what is for our good: but my duty is plain—never will I give this hand to any one unless by so doing I can prevent the misery of these my dear relations. You, Edward—kind, feeling, generous as you are,

I am sure will understand me. You will even second my resolution! Let us here swear that no selfish feeling of ours shall ever interfere to destroy this sacred intention!"

Edward was affected to tears by the touching simplicity of heart and exalted virtue which shone forth in every look, word, and expression of the gentle being before him. He would have exacted some more definite promise from her, but that he feared to hurt those generous feelings of devotion to her relations which actuated her; and he felt that for the present he must remain satisfied with the simple assurance of her love. This certainty, secured to him by the warrant of her own lips, infused an instantaneous feeling of satisfaction throughout his being, and comforted him in the doleful separation which was about to ensue. They dwelt long upon the many and various possibilities which constitute that large circumference of hope so apt to surround the hearts of the wretched—they contemplated the probability of affairs taking a favourable turn in Mexico, by which her uncle and aunts would be restored to their independence—they discussed the hope of soon seeing Mary's father, upon which so much of their welfare depended; and then Edward, with all the language and confidence of youth, cheered up her drooping spirits by adverting to his own prospects, which, owing to the kindness of his uncle, whom he was now going to propitiate, he asserted were likely to be soon very prosperous.

By the time they had poured out the whole effusion of their hearts, and vowed those thousand protestations of eternal love which are always better imagined by the reader than expressed by the writer, the return of Aunt Barbara and Fanny was announced; and though no time is ever long enough for lovers, yet on this occasion its lapse became a matter of consequence, since at a fixed hour Edward was obliged to take his departure. Abel returned opportunely to see him before he went; and having extorted a promise from him to write often, he left the house,—we will not venture to say for what length of time.

Edward's departure produced a great blank in the family—for he was not only an agreeable companion, but also its friend and adviser. It would be difficult to say who loved him the most: Barbara could do nothing without his advice; Fanny's affection for him was of so vacillating a nature, that it usually vibrated between friendship and love; whilst Abel's esteem for his high qualities was of the most exalted kind, for he entirely came up to his ideas of what a man

ought to be. With such feelings, perhaps it will not be thought extraordinary that neither the uncle nor the aunts had remarked, nor had it ever entered their heads to suppose, that there existed between him and Mary any sentiment beyond that of common friendship. Time had passed on in such dull uniformity, that nothing ever occurred to excite the passion they mutually felt into anything beyond the casual and daily acts of attention and intimacy. So little were they aware of the real truth, that it was their habit frequently to speculate upon the person to whom they would accord their darling niece. They scarcely knew any young men besides Tom Woodby and Edward: and as they never contemplated any attentions from the one, so they generally decided that the other would be a very desirable match. His behaviour since his family had come to town had very much reconciled them to him; Barbara thought it very civil on his part to pay them a visit purposely to ask them to dinner; Fanny asserted that he was a very genteel young man, and Abel, who had long foreseen all the miseries of poverty, would often speculate as to the eligibility of marrying his niece to so wealthy a man, in order to screen her from the wretchedness in prospect. They therefore constantly urged Mary to receive him with more alacrity than she was accustomed to show when he appeared.

The very morning of Edward's departure, when poor Mary's bosom heaved with sorrow, and she appeared visibly dejected, the very subject she most avoided was brought under discussion. "We must endeavour to compensate for Edward's absence by making a great deal more of Tom Woodby than we have done," said Aunt Bab. "It stands to reason that if he's discouraged he won't come near us. My dear Mary," (addressing her,) "I wish you would manage to make yourself agreeable to him!—you do always so keep him at a distance, that it is quite shocking to see you!"

"I'm quite certain," said Fanny, "if Mary would only look at him straight, take her head from off her work when he talks to her, and give him good long answers, not short 'Noes,' without a single 'Yes' to bless himself with, he would be as easy and comfortable with us as an old shoe."

Abel would have said something also, but that he remarked the subject was disagreeable to her. He approached her, and taking her hand, said, "I am afraid, my dear, that you are not very well: let us hope that a little dissipation will do you good. You have been oppressed by the dull

life we lead: to-morrow you will go out and see some new faces—I fear you will sadly tire of ours.”

Mary’s heart was full, and this act of kindness made it overflow. She burst into tears, and kissing her uncle with affection, left the room.

“I am afraid that poor dear,” said Fanny, “is sadly moped: she has not had a bit of gaiety, excepting the hand-organs and hurdy-gurdies in the square, since we have been here. She must positively go out—I wish the Goold Woodbys were giving a ball instead of a dinner to-morrow.”

“It stands to reason,” said Aunt Bab, “that young things like her must have gaiety, or else they will die. I recollect very well when I was young, I nearly killed myself by teaching the charity children in our village to sing the hundredth Psalm—it was so dull and they were so obstinate: but a good game at blindman’s buff put it all to rights—and so will the Woodby’s dinner put Mary to rights.”

“You do not think that Tom Woodby can have proposed to her yet?” said Fanny with a mysterious air. “You know few young girls can be asked the question without wincing—and I think all that crying and seriousness looks very suspicious. I recollect very well, when that Captain Rawbone had the impertinence to propose for me, with his red whiskers and freckled skin, I was so put out for a day or two that I could not eat, and got as thin as my stays through fretting.”

“I think what you now suggest to be impossible;” said Bab; “because Mary tells us everything the very moment it happens. She’s not a girl to keep anything to herself, all excepting her fear for her dear father’s safety; I am afraid that does weigh upon her heavily: poor thing! how she does dote upon him!”

“God’s will be done!” said Abel with a deep sigh and a most reverential tone of voice. “If we do not hear from him soon, I shall begin to be anxious.”

The conversation which had so unseasonably taken place concerning Tom Woodby, had in truth been the cause of Mary’s retreat to her room. Coming almost immediately upon the back of her explanation with Edward, it had shocked her, because she felt, now that he was gone, how much she would be exposed to the attentions and observation of his rival. She quite loathed his sight—and with good reason, for the motives which impelled him were in every way most wicked and profligate.

This young gentleman’s ambition was to be thought a

man of fashion and pleasure. He was encouraged by his foolish mother and sisters in this pursuit; but ignorant as he was of the many requisites which make up that character his vulgar mind could only imagine the depravity and the vice, without including any of the refinement so essential to its complete formation. He provided himself with all the proper exteriors, and then thought that he might compete with the best in the land. His little person was dressed out with scrupulous precision; he kept aloof from the common herd, and disdaining to make use of his legs, was carried about at the tail of a tall horse, escorted by a wretched boy in the guise of a groom. He did his best to get into good clubs, but not gaining admittance there, he became a swaggering member of the worst.

When the ruin of the Allnutts was announced, his wicked heart beat with joy; for nothing more was wanting to complete his equipment than to become the tyrant over some weak and wretched outcast—nay, his malignant desires dared soar to the possession of the pure and gentle Mary, particularly as in compassing her ruin, he intended to exhibit his superiority as well as his contempt for his more favoured rival Edward. It was he who insisted with his parents that they should visit the family, and invite them to dinner. This had been a subject of fierce contention at home; but Tom's determined resolution carried the day—he had laid a plan in his own head for pursuing his iniquitous scheme; and as he was not deficient in skill and cunning, he sagaciously determined to secure the approbation of the old folks on his side, ere he undertook his greater exploit. The truth is, that Mrs. Goold Woodby, impelled by Lady Thomson, had determined not to visit the Allnutts in London; for her object in life was to raise herself by endeavouring to associate with the rich and great; and what had she to gain, beyond the vulgar enjoyment of doing a kind act, by continuing her intimacy with them? She arrived from the country full of the most extensive schemes of 'cutting a figure,' and brought Lady Thomson with her as her dry-nurse. Lady Thomson planned her luxuries, and chose the fashion of her liveries, introduced her to the fashionable tradesmen, and threw her into the arms of extravagant milliners. She moreover supplied her with visiting lists, and never lost an opportunity of making obligations a marketable commodity, turning the civilities conferred upon her friend to her own benefit. She was ingenuity personified in executing any act of baseness, in order to se-

cure the notice of the great; and was equally full of talent in avoiding those whom it was inconvenient to know. But her scheme of 'cutting' the Allnutts became abortive, owing to the too powerful influence of the arrogant and petulant Tom, who, in spite of the stinginess and surliness of his father, and the ambitious views of his mother, had acquired a sway in the family which nothing could withstand. Lady Thomson herself was obliged to lower her diminished head; and bully Tom, as he was occasionally called, had it all his own way.

END OF VOL I.

ABEL ALLNUTT.

A NOVEL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“HAJJI BABA,” “ZOHRAB,” &c.

And if I have done well as is fitting the story, it is that which I desired ; but if slenderly and meanly, it is that which I could attain unto.

2 MACCABEES, XV. 38.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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ABEL ALLNUTT.

CHAPTER I.

Town vanities and ridiculous pretensions.

AMONG a knot of men who were standing together idling away their morning at the window of one of the clubs, stood Mr. Simpleton Sharp, the dull-witted young gentleman we have before noticed, and his friend Lord Demone.

“By the by, Demone,” said he, “do you dine at those rich citizen friends of yours, the Woodby Goolds, or Silver Woodbys, or some such name, to-day? they have sent me an invite to meet the widow Thomson, or Thomas, or some name of that sort—I hope you go?”

“How can you mistake names in that manner?” said Demone: “the people’s names are Goold Woodby. Everybody would be as much surprised were I to call them Woodby Goold, as if I were to call you *Sharp Simpleton*!”

This raised such a laugh at the expense of the affected coxcomb, that he retired as fast as he could, not without reflecting how he might make use of the joke again to his own advantage. These two worthies formed part of the society that were to assemble at Mr. Goold Woodby’s dinner, on the same day that our friends from Golden-square were invited; and we must take up our history from the moment that a hackney-coach, the most sonoric of its kind, resounding with clashing iron steps, and creaking with uneasy springs, stopped at the door of the well-known three-windowed mansion in Baker-street, and announced its arrival by an abortive knock from the unpractised hand of the drab-coated driver. As soon as the door was opened, appeared a host of liveried louts within, who seemed to be running one against another, unpractised as they were in their vocation; and soon was heard the jin-

gling crash of the iron steps let down from the vehicle in order to promote the delivery that was to ensue. First issued Abel, leading out Aunt Bab, in all the pomp and circumstance of her gray gown, followed by Fanny glistening in her cherry colour, and succeeded by Mary; alas! how different in air and in buoyancy of spirits from that day when she first appeared at Belvedere. Straw was not wanting to track their line of march; and they would have been so tracked into the very drawing-room, had not they discovered among the servants honest Brown, their old country servant, who in almost worshipping the ground they trod upon, also cleared away the straws that adhered to their skirts.

The facetious Demone, whose quickness in the detection of ridicule always supplied him with an appropriate nick-name, ere he finished his late visit at Belvedere Hall, had grafted the name of *Barbarossa* upon Aunt Bab, on account of certain sprigs of reddish hair that grew about her lips and chin. Aunt Fanny, too, he illustrated as *la Fanee*; whilst Abel, in allusion to his teeth, he invariably called *Curius Dentatus*. These different designations, ever since his lordship's visit (particularly since the Mexican defalcation), were become current in the Goold Woodby family; and the individuals in question were scarcely known by any other names, excepting that Mrs. Goold Woodby would usually exert her talent in slip-slop, by calling the last "*Curious 'tatoes.*"

It appears that the intention of Mrs. Woodby had only been to invite Abel and Mary to dinner. A large portion of the company had already arrived, when the Miss Allnutts and Mr. Allnutt were announced. Mrs. Woodby, her daughters, and Lady Thomson, all looked thunderstruck, particularly as one after the other in goodly procession filtered through the door into the room—first Aunt Bab escorted by Abel, then Aunt Fanny, and last of all, Mary. All who know what giving a dinner in London means, and are conversant in the ceremony of counting noses, may perhaps imagine what Mrs. Goold Woodby felt when she saw two more persons arrive than were expected. The circumstance almost took away her breath; she met the whole party in so perturbed a state of mind, that her reception of them was even more chilling than that she might have given to a poor cousin approaching her to claim

relationship. Abel, being humble, did not see why he should be received with cordiality, and the circumstance by him was unheeded; but Aunts Bab and Fanny could scarcely recover their astonishment, and had it been in their nature to be angry they would have been greatly so.

Whisperings ensued—Lady Thomson was appealed to—she shook her head; the girls looked hot and put out; Mr. Woodby got up what cordiality he could, but it was quite deficient in the old vibration of the elbow; and in short, the preliminary to this expected feast portended from the first nothing but a concoction of crude humours.

“I only asked ‘*Curious ’tatoes*’ and his niece to come,” said Mrs. Woodby to Lady Thomson; “what could make old Barbarossa and Fanny come too—what shall we do?”

“You can’t help yourself now,” said Lady Thomson; “in justice to yourself you can’t turn them away: ’tis Tom who has done this. You must contrive to make two more places at the table;” upon which, ringing the bell for the servant, more whisperings ensued, and the agitation for the moment subsided.

After the usual progress, arranged according to the strictest adherence to rank, had taken place down the staircase towards the dining-room, and when the august assembly had after much difficulty seated themselves, it was found that the addition of the two supernumeraries had rendered the whole operation in prospect about as irksome as sitting four in a chariot, or playing the fiddle in a sentry-box. In point of comfort it was a dinner very much like the one described by Boileau:

Où chacun, malgré soi, l’un sur l’autre porté,
Faisoit un tour à gauche, et mangeoit de côté.

To the vulgar-minded, display is pleasure, ceremony is good breeding, and expense is excellence. Mrs. Goold Woodby and her husband were eminent instances of this: although they were in essentials the most niggardly and avaricious of mortals, yet on occasions of display they forgot their avarice in order to indulge their vanity. The room was lighted to almost oven heat, and when to that were added the steam and fumes of the dinner, both acting violently upon the spiracles of the skin belonging to the attendants, it may, perhaps, be imagined how great

was the oppression produced by the exercise of eating in such an atmosphere. In such heat and under such circumstances little was left for the free action of the intellect.

Lady Thomson, however, who had made up her mind to shine on this occasion, had got up a scrap of literary talk, and after several unavailing efforts, having at length given her opinion upon some of the productions of the day, undertook to defend the book of a friend of hers, a lady author, by asserting "that she had written it for the purpose of charity."

"She ought to recollect," said her opposite neighbour, Lord Demone, "that 'charity begins at home;'" an answer which excited Lady Thomson's wrath in proportion as it was applauded by Simpleton Sharp.

Mr. Woodby having long since exhausted the subject of his lodges, his shields, and his family mottos, had now set up a new idol in his mind, and that was the size and excellence of a kitchen he had constructed in his house in Baker-street. This subject was now become the terror of his friends, and formed his stock story. We have already before hinted that he was celebrated for want of hospitality, excepting on such occasions as the present (if such may be called hospitality), and therefore, the discussion of this great kitchen only made him appear the more ridiculous in relating its history. He had undertaken to describe it in its most minute circumstances to Aunt Fanny, who lent an attentive ear, and seemed as much absorbed in the various intricacies of the steam apparatus, patent spit, and ingeniously devised oven, as the narrator could wish, whilst Demone secretly gave his attention and enjoyed the whole scene with malicious amusement. At length Woodby exclaimed, "Why, ma'am, in short, my kitchen is so large that I could roast an ox in it."

Fanny, with the greatest simplicity of mind, gently said, "And do you?"—a question which so intensely tickled the wit's fancy that he could not refrain from bursting into such laughter that it immediately excited Simpleton Sharp's sympathies; who thinking it quite sacrilegious when his Joe Miller had taken to laugh himself that he should not join, laughed too with all his best energies.

Aunt Bab and Abel, perceiving that laughter had been excited by something that Fanny had said, were involun-

tarily filled with dismay, being quite certain that in proportion as she promoted merriment in others she produced confusion to them. Old Woodby's story was stopped by this explosion, and as in a farm-yard one oftentimes hears a distant donkey take up the expiring bray of one near at hand, so, as soon as the husband had ceased to speak, the wife immediately broke out into some of her usual ill-timed remarks. She cried out from the further end of the long table to her husband,

"Now, Mr. Woodby, do you hear that! Here's Mr. Allnutt says that Edward Manby is gone back to Liverpool, and without ever coming to see us or wishing us good b'ye—now is not that ungrateful of him!"

"He was obliged to go," said Abel, "at a moment's notice; his uncle wrote to him in a great hurry."

"There's no excuse for him—now is there, Lord Demone!" addressing herself to him, seeing that no one else would listen to her.

"There is only one excuse, which is necessity," said Lord Demone.

"One day could make no difference. Now need he go so soon, I only ask you that,—need he go!"

"Why he would go *needy* if he did not," said the incorrigible joker.

"That's what he will do at all events," said the lady, not in the least perceiving the point of the answer which she had received; "Edward Manby will never get on in the world—now mark my words—he thinks a great deal too much about right and wrong."

"He can never go wrong as long as he acts rightly," said Abel, with spirit.

"He may go right, and welcome, as long as he chooses," said Mrs. Goold Woodby; "and to do right is all very well in its way; but really I don't see why he should give himself airs of consequence, and come Sir Charles *Grandson* over us; for after all, Mr. Goold Woodby has treated him more like his own son than anything else."

Tom Woodby, who felt that it was owing to his conduct that Edward had been driven from the house, and fearing that something unpleasant to himself might be elicited by this untimely discussion, turned the conversation by making some common-place remark upon the Opera, giving himself the airs of a patron of dancers and singers, and all

this, as he fondly hoped, to make an impression upon his neighbour, the (to him) impassive Mary.

The eyes of all at table had been turned upon her rare beauty, a sight truly refreshing amidst the ostentatious display and oppressive finery which filled the room. The women were envious of her charms, the men were lost in admiration. Tom, with that sort of presumption which the eminently low are so apt to possess, comported himself in a manner which, he flattered himself, would make every one suppose that he stood first in her good graces. He was officiously attentive to her wants; he would occasionally bend himself towards her, speak in a confidential whisper, then turn about to see if he was observed; and when he perceived how much she was annoyed, would instantly take upon himself the airs of being the director and patron of the whole table, drinking wine with one, rallying a second, and recommending good things to a third. To Aunt Bab he was peculiarly attentive, for he was sagacious enough to discern that she was the ascendant in that family horizon, and that he must secure her influence before he could compass any end he might have in view relating to her niece.

As for Abel, he saw in Tom one who might be the means of promoting his views of setting up as a teacher of the flute; and during the course of the entertainment his principal thoughts were turned upon that one object; he therefore received the bad young man's advances with good-will. He looked into the face of every man at table, with the hope that in the conformation of his lips he might discover one who was fond of blowing into a small hole. He conceived that in Lord Demone he had discovered that man, for by the cast of his face he deemed him to be musical, and as his chest was broad, he made no doubt that there was nothing in his lungs to impede the scheme he had of teaching him the flute. With the same eye he viewed Simpleton Sharp and Tom Woodby—they were both tolerable subjects. Old Mr. Woodby evidently would not do, his lips were certainly nonconductors of sweet sounds; but he felt sure that, if he could start with the three aforementioned, with that capital alone, he flattered himself he might keep his sisters from starving. There were two or three more upon whom he speculated, but not being acquainted with them, he allowed himself to be satisfied with those he knew.

Accordingly, when dinner was over, calling Tom on one side, and prefacing what he had to say with a short account of the necessitous situation to which they were reduced, he unfolded his scheme and begged his assistance.

Tom, who at one glance saw how entirely he would have the free ingress to the house by furthering Abel's wishes, entered into the scheme with the greatest apparent zeal, and assured him that he would not only become a scholar himself, but that he would induce Lord Demone and Simpleton Sharp to follow his example, and with them, as a beginning, he made no doubt that ere long he would have as many pupils as he could wish. Abel's eyes filled with tears of gratitude, and he thanked him with unsuspecting sincerity.

Feeling by this arrangement he would be placed beyond the reach of downright want, his spirits became elated, and his sisters afterwards said that they had never seen Abel in such good-humour since that specimen of happiness he evinced in the first part of the fete at Ivycote.

But it was different with them. They had not overcome the shock of Mrs. Woodby's cold reception, and they longed for the moment of departure. They sat by themselves after dinner unheeded and neglected. The admiration excited by Mary had produced no favourable feelings towards her in the hearts of the young ladies, and they scarcely noticed her by even the common forms of civility. Indeed the whole thing, from the beginning to the end, had been one uniform action of ponderous dulness to them; and wherever people meet together, as is frequently the case, not for the purposes of exchanging ideas, but solely to exhibit dress and persons, to eat, and drink, and to go away, such must ever be the result.

We will not continue our narrative of this dinner to its very termination, for fear of inspiring some of that dulness in our readers which was its characteristic; but we can assure them that it was complete in all its parts. The ladies sat, yawned, perambulated, and talked of long and short sleeves, till they were relieved by the gentlemen and coffee. Several refreshers—among whom were Captain Swaggle and Mr. Dolittle—were afterwards announced, whence ensued flirtations—then a sensation was produced by the arrival of the lion of the evening, Mrs. Goold Woodby's first cousin, the great Mr. Flam, from Chingiput, famous

for having wrestled with a royal tiger in the Sunderbunds — afterwards a song took place by Miss Anne, succeeded by variations on the harp by Miss Ellen, which led to a general departure. So ended a day expected to have been full of enjoyment, but which terminated in disgust, having however fulfilled one of its principal expectations, namely — to set up Abel as a teacher of the German flute.

CHAPTER II.

It is like trusting to the wind, depending upon teaching the flute for daily bread.

LORD DEMONE was one of Mary's most ardent admirers. So artless in manner, so engaging in her whole deportment, and so eminently beautiful, her appearance in the company and in the scene to which we have referred in the last chapter, was so unlike those who met on that occasion in the full exercise of all their grosser appetites, and mental corruptions, that it was impossible not to be greatly struck by the comparison. He viewed her through the medium of those appetites. When he reflected upon himself and his own person, he felt that he never could succeed in attracting her notice, and often said to himself, "I suppose she looks upon me as a disgusting old man, old enough to be her father." Still he longed to render himself acceptable to her; and when Tom Woodby, after making the proper explanations concerning the needy state of the family, couched in sentiments current among libertines, proposed to him to become Abel's scholar, the profligate man soon acceded to the proposal, hoping that by exerting his lungs in favour of the uncle he might stand a chance of gaining the heart of his niece. When Tom applied to Simpleton Sharp for the same purpose, he at first objected upon the score of the weakness of his chest, besides having no po-

sitive ear for music ; but when he was told that Lord Demone had agreed to the proposal, he no longer made any difficulty. Thus Abel was supplied with three pupils ; and we beg the reader to introduce himself in imagination into a small front parlour looking into Golden-square, where Abel, having received the notification that his three scholars would wait upon him during the course of the morning, was making the proper preparations for their reception. Happiness beamed in his heart, and expressions of gratitude would ever and anon burst from his lips for what he looked upon as a providential interposition ; that want which was staring him in the face he hoped to stave off ; those creditors who would inevitably come for their due, he now hoped to meet with a ready hand ; and he blessed God that the talent which he possessed, so despised and scouted as it had been by his sisters, should now be the means of procuring for them a livelihood. He spread a table in the middle of the room, covered it with a bit of green baize, and there made a display of his flute and music. Against several large folios he raised his music-book ; and then, walking round and round, he gazed upon what he had done with as much self-complacency as if he had raised an altar to the God of Harmony. His sisters and Mary came down to help him, dusting every corner, cleaning every chair and table, and preparing for the reception of his scholars with unfeigned interest, their hearts at the same time overflowing with the kindest feelings towards him, for that devotedness to them which characterised his every thought and action.

Were we asked to draw the strongest contrast we could imagine between man and man, we should name Abel Allnutt and Lord Demone. Behold the simple, unsuspecting, and sincere Abel, endeavouring to make the designing, insidious, and sensual Demone screw up his lips into such a focus that they might blow into the small aperture of a flute ; labouring to adjust his fingers ; entreating of him to infuse his breath into the hole instead of its side ; every now and then slapping his hands with ecstasy as soon as his lordship produced some hideous sound, which he affirmed made an excellent beginning. The crafty pupil laughed in his sleeve at the zeal of the master, and at the probation to which he had subjected himself. He soon got tired of the efforts he was called upon to make, and when he announced that the lesson was over for that day,

Abel felt hurt that so little had been required of him, and that his pupil had made such small progress. Tom Woodby and Simpleton Sharp came in succession, and the time was passed more in settling preliminaries for future proceedings than in any actual lesson, much to the delight of Abel, who, enthusiastic as he was about music, contemplated the hope of establishing a sort of morning academy, in which his pupils eagerly joined, particularly when he fully acquiesced in their proposal of joining Mary, who was a good musician, to their concert. Demone loudly proclaimed that if Miss Mary came, he intended to play *apart*, an inuendo which no one understood excepting the libertine Tom, who now for the first time perceived that he might have to combat another rival in his noble friend.

The result of this morning's labour was that the whole party adjourned to visit the ladies up-stairs, who received them with appropriate smiles and welcome. Aunt Barbara, 'tis true, only saw in them so many representatives of the few shillings that were to be the remuneration of each lesson; but Fanny took a more sentimental view of the case, and began to think that swains might abound as well in Golden-square as among the fields and grassy banks of the country. She renewed her former acquaintance with Lord Demone, who did not allow his good breeding to forsake him as he met her advances, although he groaned under the apprehension that he might be obliged again to undergo the history of brother John, or be led out on the leads to admire the beauties of a kitchen chimney.

Mary made an effort in furtherance of the wishes of her aunts and uncle to render herself agreeable to their guests, and now turned a less reluctant ear to the insipid inanities of Tom Woodby's remarks and flattery, hoping thereby to prove herself willing to sacrifice her own feelings to those of her relations. The visit, however, had scarcely commenced ere the postman's knock was heard at the door, and presently a letter was delivered to her uncle. Looking at its address, he exclaimed, "From Edward Manby, I declare!" and then opened it with great demonstrations of delight.

Mary visibly changed colour at this announcement, a circumstance which immediately caught the eye of Tom, and which did not escape the observation of Demone.

“What did you say?” said Aunt Bab to her brother, with much animation.

“Here is news from John,” answered Abel, intent upon reading the letter with the greatest earnestness.

“News from papa!” exclaimed Mary, jumping up from her seat and running to her uncle in a transport of delight, her cheek flushed, and her eyes beaming with joy. “What does he say? Is he well?—Is he coming to us?—do tell me!” she exclaimed in one breath; whilst Abel, still reading, answered, “He ’s very well, he ’s not coming I’ll tell you all in a minute.”

The arrival of this letter made the parties interested in it so forgetful of the presence of their visitors, that Lord Demone thought it right to take his leave, and, dragging the others with him, left the family to the free expansion of their feelings.

“Read it to us,” said Barbara.

“Read,” said Fanny.

Abel being seated, Mary posted herself close to him in order to feast her eyes upon the letter for more reasons than one, and he read as follows :

“*My dear Friend,*

“I write in great haste to inform you that I have seen the master of a merchantman, an intelligent man, who only arrived yesterday from Vera Cruz, and who informs me that he had heard of your brother John, although he had not seen him, and that he was in good health and spirits, notwithstanding the failure of the expedition upon which he was sent, owing to the causes truly described by your banker. He reports he was well known to the inhabitants of that city, who never before had seen one so zealous, active, and enthusiastic, and so ready to devote himself to the interests of the republic. The fortress of San Juan de Ulloa, still in the hands of the Spaniards, he proposed to take by erecting one of Perkins’ steam-guns against it, and talked of battering down the walls in an hour. The barren Island of Sacrificios, famous for being the burial-place of the ancient Indians, he promised to render eminently fertile, by ploughing it and using the old bones as manure, which he assured the people would make vegetation spring up where it had never before appeared. He objected to allowing the *sopilotes* (the carrion vultures) to

retain the situation of scavengers to the city; asserting that they ought to be shot by act of congress, and good wholesome sewers constructed instead.

“His first impression upon seeing the naked Indians was to encourage manufactures, in order to clothe them comfortably; and when he observed the sickly little children crawling about the streets, he immediately planned an infant school for them. In short, it seems that Vera Cruz was set quite alive by his presence. He made the authorities, civil and military, stare by the activity of his disposition, and indeed they were right glad when he left their city for Jalapa, at which place I hear he became more and more enthusiastic. Before he reached Mexico, he twice escaped being robbed and murdered, and in consequence determined to urge the government to establish a new police, precisely upon the plan of our own; and when he came in sight of the Lake of Tescuco, its ducks, and flat-bottomed boats, he became quite wild with the desire of turning such natural advantages to the greatest possible national benefit. My informant did not tell me what his ulterior plans were; but it does not appear that he is likely to quit Mexico for some time to come. I will keep you well informed whenever I hear more: in the meanwhile let me congratulate you all, (Miss Mary in particular,) upon knowing him to be in good health.

“I am sorry that I can't say much in favour of my own prospects. The story is a long one and would take up more time than I can at present afford. It shall be for your private ear, when please God we meet again: in the meanwhile, pray recollect that I am wholly and entirely yours, devoted to your service, and that I only live in the hope of proving the truth and sincerity of my friendship.

“Ever your affectionate

“EDWARD MANBY.”

“P. S. The master of the ship says that things in Mexico are in a very unsettled state, and that the merchants are all very desponding. Alas! alas!”

This letter puts flutes and flute-players entirely out of their heads for the moment, and they discussed its contents from morning till night, making every sort of conjecture upon what might be John's ultimate fate. Mary sat down in deep thought, every now and then anxious to join her

father, and then subduing that feeling by the reflection that she would be better employed in being of use to her uncle and aunts. She deeply sighed as she fixed her thoughts upon Edward, and became impatient to know what he meant, when he alluded to the untoward state of his own prospects. In the united view which they all took of their situation, they agreed that, for the present, patience was their best remedy, for there was no chance of a turn in their favour as far as regarded Mexican affairs, for some time to come. Barbara took heart, and did not despair of disposing of her cookery-book in verse to some good-natured publisher. Fanny avowed her determination to work her fingers to the bone in making fancy things, and Mary was only anxious to find a place as governess.—As for Abel, his hopes were quite elated with his essay as a teacher of the flute. It was true, their funds were rapidly diminishing, and that rent-day was fast approaching; but then more pupils might come: they had Tom Woodby for their friend, and he was rich,—then Edward Manby might return to them,—Mark Woodcock was not to be forgotten,—and on the whole, with such like prospects, and with a sincere reliance upon Providence, they determined that they could not call themselves very ill off.

Lord Demone, in leaving the house, was more absorbed in admiration of Mary than ever. She, on the other hand, was happy in having found one who would in some measure screen her from the obtrusiveness of Tom, and therefore encouraged his conversation; which indeed she did, distinct from any other consideration, because he was an eminently agreeable man. He could talk good sense whenever he chose, and always managed to enliven whatever he had to say by so much happy illustration that it was impossible not to be amused. He was of an age which rendered his society harmless to a young person, as far as the attraction of looks might be of consequence; but, under that plea, he felt that he could make his advances unnoticed.

Great indeed must be the corruption of that man's heart who, at an age when he ought to be fighting his way to the end of his pilgrimage, having already completed more than one half of it,—is only bent upon pursuing a course of systematic depravity! But such was this personage. Living among those who were charmed by his wit, and who

looked upon pleasure as the only object in life, he was debarred from the wholesome restorative of serious thoughts by the never-ceasing poison of adulation. The supremacy decreed to him was his greatest trial; and he never acquired sufficient strength of mind to reflect how less to be envied he was in truth, than the man who, gradually retiring from the world, passes his life in ascertaining the corruption of his nature and in endeavouring to subdue it.

Tom was enraged when he found that Demone was likely to be his competitor in his own scheme of iniquity, and often did he upbraid himself for having been the means of introducing him to Abel as a scholar. As they were walking away, he laughed at Abel and his flute, and purposely made it a point to cry down the utter folly of learning that instrument from such a master. Demone, too shrewd not to discover the object of Tom's remarks and his real feelings, upheld Abel, and asserted that a morning thus spent was extremely pleasant; and that for his part, intending to pursue the science of music with ardour, he made no doubt he should soon become a great proficient. Upon which, Tom, wishing further to sift Demone concerning Mary, and at the same time to turn the subject of their discourse, said, alluding to a poor dowager duchess, to whom it was reported that the peer was paying his addresses,—“By the bye, the report is that you are to marry the duchess: is that true?”

“True!” said Demone,—“it is about as true as that Mary Allnutt wishes to marry you. No, no! that report is utterly unfounded.—*Your grace* without dinner, will never do!”

“Excellent!” exclaimed Simpleton Sharp; “that's the best thing I have heard to-day,—saying grace without dinner! Capital!”

Tom walked away sulky and disconcerted.

CHAPTER III.

An explosion of wickedness described, to which the innocent must be exposed when they associate with the guilty.

THE days now glided on in Golden-square very much in the same routine that we have just described. Abel gave lessons in the morning, and the afternoon was passed in the drawing-room in the company of the persons before named. Lord Demone had succeeded in making himself very acceptable in the eyes of Mary. As a man of the world, he was delighted to find a mind so new to all its ways, and she was never sated with the charm of his conversation. He would talk to her upon the various subjects which make up the business of a man of pleasure, and amuse her with anecdotes of every thing then passing in the world. She, who scarcely ever heard any thing but discussions upon family affairs, listened to the details of passing events, the cabal of parties, the conduct of statesmen, and the intrigues of courts, with the interest of one who hears the narrative of some portion of history. He entertained her with accounts of modern literature, discussed the merits of books, and, without appearing to do so, informed her mind whilst he amused her imagination, seasoning his whole discourse by flashes of wit and happy allusions. His object was to secure her confidence, and every time he saw her, he felt assured that he was attaining that object. She was now always happy to see him, and he had so entirely succeeded in keeping Tom Woodby at a distance, that that circumstance alone was sufficient to awaken her gratitude.

One day, after he had been describing the success of a new play, and the attraction of the popular actor of the day, he proposed that Mary with her uncle and aunts should accompany him to see it. She was quite overjoyed at the proposal, for she had never seen a play acted in her life, and immediately made it known to them. They at first acquiesced with the greatest alacrity, and nothing was talked of in the house but the pleasure which they were about to enjoy; but when the more serious discussion of

expense took place, Abel and Barbara found, that what with the hire of the coach, and what with the share of the box which they felt themselves called upon to propose paying, they would throw away as much money in the search of amusement as would suffice for several days' maintenance. They therefore felt it right to forego the enjoyment; but when Lord Demone informed them that he could carry two in his chariot, and that a friend had lent him the box, Barbara and Abel, avowing their intention to stay at home, insisted that Fanny and Mary should accompany him. This was at length so arranged, and Tom Woodby having also been invited to be of the party, he agreed to meet them at the theatre.

When a man is totally without principle, by which we mean religious principle, (for what other can there be?) his mind is fearfully open to temptation: with such a man, Satanic impulses have as great a range, as ruin and devastation have over a fair piece of ground which lies unfenced and unprotected; whichever of the vices assail him, he has nothing to oppose to it, but at once allows it to enter his heart as freely as if there was neither conscience nor retribution at hand to check him. The man of the world is only held back by what is commonly called honour; and where that honour does not intervene, finding nothing to curb him, he proceeds fearlessly in quest of his own gratification. In the instance before us, Lord Demone, in proposing this scheme of going to the playhouse with Mary, only followed a temptation which had long been goading him on, in spite of every moral and sacred consideration, to enjoy her society in a situation which might, if the chapter of accidents should operate in his favour, deprive her of the protection of her relations, and throw her into his power. He depended much upon innate corruption, and calculated that our natural depravity would alone advance his object; for his own heart was too vicious to conceive that religious sentiments can establish such thorough detestation of vice, as to preserve their owner in purity and innocence.

Aunt Fanny, Mary, and Demone, proceeded with all due decorum to the play-house. They occupied a small private-box near the stage. Tom Woodby followed soon after. Mary, surprised at all she saw and heard, was so delighted by the pageant and the show, that it succeeded

in throwing her mind from off its usual sedateness, and she became a perfect child in emotion and curiosity. Aunt Fanny was equally struck, but she was acted upon by her old enemy—imbecile vanity, which at once made her suppose that the thousand and one pair of eyes glancing in her direction from the pit, were solely attracted by her beauty,—forgetting all the while that next to her sat one whose charms were without compare in the whole house. She looked, so she flattered herself, a being made up of delicacy and sentiment, and occasionally, in a proper attitude, glanced “unutterable things.”

We will not go through the whole history of the four or five hours passed in the play-house; but merely assert that Lord Demone made himself so agreeable to Mary that he entirely engrossed her attention, when it was not taken up by the play; whilst Tom, who dodged about in the back ground, occasionally communicated his remarks to Aunt Fanny in a low, undertoned growl.

The performance having at length drawn to a close, Demone, after duly shawling and cloaking the ladies, drew Mary's hand within his arm, and straightway conducted her through the crowd, followed by Tom and Aunt Fanny. He pushed on, dragging his companion after him, who, unaccustomed to such a scene, half-frightened, half-amused, but only anxious to get home, followed him without once looking behind. He was well acquainted with all the avenues of the theatrs, and, having succeeded in getting clear of the crowd, he at length reached the spot where his carriage was in waiting. There he came to a halt, as if in expectation of Aunt Fanny; and having paused for a few minutes, he at length persuaded Mary to get in, for fear of catching cold: saying, “Your aunt will no doubt follow with Woodby.” He then got into the carriage also, and desired the coachman to drive on.

It was now, for the first time, that poor Mary felt the loss of her aunt's presence; for, although she did not at first imagine any harm could accrue to her, still woman, however unpractised in life, feels an impropriety almost instinctively, particularly when her character may by possibility be assailed.

Mary inquired eagerly for her aunt, and when she found the carriage was proceeding without her, begged that it might be stopped, for that she was determined to wait un-

til she should appear. Demone, afraid of alarming her, acceded to her wishes, until she was appeased—they then drove on, but still Mary became more and more uneasy as they advanced; and when she observed the streets, and thought that they were not the same through which they passed on going to the theatre, she became frightened outright—other circumstances tended to frighten her still more:—she now would listen to nothing that Demone could say in extenuation; in great agony of mind, she did not cease to look out of the window, and implore to be allowed to get out. Demone endeavoured to take advantage of the confidence which he had so long laboured to inspire, but he only increased her alarm. Gazing into the street, by the glare of the lamps she perceived a figure which she thought was well known to her. Looking at it with great earnestness, she at length recognised Mark Woodcock, who was walking along with hasty strides, accompanied by a friend. She immediately let down the glass, and cried out with her might and strength, “Mr. Mark, save me! save me!”

Mark, hearing a well-known voice, started as it struck his ear, and immediately pursued the carriage, escorted by his friend. It drove on at an increased rate, which made it difficult for them to keep up with it; however, they ran with their best speed, keeping it in view, determined to trace it to the spot where it would stop. To their joy, it suddenly came to a stand, owing to a barrier thrown across the street, (the place being under repair,) which obliged the coachman to turn about. Mary, having lost all hope of help, had by this time almost fallen into hysterics, when to her utter joy, just as the carriage was slowly backing around, the door was opened, and she beheld Mark Woodcock, who, almost exhausted with the race he had run, and seconded by his friend, had succeeded in seizing the door handle. She threw herself forwards, whilst he received her in his arms. Demone would have detained her, and was about to jump out and assail her champion; but when he perceived him to be a strong, muscular man, supported by one of equal powers, he found it wiser to stifle his rage and disappointment, and leaving her to take her own course, he ordered his carriage to drive away.

When Mary felt herself released from her champion, and in safety with one who, she was confident, would take

care of her, she nearly fainted from that revulsion which so often takes place after violent emotion. Mark, who to this moment had not been able to discover the reason of this call upon his interference, tended her with the greatest care and humanity; and as in truth they were not very far from Golden-square, although Demone's intentions were anything but to have driven thither, so they were not long in arriving at that place.

As soon as Mary reached the door of her own house, she was so entranced with joy that she could almost have kissed her deliverer with gratitude; whilst he, surprised to find himself so suddenly transformed into a hero of romance, vowed in his inmost heart that he never would lose an opportunity of devoting himself to her service when and wherever those services might be required of him.

Fanny and her conductor, upon arrival, had raised such a hue-and-cry at Lord Demone's conduct in leaving her to find her own way home, that Aunt Bab and Abel, who half asleep were waiting for their return, were roused into the most active state of liveliness. They entered but little into Fanny's feelings with regard to her own ill-usage, but called loudly for their neice. "Where can she be gone?—what can have happened to her?" were exclamations which they never ceased to make, until their fears were excited to a most alarming degree by seeing Tom Woodby, with a mysterious air, shrug up his shoulders, and hearing him confess that he would not trust Demone alone with one of his sisters, or with any young person he cared for, for anything the world could offer.

"Why, what do you think he would do to her?" inquired Aunt Bab with the greatest anxiety.

"I can't say," said Tom, too happy to have an opportunity of venting his rage at being so entirely outstretched in his scheme; "but this I will say, that Demone is well known for being the most dangerous man, the most celebrated lady-killer in the United Kingdom, and that he actually sticks at nothing."

"A lady-killer!" roared out Bab. "God bless us! he's not going to murder the poor girl!—is he?"

"A lady-killer!" echoed Aunt Fanny.

"Here! give me my hat and stick," exclaimed Abel: "I'll go after them: only tell me which way they went, and if she is to be found on the surface of the globe, I'll

find her. Villain! rascal!" he exclaimed, gnashing his teeth with agony, and rushing down stairs with the impetuosity of a desperate man.

"Run after him, Mr. Woodby," exclaimed Barbara to Tom; "for Heaven's sake let us not lose him too—you don't know how violent he is when he is taken in this manner."

Tom, followed by Aunts Bab and Fanny, rushed down stairs after Abel, who had already seized his stick, put on his hat, and was fumbling at the street door to get out, when Mark Woodcock's violent knock from without was heard, with Mary as his companion. The door being opened, the bewildered maiden soon found herself in the arms of her relations, who almost wept with joy at seeing her again in safety.

"What has happened, my dear Mary?" inquired Aunt Bab, who had preserved her self possession more than any of the party. Mary could not answer, so convulsed was she with every sort of feeling. "Do explain to us," she continued, addressing Mark, "Mr. Woodcock, how did all this take place?"

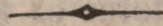
"Why, ma'am," said Mark, "I'm not sufficiently able to explain, for I was taken quite unawares; but as I was walking along, I heard the voice of an interesting female vociferating after me, upon which I ran with all my speed, accompanied by a friend of mine, right after the carriage, and, as good luck would have it, it stopped. Upon which I opened the door, and there I saw the criminal with Miss Mary, he, insisting and she persisting, until she came tumbling out right on the top of me. The criminal would have assaulted me had I let him; but seeing my friend and I too much for him, he thought fit to sneak off; so we completely did him out of his wicked purposes, and having got lawful possession, here she is, as safe and sound as the Monument."

By this time Mary was sufficiently restored to herself to confirm what Mark had stated, and she made her acknowledgments to her protector in a manner that secured his friendship for ever; whilst all present were loud in expressing their indignation against the unprincipled causer of this disturbance.

"He shall never come into this house again," exclaimed Bab, "whatever he may say or do!"

“If he sticks at nothing,” said Fanny, “I should like to know what he will try to do next?”

Abel would have spoken, but he discovered a disaster had happened to his mouth, rendering the act of utterance unpleasant, and which to his dismay, when he ascertained the cause, he found to proceed from the loss of certain false teeth he had long cherished, and which had fallen during the excitement of the evening and from the violence of his vociferations. It became an object of the first importance to find them, for upon their existence depended his power of blowing the flute; for it would be impossible to restore them without incurring much greater expense than they could at present afford. An immediate search was therefore commenced, in which he was assisted by Tom, who, now finding that he was likely to have the coast clear, and every facility before him of pursuing his villainous scheme, sought to ingratiate himself in the family by every act of obsequiousness. It was late before the party retired for the night, Abel being the greatest sufferer, for he went to bed toothless.



CHAPTER IV.

The family in their distress apply to a powerful though distant cousin.

THE excitement of the preceding night had not subsided on the following morning, and the family met together to breakfast in no very satisfactory mood. Not one of them had passed a quiet night,—each had a grievance to complain of; but what remained uppermost in their minds was Lord Demone’s conduct.

“I’ll ask Mark Woodcock, the next time I see him,” said Aunt Barbara, “whether it would not be possible to take the law of that vile man for such conduct. It stands

to reason that no one has a right to seize another by force and gallop her half across the city in a coach, without asking her, with your leave, or by your leave, and that a young girl, too, not eighteen, who is obliged to cry out for her life in the middle of the public streets."

"I cannot think so ill of any man," said Abel, "to suppose that designedly, he would inflict such cruelty upon those who have never offended him, as to injure one they cherish so tenderly as our dear Mary. I dare say," said he to her, at the same time patting her cheek, "I dare say you were more frightened than hurt, if the truth was known."

"Indeed he hurt me very much," said Mary blushing; "I thought he would have torn my gown from off my shoulders, when he found that I was determined to go with Mr. Mark."

"He is an odious wicked man," said Bab; "I wonder Abel, how you can venture to say a word in his favour. Such are the vile wretches who, with their smooth tongues, do more mischief in the world, than your open murderers."

"We have no right to judge any man," said Abel.—"Can you say how that very person has been educated—what examples he has had before his eyes—to what his mind has been directed—what the peculiar nature of his constitution—what the force of temptation he has to contend with? If you cannot answer these questions and a thousand others of a similar nature, you ought not to judge him. There is only one who is capable of judging him, and that is his Maker."

"Then you do not allow me to discriminate between right and wrong—to approve of the one, and to censure the other?"

"That I deny," said Abel. "We must abhor vice and love virtue;—and we are to follow God's commands with our undivided strength—and we may censure particular actions and laud others, but no one man can entirely judge another. As I said before, that is left to his Maker and his ultimate Judge."

"Well, nobody shall ever persuade me," said Aunt Fanny, "that Lord Demone is not an odious man; although I will allow that he is a very civil one, and even very amusing!"

"He shall never come into this house again," said Bab,

“as long as I have a word to say in it—not even if he comes to pay for his flute lessons, which I suppose now he never will—mean wretch that he is!”

“He has injured us very much,” said Abel, “by insulting our niece,—but that is an indignity which we must bear with patience; and he is also the cause of me making me lose my teeth, another real grievance, for I cannot replace them without incurring an expense which we cannot now afford, and thus I am prevented from gaining my livelihood.”

“Yes,” said Bab, “you must give up your flute, as well as your vile scholar; and as we have lost him, so we shall lose that foolish shadow of his, Simpleton Sharp, who goes about laughing at his jokes, like the little chimney-sweeper who echoes ‘sweep’ the moment the big chimney-sweeper has said the word.”

“We must turn our minds to something else, and that instantly!” said Abel.

“We must, indeed; for I do believe,” said Bab, “that we have only a small sum left at the bankers’, and they never allow any one to overdraw.”

“I have been thinking,” said Abel, after a long pause, “as I did not see Lord Knutsford, and since nothing has been elicited by my first application, that we might apply again, and that by letter. Suppose I write to him and state our situation?”

“A good thought!” exclaimed Bab, suppose you do. Much will depend on the sort of letter you write—I will help you.”

“The simpler the better,” said Abel. “A plain statement of facts is always the best mode of appealing to a man of sense, which I suppose he is, being a cabinet minister; and he will then draw his own inferences.”

“We must give him something more than facts,” said Bab; “we must let him know how we are related to him—he must know who our grandfathers and grandmothers were, and that will do more for us than plain facts. I am sure I could almost cry when I think of our dear old grandmother, and I dare say he will too, when he thinks of his; we must touch him through the heart.”

“Well, I will go and write the letter,” said Abel, “and then you shall see it and make your suggestions;” upon which he retired to his room, and, after some thought, wrote as follows:

“ *My Lord,*

“ I venture to state that my necessities impel me to write to you. I address myself to you, because you are my relation,—a fact which I entreat your lordship to give me an opportunity of proving. My two sisters, myself, and niece, were living peaceably in the country, when ruin overtook us, wholly without our fault; and we have been obliged to come to London, where, unless you protect us by giving us some means of gaining our bread, we must either die in prison or in a work-house. If your lordship would be kind enough to grant me an interview, I would more fully explain the nature of our distress; and in hope of a speedy answer,

“ I am, my Lord,

“ Your obedient servant and cousin,

“ ABEL ALLNUTT.”

“ Why, that will never do, Abel,” said Aunt Bab; “ you have said nothing about our relationship—nothing about our great-grandfathers; if we do not tell him who his parents were, how is he ever to know it!—it stands to reason that you must tell him. The letter is too short, indeed it is; you ought to give him at least two or three sheets full; these sort of people like attentions, and you ought not to write to them as if you was writing to a grocer. You must appeal to his heart,—it stands to reason that you must: tell him what brought us to Golden-square, and he will feel for us; and say a good deal about Mexican bonds, and of the abominable conduct of the Woodbys to us. You have not informed him who John is, and what a distinguished officer he is; then you must describe yourself and your weak state of health, and tell him how old we are all getting, and that it is a shame that we should be left to starve, and that we have tried literature, and tuition, and given lessons on the flute—all that will touch his heart; but we must depend most upon our mutual ancestors—lay great stress upon them. You may be certain that blood tells after all.”

Abel listened with patience to what his sister said, and, after passing some time in combating her argument in favour of long letters, he was persuaded to introduce a line or two into the one he had written explanatory of mutual relation-

ship, and having done so, he carefully folded it up and proceeded himself to deliver it at the very residence of Lord Knutsford. This having been accomplished, they determined to wait the event with resignation; but there was one circumstance which gave them great cause for anxiety, and that was not having heard from Edward Manby for some considerable time. He knew the warmth of his affection for them all, a feeling which would make him punctual in writing to them regularly, and still many days were expired, and no letter arrived. Mary, too, had partaken of her uncle's anxiety, although she had not ventured to express it; and as those once accustomed to affliction are apt to expect a continuation of adversity, so their minds did not fail to apprehend more misery in store from that quarter.

When Tom Woodby arrived the morning after to take his lesson on the flute, he was not displeased to find that, owing to Abel's loss, he could not continue to teach that instrument; and living under the apprehension that some other person might slip in between him and his schemes upon Mary, he loudly applauded Abel's decision. Having thus got rid of a rival in Lord Demone, Tom had, however, to contend with more formidable difficulties in the opposition which his own family made to any further acquaintance with the Allnutts. His mother, Lady Thomson, and his sisters, had observed the marked attention he had paid to Mary at the dinner already described; and when they heard that he was a constant visiter at the Allnutts', they became alarmed lest he should throw himself away—so they called it—upon one whom they despised, and whom they were pleased to look upon as a wretched scrub and a penniless pauper. Mrs. Goold Woodby was the more awake to such a circumstance, at this particular juncture, because she was flushed with prospects of worldly prosperity. It was determined that she and her daughters were to go to court to be presented; it was confidently whispered about, that the male Woodby was to receive the honour of knighthood; and besides, a baronetcy might be in the wind. She had, moreover, succeeded in getting a foreign ambassador—so she called him, but in truth the *chargé d'affaires* of Hesse Smokanpoff—to dine with her. She was promised to be introduced to a secretary of the Turkish ambassador, and was in negotiation for a Persian

prince and the descendent of an Indian nabob. Was it probable, therefore, with this brilliant career before her, she should ever agree to see her son Tom, the heir of Belvedere, and perhaps the future baronet, dangling after Mary Allnutt,—a girl whom nobody knew, whose uncle was a teacher of the German flute, and whose aunts would soon be reduced to wielding a mangle or perhaps going about as getters-up of small linen? The ladies in question were visited by Demone the morning after his discomfiture by Mark Woodcock,—a visit he had intentionally planned in order to destroy any unfavourable report that might be spread to his disadvantage, and thus overwhelm him with ridicule; and also to give a hint to the family concerning the position in which Tom was placed.

“So my friend Tom, I hear,” said Demone, “is to marry the beautiful Mary Allnutt.”

“Tom! marry!” exclaimed Mrs. Woodby.

“Mary Allnutt!” roared Lady Thomson.

“Ay,” said the other, “*Curius Dentatus*, like a second Orpheus, has fascinated him with his flute; *Barbarossa* has wagged her beard and exercises tyranny over him; and *la Fanée* acts as decoy-duck. They’ll have him as sure as fate.”

“That they never shall,” exclaimed Mrs. Woodby, her face flushed, her hands clenched, and her eyes darting fury. “If *Curius ’tatoes* ever again dares to teach Tom how to play the flute, I’ll—I’ll—I’ll play the deuce with him. *Curius ’tatoes* indeed! with his white ugly face and ill-made pantaloons. And as for old Barbara, she shall answer to me for that piece of impudence—I that have done so much for her. Didn’t I subscribe to her pitiful charity-school all to please her, and didn’t I take old Brown into our service all to make it agreeable to her; why should I take her leavings? I won’t be so bamboozled: and now she’s going to cheat us out of our Tom. No, no,—that she shall not do; happen what may, I’ll show them up to the astonished world; and if that oaf, old Fanny, comes here with her airs and graces, I’ll tell her that none of her fine words shall operate any effect here.”

Lady Thomson, who had been anxious to speak, as soon as this effusion was ended burst out as follows:—
“You are perfectly right—you must not allow Tom to domineer over you in this fashion any longer. It is a duty

you owe to yourself, to stop all intercourse with the Allnutts: if they really belong to Lord Knutsford, as they pretend to do, then ought of regard to your own character and to the aristocracy you ought to be civil to them; but really when it is quite plain that they as much belong to his lordship as they do to the king of the Hottentots, and that they are nothing but poor miserable wretches who are known by nobody, and who can't even make themselves fit to be looked at, why then it is only right, and belonging to your station in society, to avoid their acquaintance. Did you ever see such a fright as Barbarossa made of herself the other night? She positively turned that old gray gown, as well known all over the country as the parish steeple, in order to hide a certain spot upon it as visible as an island on a map;—and then Fanny's cap was actually composed of old shreds, which made her look like a chimney-sweeper; whilst that well-remembered cherry silk, being faded yellow, will soon die of a green old age. As for the girl Mary, she was a thing to send into the house-keeper's room to dust the chairs: she looked like the housemaid, with her cotton gown and black stuff shoes. It was quite odious for all that to see how the men ran after her; and you, Lord Demone," she continued, addressing herself to him, "were one of the first to lay yourself at her feet."

"Ah, my dear lady!" said Demone; "wherever there is a beautiful face to be gazed at, we don't look at the gown;—a diamond may be wrapt up in a piece of brown paper, but it is still a diamond. Mary Allnutt is surprisingly beautiful, there is no doubt of that."

"After all," said Anne Woodby, "she is no such great things either. Surely her nose is not long enough,—and then she has a defect in her mouth;—besides that, some people have said she squints. I know she once began to have a hump."

"Ah, that hump has now got into her chest!" said Demone with a satirical smile on his lips, "for in truth there never was seen a finer bust."

"I see you are determined to be the girl's upholder at our expense, my lord," said Mrs. Woodby, reddening with anger.

"As for being her upholder," said he, "you must allow me to deny that, for her beauty is so great, that it requires

but little furniture to set it off;—as to expense it is nothing, for you have already said that that furniture is cotton.”

“I said nothing about furniture,” said Mrs. Woodby, unconscious of the drift of his humour; “but this I will say, that if Tom marries her, then I will insist upon Mr. Gould Woodby making short work of it, and cutting him off in his will with a shilling.”

“You are perfectly right,” exclaimed Lady Thomson; “you have no business to allow the respectability of your name to be contaminated by an alliance with a beggar.”

“No, nor shall it,” said Mrs. Woodby, “although that beggar should be as handsome as Venus herself.”

Much more was said on this occasion which does not require repeating, and therefore we will proceed to the following chapter; but Demone accomplished his object by entirely turning the current of attention from himself towards Tom, which was all he wanted to achieve.

CHAPTER V.

Vicissitudes and mortifications.

ONE of the peculiar characteristics of Tom Woodby was his perverseness. His very look, with his spherical head and round features, was the personification of that hateful quality, alas! so strongly stamped upon all the posterity of Adam. The opposition of his family to his visiting the Allnutts was the only sure mode of making him increase his attentions to them. The very next time he appeared at home after the visit paid by Lord Demone, his mother, Lady Thomson, and his sisters, in a body set upon him like so many hornets, and assailed him with every taunt and every argument which they could devise to draw him off from Mary. They so persecuted his ears with the miseries he would endure were he to venture to marry her,

that from sheer obstinacy he would that moment have rushed to make a proposal to her, had he not already planned in his wicked head the scheme of seduction to which we have before alluded. Demone had been instrumental in proclaiming Mary's beauty among the depraved and the licentious; Simpleton Sharp had duly echoed his assertions; and Tom had done his utmost to make it known that he was the accepted favourite. She was described as a fresh country beauty, one but little known, and niece to a teacher of the German flute; and such had been the description given of her matchless charms, that vice had long inscribed her in the list of those devoted to ruin. These circumstances, more than anything else, had so worked upon the ambition and vanity of the vicious Tom, that he was determined more than ever, now that he found the field open to him after Demone's discomfiture, to push his nefarious scheme. He therefore became doubly assiduous in endeavouring to secure the friendship of Mary's uncle and aunts, who, in the distress that was gradually creeping over them, were happy to have any one in the shape of a friend to whom they might have recourse.

Barbara and Fanny both encouraged his addresses to Mary, and began to speculate deeply upon the possibility of his marrying her. They never indulged the hope that he would assist them in pecuniary difficulties, because they knew how much Abel was averse to such a proceeding; but they argued thus, that once the husband of their niece, he would never allow them to sink into utter poverty, but would surely give them a helping hand towards gaining their livelihood. In the mean while they remained at home waiting with impatience the result of Abel's application to Lord Knutsford.

One morning, just after they had cast up their accounts at the bankers, when they found themselves fast approaching to that appalling result, a balance on the wrong side,—an unpretending rap was heard at the door, and presently was introduced into the drawing-room a man, who, by his appearance, answered to his modest announcement. He was a respectable tradesman-like looking personage, with quiet manners, unobtrusive in his deportment, but still with the air of one intent upon business. From amongst a bundle of papers which he drew from his pocket he extracted a letter, which he unfolded, and, addressing Abel,

begged to know whether it had been written by him. Abel recognised at once the letter he had addressed to Lord Knutsford, and immediately answered in the affirmative. Barbara, overjoyed in having at length received a communication which she imagined came direct from Lord Knutsford, drew near and listened to every word which his lordship's supposed messenger uttered, with the most respectful attention. Fanny and Mary also stood by, and perhaps no group was ever more worthy of a painter's pencil.

He then exhibited a paper containing a printed form of questions, which he proceeded to make to Abel, and noted down as fast as he was answered.

He inquired of what place he was a native; how old he was; how long he had been a resident in Golden-square; what rent he paid; if he was in any arrears, and the name and residence of his landlord. They began to think it strange that Lord Knutsford should ask so many questions, and that he should hitherto have inquired nothing concerning their relationship to his family. The visiter then continued to inquire whether they were of any trade, to what they had been brought up, and what business they had recently followed. At these questions, Barbara showed symptoms of impatience,—her pride began to take fire;—Fanny's feelings of gentility were roused, and the two sisters looked at each other with something like anger. He then inquired whether they were single or married. Abel answered that they were all single,—Barbara bit her lip,—Fanny heaved a sigh.

“Then you have no children?” said the man.

“None,” answered Abel.

“But who is this?” said the visiter, pointing to Mary: “is not she your child?”

“She is my niece,” said Abel; “and she lives with us.”

“Have you any more nieces? I must see them all: and pray let me know whether they have been properly instructed at a national or a Sunday school.”

Barbara could hold out no longer, but said with some asperity of accent, “But pray, sir, what has all this to do with our application to Lord Knutsford,—does he wish to know whether our niece has been educated at a Sunday school?”

“I am only fulfilling my instructions,” said the visiter mildly: “will you allow me to proceed?”

“Proceed by all means,” said Abel; “we have nothing to conceal,—we can only be thankful to whoever will take the trouble to inquire into our situation; and if his lordship wishes to make these questions, we are ready to answer them.”

The visiter then continued to inquire whether they had anything in pawn, its value,—what were the earnings of the whole family per week,—whether they had ever received parochial relief,—what was the cause of their distress,—and if they could refer to any respectable person to speak to their character, and to the truth of their statement.

At this last question, Barbara became quite indignant, and exclaimed: “Has Lord Knutsford sent you here to insult us? surely there must be some mistake,—he must know that this branch of his family is in existence:” then addressing Abel, she said, “I told you that you were wrong in not entering into a full explanation in your letter who our great-grandfather was.” Then turning to the man, who seemed in no wise astonished at the scene, she exclaimed, “You dare to ask us whether any respectable person will speak for our characters! Go and ask half of the nobility of England. The Allnutts have been allied to royalty; they have been married and intermarried with dukes, marquises, and earls. If we are poor, the disgrace is not with us; but it is with our family that allows us to be so. Go, sir, and tell Lord Knutsford that if he chooses to send us a list of insulting questions, he must not be surprised to receive this answer, which you may give him as soon as you please, that he is both unfeeling and impertinent, and that if he will not relieve our distress, he need not add to it by his insolence.”

“My dear Barbara,” said Abel, interposing his quiet manner to stop her violence; “I dare say if you will allow this gentleman to speak, he will explain what appears to you difficult. Pray, sir, did Lord Knutsford send you to us?”

“Lord Knutsford!” said the visiter. “No, sir, I come from the Mendicity Society; I am one of its officers, and am sent here on duty.”

“The Mendicity Society!” exclaimed Bab; “and pray what is that?”

“It is a society composed of charitable persons,” an-

swered the visiter, "whose object is to inquire into the cases of mendicants with a view of relieving their distress, and detecting imposture."

"And what has Lord Knutsford to do with it?" said Bab.

"He is one of those charitable persons," answered the other: "and according to the report I give in reference to the letter which you addressed to him, so it is likely that he will act."

"Then you are to decide whether he is our relation or not?" said Bab, her face assuming a look of indignation. "You will please to tell his lordship that we want no such interference; and that if he requires a whole society to direct the feelings of his heart, we have nothing more to say to him."

"My dear Barbara," said Abel, "you are really quite in the wrong to take up the matter thus. I dare say Lord Knutsford's intentions are good, and that the Mendicity Society, of which this gentleman is the agent, is most useful and praiseworthy. We certainly had no intention to place our concerns before the public, and we did hope that, in consequence of our affinity, Lord Knutsford might have given us the means of gaining an honest livelihood; but since he has judged otherwise, we must submit, not with pride and anger, but with humility and proper resignation. Sir," said Abel, addressing the visiter, "have the goodness to inform his lordship that it is not our wish to give him any further trouble; and pray excuse the indifferent reception which I am afraid you will complain that you have received at our hands."

Upon hearing these words, the visiter took his leave, making all proper apologies for what he presumed was a mistake. A mistake it really was, for Lord Knutsford's secretary, who was accustomed to attend to the numerous begging letters addressed to his lordship, had included Abel's with others of a mendicant description, and had in due course sent them for examination to the Mendicity Society, to which he was a liberal contributor; and thus was produced the scene we have just described.

Had Aunt Bab been less proud, and could Abel have crushed those feeling which are inherent in a gentleman born, it is probable that the proper explanations made by the visiting officer would have directed Lord Knutsford's

notice to their case, and every relief in his power would have been bestowed. As it turned out, the whole proceeding was quashed, and they were left apparently without hope, for all their expedients were exhausted.*

“What is to be done now?” said Barbara, her recent excitement having gone by, and the real truth appearing before her mind in all its severity. “Nothing more is left to hope. The rent must be paid to-morrow, and we have not enough money to meet the demand.”

“We must sell all we have,” said Abel calmly.

“I entreat you!” exclaimed Mary with great earnestness, “to allow me to seek a place as a governess, as a servant, as anything; whatever I should gain would increase your means of living. I am young and strong, and there is no doubt that I could secure a sufficiently good recommendation to be received in the house of honest persons: I would work day and night rather than see you continue in this painful needy state. Do, my dear uncle,” she said, taking Abel’s hand, “allow me to seek for a situation. I am sure, at least, that I could maintain myself, as well as add to your means.”

“It is surprising that we do not hear from Edward,” said Abel in great perturbation. “I wrote to him but the other day to inform him to what straits we are now approaching: he is the only real friend now to whom we can venture to disclose our situation.”

“We have Tom Woodby,” said Fanny in deep despondency: “I think we may look upon him as our friend.”

“I do not wish to say anything against Tom,” said Abel; “he is very attentive: he comes here constantly; and I dare say if we required a service from him that he would be good-natured enough to perform it; but I do not think his principles of conduct are the same as ours; he lives entirely for the world; its pleasures and its vanities appear to engross the whole of his thoughts, and he seems to

* Having been for some time a manager of the Mendicity Society, the author cannot refrain availing himself of this opportunity humbly to express his conviction of its vast utility in promoting the ends of practical charity; for whilst it gives security to those who distribute, it ensures justice and an impartial investigation of their case to those who ask; and (were it carried to the full extent of which it is capable) would afford decided protection against annoyance and imposture to the public in general.

think they are the sole objects for which he has been sent into life. With such a mind, I for one have nothing in common; the cheerfulness of youth must always have attraction; but unless it be allied with the love of virtue, it is only attractive as the beauty of a flower is attractive; to look at, and sigh over its brief existence. Tom never evinces the smallest taste for anything pure and religious; I rather fear he is a scoffer; that very doubt tends to estrange us: there can be no approach to mutual confidence; to that free and unrestrained exchange of thoughts and sentiments, without which there can exist no friendship, and which is so well established between me and Edward Manby. He, indeed, is a totally different youth, awfully impressed with the sacred truths of religion: humble in his own esteem, although strong in his faith, he has secured to himself more of that 'glorious liberty,' so difficult of attainment, than I ever thought it possible for frail corrupt man to acquire here on earth. That liberty gives him such visible happiness, both of countenance and deportment, that it can but arise from the enjoyment of that peace which has truly been said to 'pass all understanding.' I am quite certain that under all circumstances, in prosperity or in adversity; in sickness or in health; in the deepest trials of the affections, as under the severest thralldom of injustice, Edward would ever be the same; the still small voice would ever be heard at the bottom of his heart, comforting him in distress, sustaining him in moments of temptation, and giving him the cheering applause of conscience when the temptation was overcome. I could talk for ever upon the virtues and excellencies of that admirable youth. What has become of him I know not; I fear something has happened, or I am certain he would have written to us."

Mary's eyes filled with tears, and her breast heaved with quick and convulsive sighs when she heard the eulogium which her uncle passed upon her lover; her mind responded with the tenderest feelings to every word uttered in his praise, for she knew that it was true and she would willingly have poured out her whole heart to her uncle, so overflowing was it with a thousand conflicting and stirring emotions; but all she could do at present was to express her surprise at Edward's silence, and to attribute it to anything but neglect,

Barbara and Fanny, who had long buoyed themselves up with the hope that Tom Woodby would propose for Mary, undertook to speak in his favour, and argued, that although he never talked upon matters of religion, yet still it was unfair to say that he was a scoffer. They contrasted his conduct towards them with that of his family, showing that they had evidently shunned their acquaintance, whilst he had not failed even for one day to call, and really to make himself more amiable and attentive to them, than Edward himself had ever been.

Abel finished the conversation by announcing that he intended on the following morning to proceed into the city to see Mr. Longhead, the banker, in order to learn whether something favourable might not have turned up in Mexican affairs; and whether he would be inclined to make an advance upon the security of their bond. Barbara shook her head, and asserted that all bankers had hard hearts. Fanny was cheered by the reflection that on the first interview Mr. Longhead had proved well-bred and civil, which she asserted were qualities always portending good-nature and liberality.

CHAPTER VI.

Temporary relief frequently only paves the way to greater mischief.

ABEL took his departure on the following morning, at the proper hour, to obtain an interview with his banker, whilst Aunts Barbara and Fanny, with Mary, remained at home, waiting with apprehension for the appearance of the person appointed to receive the rent, in the same manner that one frequently sees women in a play-house, shutting their eyes and stopping their ears when a pistol or a gun is about to be fired off. They had a thousand vague ideas

of the misfortunes likely to ensue if payment was delayed. They had heard of distressing for rent, had seen pictures of its horrors, and read heart-rending tales which described the ruin and misery of penniless tenants, and the stern inflexibility of ruthless landlords. Aunt Fanny, who had heard of an execution in a house, insisted that it could only mean something bloody and horrible; whilst Barbara gravely asserted that no such act could take place without the sanction of a jury, at least, she said it was so in the country, although possibly it might be different in town. Not being quite certain on what day their half year's rent was due, they fondly hoped it might be deferred, although again they agreed that the man might call at any hour.

Barbara had fully made up her mind, should he appear, to lay a true and full statement of their situation before him; to tell him the whole story of Mr. Woodby and the Mexican bonds; to describe to him the various excellencies of John's character and his great resource in difficulties; to give him a general view of the Allnutt family, its antiquity, its former riches, its affinity to the aristocracy, and its present prospects. She was quite certain, and she asserted that it stood to reason, that when a sensible man, which she concluded the collector of the rent would be, had received this explanation, that he would acquiesce in his security of ultimate payment, and that he would even be too happy to keep them on as tenants. She maintained that the education which collectors of rent received rendered them enlightened men, and as their profession brought them into contact with great varieties of character, this present personage would not fail to discover the integrity of their minds, and the sincerity of their promises. She succeeded at length in clothing this imaginary person with qualities so exalted and magnanimous, that she finished by driving all the apprehensions she had previously entertained from before her, and placed herself in a position quite equal to meet the impending event. Fanny, however, who was prone to create beatific visions of men in her brain, on this occasion could not raise the collector in question to the pinnacle of perfection which we have just described. She could not divest him of certain earthly appendages that naturally belong to collectors. She saw before her the snug brown wig, the gray stockings, and round-toed shoes, the inkhorn in the button-hole, the pen in hand, and the account-book.

She had never heard of a beautiful collector of rent, and moreover had never seen one ; and although she was ready enough to admit that he might have a feeling heart, and might be touched with a pathetic story, still she avowed that she would never go among that class of men for her hero of romance. Mary was deep in thought upon her Edward, turning in her mind all the various causes which might have prevented his writing, and thus the whole discussion upon the collector passed by her unheeded.

She was however brought to her senses by the appearance of Tom Woodby, who had become more frequent in his visits and more urgent in his attempts to engage her attention during the last few days than he had ever been before. He, in truth, felt how little successful he had hitherto been in forwarding his suit, and consequently had turned over in his wicked mind every possible scheme in its advancement. He felt secure of the aunts', and hoped that the uncle's approbation would follow ; but he was awed before the uncompromising dignity and strength of virtue of the lovely young maiden herself. Goaded on by the ridicule of some of his associates, who taunted him for want of success after his vain boasting, he at one time thought of carrying her off by force ; but then, dastard as he was, he became alarmed at the consequences, and dreamt of a gibbet and the hulks. He then began to consider upon the expediency of proposing marriage, but was stopped short by the announcement made to him by his parents, that if such an event took place he was from that moment disinherited. He became quite bewildered, and occasionally thought of abandoning the pursuit, but still he clung to the chapter of accidents which he hoped might turn over a fortunate leaf in his favour. He was aware of the family distress ; he reckoned that his money and their ruin might promote his views, and therefore at length determined to keep himself in love more intensely than ever, until he saw that ruin complete. The moment was now not far distant when his villainy would receive every encouragement he could desire.

He had not been long arrived, and was more than ever welcomed with cordiality and even adulation by Barbara and Fanny, when a knock was heard at the door, and shortly after old Betty came bustling up to say there was a gentleman below who had called for six months' rent of

the lodging. This produced a visible sensation upon all present. Barbara, notwithstanding her previous views upon collectors, was full of nervous apprehension; Fanny said, "What can he mean by coming to-day?" Mary was calm, but pale; Tom looked like Mephistophiles, the smile of a demon on his lips, with the quick eye of triumph glancing under his brow.

"What sort of a looking man is he?" said Barbara.

"Indeed, ma'am," said Betty, "he is a very nice-looking young man."

"Young man!" exclaimed Fanny; "that is odd!"

"What did he say?" said Aunt Bab with emphasis.

"Oh, he only said that he came for rent; quite genteel like," said Betty.

"Did he look positive and determined," said Bab, "or did he appear lenient?"

"Why, he did lean again the wall, and that's the truth of it," said old Betty: "he seemed quite positive about that."

"Let us go and look at him first," said Fanny; upon which she gently slid out of the door, and bending her head over the staircase, took an accurate survey of the man. She returned with a face quite beaming with satisfaction. "He really is a very nice-looking young man" said the old beauty. "He does not look a bit like a collector; he puts me in mind of Edward Manby; he has his height, his hair is nicely combed; he grows the prettest little beard; his coat is black; he wears gray kid-gloves, and is resting gracefully, and apparently patiently, with his back against the wall, with his hat in his hand. He has neither inkstand at his button nor pen behind his ear; indeed, now I think of it, a flower is in his button-hole, and indeed he is a very nice young man."

"I'll go and speak to him," said Barbara; "or let us have him up here."

"Do," said Fanny; "I am sure Mr. Woodby will excuse it."

"By all means," said Tom, looking full of exultation; "these sort of men are sometimes pleased to call themselves gentlemen."

As soon as the young man appeared, (and Fanny had been true to a hair in her description,) Aunt Bab greeted him with more than usual politeness, asked him to be seat-

ed, and introduced him right and left as if he had been a dignitary of no small consequence. She then began gradually to weave the thread of that history, which the gentleman in question (who was an attorney's clerk) soon perceived would end in an avowal of inability to pay. He heard her story throughout with exemplary patience, and, in truth, she neither spared him or herself, for she gave him so complete an account of their birth, parentage, and education—of their life, present and past—of their hopes, fears, and future projects, that, had he so pleased, he might instantly have published the history of the Allnutt family from the best and latest authority.

When it had drawn to a close, and when she had avowed their present difficulties, the young man with a grave face said, "I am afraid, ma'am, this will be an awkward business;" he then in a few words informed her that any compromise for non-payment of rent was out of the question, and that before the day was over she would find how fatal would be the consequences of any defalcation, and hinted that the distress would immediately be issued.

"But I promise you," said Barbara, "that you will be paid the very first moment we receive our dividends from the Mexican bonds, and I am sure I can't say more. After all, sir, there is such a place as Mexico, and the whole nation is as responsible to us as we are to you."

The young man appeared not in the least touched, but on the contrary smiled.

"But you surely would not be cruel enough," said Barbara, "to turn an honest family into the street, who have been brought into difficulty by no fault of theirs."

The young man shrugged up his shoulders and said, "The law must have its course."

Barbara now looked serious and distressed, and whilst her loquacity lapsed into silence, her former elation turned into dejection.

Fanny was the picture of wo, and cast up her eyes beseechingly to Tom, who began to feel that the moment of his success was approaching. She then tried her eloquence upon her 'nice young man,' who had gradually expanded in her mind into a fiend, a giant of strength, a tyrant, an odious hard-hearted individual.

"Sir," she said, "it is really shocking that you should remain so unshaken when so many interesting persons are

entreating your forbearance. You are told the money will not fail to be paid, and still you do not appear to believe us, allow me to say, that it would show better breeding if you did."

"You know the alternative, madam," said the "nice youth;" "either immediate payment or the consequences. Am I to return to my employer and to tell him that you can't pay?"

"Sir," said Tom, with a most magnanimous swagger, and glancing his eye at Mary, who was seated in a corner absorbed in grief,—“Sir, you are not called upon to be insolent, although you may be peremptory. As long as I am here, these ladies shall never want a protector nor a banker.” Then taking Aunt Bab on one side towards the spot where Mary was seated, he said with as much feeling as he could throw into his unsentimental features, “Dear Miss Allnutt, do pray allow me to settle this business for you. I see you will be involved in immediate ruin, and most perplexing difficulties, should you permit this fellow to leave the house without paying his demand; and I hope that you will place sufficient confidence in my friendship” he sighed and looked at Mary “to receive from me the supply which I am sure time will enable you to repay. I have a hundred pounds now at your entire disposal—pray allow me to pay the fellow, whilst the remainder may continue in your hands, the whole to be repaid at your utmost leisure.”

Barbara's eyes filled with tears of gratitude at this generous proposal, for so she esteemed it. She hesitated to accept it, particularly when Mary ventured to say, “Had you not better wait until uncle Abel's return;” but Fanny coming to her aid, with an enthusiastic expression of her thanks, she could no longer resist the offer, and accepted it without further delay.

“Here, sir,” said Tom to the young man, “here is a check for your demand; give me a receipt as paid on account of Mr. Allnutt, and behave yourself less insolently for the future.”

“I'll give you the receipt with pleasure,” said the attorney's clerk; “and I tell you what I'll give you also,” he added, lowering his voice; “I will give you as sound a horse-whipping as you ever had in your life, if you allow yourself any more impertinent airs.”

As soon as Woodby heard this energetic sentence, the blood rushed into his face and as rapidly retreated, leaving it as white as the paper of the receipt which his spirited opponent put into his hand. "Sir, you had better mind what you are at," said Tom, trembling from head to foot; "you do not know whom you are talking to."

"I am not ambitious of that honour," said the clerk with a sneer; but should you require to be informed who I am, which is more to the purpose, here is my card, and you know the rest." Upon which, putting the money into his pocket, he took up his hat, made his bow, and walked out of the house.

"Did you ever see the like of that?" said Tom as soon as he heard his last step: "a low blackguard giving himself these airs!" This is the worst feature of the times I have yet seen! I am all for equality; but really when a pitiful attorney's clerk thrusts his card—*his* card to be sure!—into your face because he is told to do his duty, I think it is time for us of the aristocracy to assert our rights too. I never saw this sort of thing before! I wish I had kicked him out of the house; and I will, too, the next time!"

"I wish you had, I am sure," said Aunt Fanny, "although he is quite as tall as Edward Manby. Now, did I not say right?" she said, turning towards Mary. "Is he not like Edward Manby?—he has his quick decided manner: but really it was too insolent to treat Mr. Woodby in this manner, when he must have perceived how kind and considerate he was, and when he ought to have thanked him, not us, for his odious rent. It is a pity he is so violent, for he is handsome enough for anything."

Tom pulled up his cravat, looked full of importance and assumed an air of protection and patronage which was not thrown away upon Mary, but which the good aunts esteemed as a mark of an increase of friendship and interest. He continued his visit longer than usual, in order to conciliate Mary, who, out of feeling for her aunts, thought it right to express her sense of gratitude for what he had done: he then left the house elated beyond measure at the success which had attended him thus far, although it had been so unseasonably checked by the attorney's clerk's spirit and determination.

CHAPTER VII.

Rather incur every misery, than lie under obligations to a villain.

ABEL returned from his visit to the banker, jaded with the walk, but with the same calm and unruffled temper of mind in which he had set off. He informed his sisters that political affairs looked worse than ever in Mexico. He had been well received by the banker, who, as on the former occasion, caused newspapers to be read to him, and confirmed to him by word of mouth the fact, that the unsettled state of the country, in which every man's hand appeared to be against his neighbour, so entirely influenced the money-market in England, that Mexican bonds were actually worth nothing, and that no man could raise five pounds sterling for one thousand pounds of its paper securities. Abel avowed that in consequence of the exposition thus made to him, he could not venture to solicit the banker for an advance of money upon things so utterly valueless as their bonds; and after mutual compliments, they separated, he was sorry to say, with as little hope of relief as ever.

Barbara during this recital was evidently bursting with impatience to inform Abel of what had occurred in his absence; and when he deplored his ill success, to his surprise he saw her smile and shake her head. "My dear Abel!" she exclaimed, "lay aside your apprehensions for the present! We have found a friend—such a friend! It was by the merest accident he was present when the man came for the rent; and, would you believe it! seeing our distress, he insisted upon discharging it himself, leaving it, as he said, to our utmost leisure to repay him. And, moreover, he left us a good sum over, to go on with till times should mend."

"Is it so, indeed?" said Abel, looking serious and full of reflection; "and who is our friend?"

"Who!" said Bab; "who but Tom Woodby, to be sure! he is a friend indeed, for I am sure he is one in need. You ought to have seen how well he managed with the man, who talked of issuing distress and every sort of odious contrivance to make us pay! Tom paid him outright, and obliged him to give a receipt. I thought they would

have fought on the spot! But the long and the short of it is, that we are now free for the next six months."

"So, then, we are in debt!" exclaimed Abel, with a deep-drawn sigh, but suppressed by an inward impulse of resignation.

"You really cannot call yourself in debt to such a friend as Tom Woodby!" said Aunt Bab. "He comes in and goes out as if this house were his own. Besides, who knows what may happen! I am sure he does not come hunting after old women like Fanny and me: and you know there is only one young one among us—I need not say more."

Fanny felt as great a shock as if she had stumbled over a sharp-edged footstool, at hearing this open avowal of old age, and said, with some ill-humour, "There is such a thing as a middle age, Bab; and that, you know, does not come on till youth has completely expired. Don't let us make ourselves older than we are! Tom Woodby certainly is very attentive to all of us: if Mary would only take example from me, and receive him as he ought to be received, I make no doubt what would be the result."

"I am sure that I shall ever be happy to do everything in my power to please you in all things," said Mary; but I must not allow you to believe that I ever can approve of Mr. Woodby, or that I ever will give him any encouragement. I do not like him; his manners and conversation are offensive; and I do not think that you would wish your niece to act so dishonourable a part as to encourage his addresses with the view of securing his wealth."

Mary had never spoken in so decisive a tone before, and her aunts were astonished. Barbara looked at her for a while, and said, "My dear Mary, I quite enter into your feelings; but still you must allow the experience of age to plead against the romance of youth. There are thousands of marriages which turn out very well without the preliminary of the passion called love: indeed, where they take place upon that foundation only, they are constantly found to be productive of much misery, and to be followed by a feeling very much the opposite of that bewitching illusion. In the case before us, both your aunt Fanny and, I believe I may add, your uncle Abel, as well as myself, are of opinion that if you were to marry Tom Woodby, you would have a fair prospect of happiness before you. Your good sense would soon wean him from his extravagant love of

the world. His recent generosity, quite spontaneous on his part, shows that he possesses many good qualities; and those little ebullitions of temper which frequently break out, (and who is ever free from them!) would soon be softened when brought into contact with your never-failing sweetness of disposition. His wealth would save you from the miseries to which you see us now exposed, and at the same time place us beyond that want which threatens to involve us in the extreme of misery. Indeed, my dear, you must think better of him than you do, and keep romance out of your head—I'm sure I'm right."

"I am quite of your opinion," said Fanny. "If that Captain Rawbone, who had once the audacity to propose to me, had only had a fortune, I do not think I should have been justified in refusing him, although my repugnance to his red whiskers and freckled skin was just as great as Mary's can be to Tom's little ugly figure and ridiculous airs and graces."

"For my part," said Abel, "I must say, however much I should wish to see our dear Mary well settled in life, still I should oppose myself to anything which would force her inclinations, or induce her to marry a man she cannot esteem. There is only one man I have yet known who I think at all worthy of her: but, however, that is impossible; it is past praying for. All things are ordained for the best!"

Mary blushed to the eyes, when she heard her uncle's words, which were spoken more as if he were thinking aloud, than addressed to any particular person.

Fanny exclaimed, "Who can that be, Abel?"

Bab said, "I know whom you mean; but that can never be. Would that John were here, and he would set everything to rights!"

They continued to talk thus; to speculate upon futurity, to turn over in discussion various schemes for gaining their bread, during which they wondered they had not seen Mark Woodcock for a long time past; when, as if to confirm the well-known proverb, who should make his appearance but the aforesaid Mark himself!

He was received with the greatest cordiality and joy, which, however, were soon turned into sorrow, when they heard the object of his visit. He informed them that he was about to undertake a very long journey, and that he should be absent at least four months. It appeared that in

consequence of the death of Mr. Oldbourn, one of Mr. Fairfax's clients, it became expedient to recall the brother of that client from Asia, where he was travelling; for according to the tenor of the will, it was necessary that he should fulfil certain provisions within a limited period. Mark announced that he had been appointed to proceed in search of this gentleman. "You see," said he, "as I am a *dab* at French, Mr. Fairfax has selected me to perform this out-of-the-way concern. It will be *rum* work, I dare say, for everybody says that foreigners are queer chaps."

Many were the expressions of regret upon hearing this piece of intelligence; for to lose a friend, when distress is at hand, is very much like breaking a link of the drag-chain when going down hill. Mark hoped to soften the sorrow expressed at his departure by assuring them that he would not fail to bring back something curious for each. He promised Barbara some Turkey-figs, and hoped too, that he might be able to get her some Turkey-cocks, although he doubted whether the native country, as he called it, of those birds, could ever produce any like those which came from Norfolk.

"But pray tell us, Mr. Mark," said Fanny, who was always alive to a piece of gossip, "who is this Mr. Oldbourn you are going to seek? I don't think I have heard that name before."

Mark was a good man of business although he did not study the graces of language, and was ever cautious in speaking upon subjects referring to matters of his vocation; he was therefore slow to answer the question put to him. "I do not exactly know," said Mark, "but this I can say, that he is in some manner or other related to a young gentleman I used to see here when first you came to Golden-square."

"Who? Edward Manby!" exclaimed Fanny.

This exclamation awakened the curiosity of all present. Abel drew near with his ears open and with inquiry in his looks; Mary's bosom heaved with unusual agitation; and Aunt Bab followed up her sister's exclamation by many others of a similar import. "I always thought that youth must belong to somebody," she added, "he has such an air of good breeding about him."

"Do tell me," said Abel to Mark, "have you heard anything concerning Edward Manby lately? We have been expecting news from him with the utmost impatience, for

a letter has long been due, and it appears to us the very strangest circumstance in the world that he should have left us so long ignorant of his proceedings."

Mark pleaded total ignorance of his present abode and of his pursuits, and said that he only guessed from certain circumstances which he was not at liberty to repeat, that Manby was in some measure connected with the object of his intended mission.

Mary's imagination was excited in the highest degree by what Mark divulged. She turned over in her mind every conversation she had had with Edward; he was never prone to speak of himself, and therefore she was but little acquainted with his private history. Aunt Bab had doubts relative to the purity of his birth, and his own silence upon the subject confirmed those doubts. Mary recollected Oldbourn as a name which he had once pronounced, and imagined it to be the maiden name of his mother; but her imperfect memory just served to render her ignorance distressing. She would have given the world to know more, for then she might perhaps have come to some certain conclusion as to what might have happened to him.

Aunt Fanny returned with vigour to the charge, with the intention of sapping Mark's integrity; but he resisted, at once declaring that in his situation he was ever precluded from telling tales out of school, and added, that even now he felt that he had transgressed. He said that one of the first rules which Mr. Fairfax impressed upon those employed in his office was undeviating secrecy.

"But you are going away in a few days, said Fanny: "what can it signify what you tell us?"

"That's a good one!" said Mark. "If I let the cat out of the bag in England, it's in England that she will do the mischief, although I may be among the Turks and out of the quandary. No, no, Miss Fanny! 'mum' is the motto of an attorney's clerk."

"You are very provoking," said Fanny; "I thought that smart young gentlemen like you never refused a lady anything."

This compliment awoke all Mark's vanity, (for he had considerable prepossessions in favour of his own gentility,) and he was beginning to get himself into an attitude to make a concession, when Able interposed and said, "Fanny, you are not fair upon Mr. Mark; you have no right

to seduce him from his duties—duties to the sense of which he has appealed, and which he has manfully defended.” And then turning to the youth, he said, “Although we would willingly learn all that can be said concerning Edward Manby, in whose fate and history we are as much concerned as if he were our own brother, still we will never do it by obtaining the sacrifice of your integrity.” Then assuming a gayer tone, he added:—“If you are determined to be ‘mum,’ we will not press you further, but will heartily and sincerely wish you a prosperous journey and a safe and speedy return. Give us your promise that when you return you will immediately come and see us.” He then added with a deep-drawn sigh, “God only knows where we may then be! but wherever we are, we shall be glad to see you.”

Mark then took his leave, and particularly noticed Mary in his last farewell. He shook her warmly by the hand, assured her that he would never forget her, and that he would do his best to bring her back something pleasing and acceptable. He then left the house, and they saw him no more.

When he was gone, they gave full scope to their curiosity upon the theme which Mark had set them—namely, who Edward Manby could be, and how he was connected with the name of Oldbourn? They referred to the story which Mr. Gould Woodby had formerly related, that he was the son of an officer, who, together with his wife, had died in the West Indies, and that his mother having made an ill-assorted marriage, was discarded by her relations. Putting this together with other circumstances, they concluded his mother’s name was Oldbourn, and that a death having ensued according to Mark’s report, Edward might have become a person of importance.

Abel determined to write to Edward’s uncle at Liverpool to inquire what had become of him; and upon this they allowed the matter to rest for the present.

CHAPTER VIII.

*The base man will insult the poor man in his adversity,
which he would not venture to do in his prosperity.*

EVER since Tom Woodby’s display of generosity he assumed a new manner towards the Allnutts, affected great

intimacy, made himself as much at home as if he were one of the family, and did not cease to persecute Mary with his attentions. This would have been, perhaps, an earnest of the sincerity of his friendship, but that it was accompanied by airs of protection so vulgar and so presuming, that it was evident he required something beyond mere expressions of gratitude for the benefit he had conferred. He now never lost an opportunity of expressing his admiration of Mary whenever he conversed with her aunts; who, on their side, thinking that every time he opened his lips on the subject his proposal of marriage was about to be made, were always sure to encourage his professions. He roundly asserted that in his opinion, when comparing her to other beautiful persons of his acquaintance, she was the most perfect of her sex, and that she was born to enslave mankind. In the composition of these burst of eulogy he would place himself in an attitude of such complete satisfaction, that it was difficult to decide whether he was more in love with Mary or himself. He would frequently complain of her cruelty; and then endeavour to throw an infusion of sentimentality into his repugnant features, which made his round face look like one of those monsters that often terminate the angle of a Gothic ornament. Such attempts to produce effect were not lost upon the aunts, who after each succeeding effort always expected the matter-of-fact result. They became at last quite tired of so many abortive strains, and Aunt Bab at length determined to hasten the event by management.

Being left alone with Bab, Tom had been descanting largely upon his carriages, his horses, his beautiful lodgings, and his intentions, whenever he became settled, to adopt the taste of the charming person whom he hoped one day to call his own, and to allow himself no wish but hers; when Aunt Bab said, "But who is this charming person? You every day increase our curiosity and impatience to learn."

"Ah!" said Tom with affected feeling, "I dare scarcely trust my imagination with the hopes which thrill through my breast. I would make you my confidant, but I despair even of your friendship."

Bab was softened into a mood quite unusual to her, and said, "I am very willing to be your confidant on this occasion. You could not have fixed upon one more likely to help you, if I am not mistaken in the person I have long thought the object of your affections."

“Will you indeed be my confident?” said Tom, his little person beaming with unusual animation; “and have you then indeed guessed? Well, you are right; I am in a state bordering upon delirium—so much do I wish to make myself agreeable to your divine niece!”

“Oh then, at length the murder is out!” said Bab, clapping her hands with joy; “this is just what we have expected: poor Mary has never been prepared for this, and we must cautiously break it to her.”

“You promise then to use your best endeavours,” said Tom, “to make her favourable to my hopes?”

“Yes, truly,” said Bab; “and so shall Fanny too. My brother is scrupulous in influencing her mind on a subject of such vast importance to her future happiness; but when he reflects upon the solid advantages which will accrue to us all, he too, I am sure, will persuade her to acquiesce in our united wishes.”

Tom did not quite relish the turn which Bab’s observations were taking; but being well satisfied to have gained what he called an important step, and trusting to the powerful agency of the pecuniary obligation to which he had subjected the family, he trusted that little by little he might attain that nefarious object for which alone he strove.

He was no sooner gone, than Barbara, big with the news, ran to seek Fanny and Abel, to whom she disclosed all the circumstances of the interview and its result. She could scarcely contain herself for joy, for she looked upon all their difficulties as vanished. Mary, she argued, married to a rich man, would become a rich woman. A very little help would suffice to maintain herself, her sister, and Abel, until John arrived, or until their affairs had come round, and then they would again be independent. Tom might have his faults, but Mary would not fail to correct them; and she would not only become the favourite, but the principal ornament of the whole Woodby family. In short, the advantages were incalculable, and it behoved them to lose no time in influencing Mary to favour the proposal by every means in their power. Fanny partook in the fullest degree of her sister’s joy, but Abel was not so much overcome as they both could have wished. He paused and shook his head ere he spoke, for he adhered to the opinion he had expressed of Tom’s character, and was unwilling, however advantageous it might be, to sacrifice Mary to one

he could not esteem. They were discussing the question, when Betty brought in a letter and delivered it to Abel, to whom it was addressed. It was an ill-folded, ugly-looking letter, one that might come from some illiterate person, and the spelling of the direction corresponded to the fashion of the folding. Having opened it, he read as follows:—

“*Maister Abel.*—Sir, I ask your pardon for taking this liberty. It is a sure friend without a name who writes this; because I heard in the stable-yard that the young squire, Maister Thomas, thinks no more of making that pure angel, Miss Mary, an honest woman than he thinks of eating her, and only because he is a sinful wretch he intends to make her no better than she should be; and I say this because I heard that young villain Sam Hicks, him they call the tiger, lay a bet that before another month was over she would be within his clutches. With which I am yours to command,
A FRIEND.”

“What can this mean?” said Abel, turning over the letter on all sides. “Whom can this be from?”

“I should not be surprised if it were from honest Brown,” said Bab after some thought. “What could he be thinking of? Mary not an honest woman, and Tom Woodby does not intend to marry her! The man must be mad!”

“I can’t think so ill of Tom,” said Fanny: “yet all men are deceitful creatures; and he is old enough to be as wicked as the best of them. But it can’t be true.”

“If it be Brown who has written this letter,” said Abel, “we must not despise the information, although it comes from so humble a source. If it be not, still we must give it our whole attention, for Mary’s happiness is of too much consequence to be neglected: we must sift this matter to the bottom.”

“My dear Abel,” said Barbara, “the thing is too ridiculous that we should believe it for a moment: this letter must be a hoax. Why you might as well say that Tom Woodby would deceive me, as Mary! Are we not all here with our eyes open, watching everything he says and does, like so many cats watching a mouse; and does it stand to reason that he is to reduce her to shame, whilst we are looking on?”

“It will be easy to ask him what are his real intentions,” said Abel; “and that before we speak to Mary.”

“Nothing more easy,” said Bab; “and I will do it myself the very first time he comes: he will be here pre-

sently, and then he shall state what settlements he intends to make, with all the requisite particulars. Leave it to me; I will manage it nicely, and draw him on to explain everything."

Having excluded Mary from the conference, as soon as Tom appeared, Aunt Bab (Fanny and Abel being present,) received him with increased attention and confidence. She endeavoured to make him feel that they now considered him as one of the family, and tendered to him those numerous little marks of affection which belong only to relations. But Tom returned with far different views; for during this short absence, he was visited by repentance for having taken, as he thought, a too hasty step, and he appeared with the intention of retrieving it. He was therefore much mortified to find the family drawn up, as it were, in array to receive him, and he instantly threw his mind into an attitude of defence.

After some preliminary talk, Barbara, clearing her voice, said to him, "I have mentioned your joyful proposal to my brother and sister, and they are here to tell you how happy we shall all be to adopt you as our nephew. In consenting to bestow our niece upon you, we think that we fully counterbalance any worldly advantages she may obtain, by the inestimable worth of the character which she will bring as her portion, for none other has she."

"Yes," said Abel, "should she consent, you will obtain a prize indeed!"

"You will be called the happiest of the happy," said Fanny; "and when the banns of Thomas Woodby and Mary Allnutt are published, as I trust they will be next Sunday, young men will call you fortunate, and parents will listen with envy."

During these speeches Tom looked confused, and scarcely knew what face to put upon it. At one time he thought of skulking out of the room, running away and never returning; but at another, when he reflected upon the vantage ground he had gained, and how entirely the existence of the family was subject to him, he determined to brave the storm, and to avow his inability to marry.

"I am afraid there has been some mistake. I did not quite say that I intended to marry now," said Tom.

"Not marry!" loudly exclaimed Bab; "What then?"

He hummed and stammered with various expletives on his lips, whilst the three looked at him with uplifted eyes. At length he said, "You know I am not my own master

—my father and mother are opposed to me—I should be very happy hereafter; but now I fear there are a hundred difficulties.”

“Then what we have heard is true!” said Abel.

“Are we to believe that you will marry her hereafter?” said Fanny. “But if so, what will you do in the mean time?”

Tom was awed into respect, and the wicked proposals which he would have made stuck in his throat: he threw as much humility as he could into his features, and then, with much hesitation, said, “If Miss Mary would condescend to wait—to temporize—matters might be arranged—my father may be conciliated—my mother may come round. I am in an awkward situation—it is impossible for me to do all that I could wish.”

“What!” said Bab, almost convulsed with anger, the truth of the anonymous letter flashing on her mind,—“What, sir! do you dare think us despicable enough to listen to anything dishonourable? Who do you take us for?”

“What!” reiterated Fanny, hiding her face with shame; “do you dare insult us, saying at one time that you will marry our niece, and then that you will not—you a Woodby, and we Allnutts!”

Barbara then continued—“Are you villain enough, sir, in cold blood to insult a respectable family in this manner? Begone, sir! never put your foot within these doors again. We have had intimations of your baseness, but never did we conceive that it would be confirmed by your own avowal. You are an odious, wicked young man, Thomas Woodby: you’ll never come to any good—begone!”

“You really mistake me,” said Tom, writhing with confusion at having been found out, “What have I done to be treated thus?”

“What have you done, sir?” said Bab: “can you ask such a question? We have been warned against you, and now we find the warning true. Speak out at once, if your intentions are honourable, and destroy our suspicions. Do you propose to marry our niece or not?”

“I am not to be bamboozled into a marriage with any one,” said Tom, taking up a tone of insolence; “and I do not see why I am to be forced to marry your niece whether I will or not.”

Barbara turned pale with indignation, whilst Fanny could not utter from sorrow and mortification.

Abel during this scene had not said a word, but his whole nature was convulsed—the strongest temptation to anger and violence circled through his veins, and he became pallid with wrath and indignation—his features assumed a cast of desperate determination; but there was within, one small monitor at the bottom of the heart (and happy are they who cherish it) constantly rising and becoming more and more vociferous to be heard, until at length it interposed so effectually between his Christian principle and his violence, that he was enabled to collect his mind into the strength of forbearance, and to resign himself to meet this bitter trial with fortitude.

“Sir,” said he to Woodby, “be thankful that you have not to deal with some violent and resentful man of the world, for he would not allow you to quit this house without making your blood answer for this injurious treatment. Be thankful that I am sufficiently master of myself to meet such conduct with moderation; otherwise, sir, weak and feeble as I am, I would have spurned you with the bitterest indignation, and driven you from before me with the utmost contempt. Go, sir! leave this house, and never let us see you again!”

“I am sorry,” said the cool villain, “that you take the matter up in this manner; it is no fault of mine if you choose to quarrel with me. I will not, however, be insulted with impunity by those whom I have saved from starvation. You have only to choose between my offer to your niece and a prison, and I leave you but a short time to think of it.”

“Villain! wretch! miscreant!” were words that rose in succession from Bab and Fanny; whilst Abel, still struggling with himself to keep his hands from assault, opened the door with one hand, and pointing to it with the other, roared out in a voice of thunder, “Begone!—delay, and we will wreak our vengeance upon you. Begone!”

At these words the insolent wretch, vociferating threats of vengeance, left the room, and bounding down the stairs, opened the door, and darted out of the house.

“And now welcome ruin,—welcome misfortune!” said Abel, clasping his hands; “for they will soon be with us. Let us pray that we may be enabled to meet our fate with fortitude, and with entire submission to the Divine will.” He had no sooner finished these words than Mary came into the room, impelled by the sound of the high words

which had caught her ear, and full of eager inquiry into the cause of this apparent distress.

“Let us prepare, my dearest Mary,” said her uncle, “for every privation, for every worldly evil, for we have fallen into the hands of a ruthless villain—he will not spare us. Before another day is over I shall be lodged in a prison.”

“In a prison!” exclaimed Bab; “what do you say, Abel? You take things a great deal too seriously; the wretch will never venture to lay his hands upon you: how can he put you into prison, when he told us that we might pay him back his money whenever it was convenient—at our utmost leisure, he said; these were his words?”

“A villain in one thing will be a villain in others,” said Abel. “I tell you we have no other prospect than a prison: but let us repeat with reverence, God’s holy will be done!”

“Amen!” said Mary, with pure devotion and resignation beaming in her eyes.

“I wish Edward Manby were here,” said Fanny.

“What a pity it is that Mark Woodcock should be gone!” said Bab.

“Let us put our trust in Heaven,” said Abel; “for we have not an earthly friend near us to whom we can look for protection;—again I say, God’s will be done!”

Before the night closed they were visited by Woodby’s attorney, who came to demand payment for the hundred pounds lent. Abel did not allow his sisters to interfere, but at once avowed his inability to discharge the debt. Bab would have asserted Tom’s promise that the sum might be returned at their leisure, but Abel would not permit any such plea to be alleged; he merely said, “Mr. Woodby is perfectly acquainted with our situation; he knows how impossible it is for us to pay him now, and we are ready to abide by whatever consequences may ensue.”

The attorney then retired, and Abel again urged his sisters and his niece to prepare for the worst. “I know nothing of law; it is evident that a man must pay what he owes, in whatever manner the debt may have been contracted, and the law makes no allowance for defects of judgment. Better had we never borrowed this money, for then perhaps we might not have been the cause of so much wickedness in this young man’s breast! But again, I say, we must submit to the decrees of Providence, and by patiently waiting until this tyranny is past, we may be cer-

tain that the result will be an increase of good to our better interests."

Abel's conduct on this trying occasion tended greatly to soothe the bitterness of his sisters' feelings; and they all retired to rest, after having poured out the effusion of their hearts with more than usual fervour, in their accustomed evening prayers.

CHAPTER IX.

The righteous man dragged to prison at the suit of an unfeeling designer.

ON the very next morning Abel's anticipations were realized. He had scarcely got out of bed when a knock was heard at the door, and very soon a sheriff's officer appeared, and producing his warrant arrested Abel at the suit of Mr. Thomas Goold Woodby, junior. This was no sooner known in the house than all its inmates came rushing from their bed-rooms, with terror in their looks and dismay in their hearts. Aunt Barbara first appeared, backed by old Betty, and addressing the sheriff's officer, as if he were the cause of this act, not only explained from beginning to end the whole of the transaction between herself and Tom Woodby, but attempted to move his heart by describing the injustice inflicted upon them by the Republic of Mexico. She expended her oratory in vain upon the individual standing before her, who accustomed to such like scenes, did not allow his official duty to own that he had a heart, but merely civilly inquired of Abel whether he wished to proceed to a sponging house. Being ignorant of the object of such a house, no one could answer.

"If you cannot afford to pay the expenses of a sponging-house," said the officer, "I must take you at once to the prison."

"We can afford nothing," said Abel, "for we have nothing."

"May we be allowed to go with him?" said Mary, who had made a violent effort to prevent giving vent to her grief by tears.

"You may accompany him and remain with him in the prison during the day," said the officer; "but at nine o'clock he is locked up for the night. You had better take with you such clothes and comforts as he may require in

prison; and should you wish to be near him, plenty of lodgings are to be had in the neighbourhood."

With aching hearts and broken spirits did Barbara and Fanny prepare to leave Golden-square. It was determined that they should accompany Abel, take a lodging near him, and, abandoning the one they now occupied, let it for the remainder of their term. They gathered up what things were necessary, and were about to depart, when an incident took place, which, whilst it almost overpowered their feelings, in some measure cheered their hearts, because they found that they had a friend in store who truly sympathized in their misery. Old Betty, their faithful servant, came forward, holding in her hand a small canvass bag; and whilst her face bore testimony to the strong feeling which impelled her, she put it into Abel's hand, and said, "Sir, excuse the liberty; I can't help doing this whilst you are so distressed,—there are my savings, pray take them, and God's blessing be upon you all!"

There was a truth and a simplicity in her whole deportment which struck so directly upon the tender feelings of those present that they could not restrain their tears, and the scene which ensued was one of the deepest pathos. All Barbara's energies were at once overpowered, and taking the old servant's hand within her own, she wrung them with the warmest affection without being able to utter a word. Fanny burst into a flood of tears, whilst Mary cried and turned her heart to God in prayer. Abel alone, having fortified his mind by all the power of piety, had strength enough to express his thanks and his affection to the simple-hearted creature, and having assured her that he would willingly avail himself of her generosity, could it be of any substantial use, requested her to keep her gold for some more pressing occasion, when real and actual destitution should overpower them; and if she were still determined to ally her fortune to theirs, he hoped she would continue to support his sisters and niece by her kindness and fidelity. The sheriff's officer, not accustomed to witness so much virtue and disinterestedness, was himself softened, and throwing into his words as much of the tone of consolation as he could command, recommended them to husband whatever money they possessed, for it would be useful in the prison, to secure a better treatment than fell to the lot of the utterly destitute.

Leaving old Betty in charge of their actual lodgings, Barbara, Fanny, and Mary ascended the hackney-coach with Abel, and escorted by the officer, bent their way to

the prison, which was situated far away in one of the remote streets of the City. Little was said during their long drive. They thought the streets, the rows of houses, and the passing population, were interminable. At length their eyes caught a view of certain lofty walls, surrounded by spikes, which told them their pilgrimage was nearly over; and in a few minutes after, they stopped in front of a heavy, dark-looking building, the gates of which were in perfect character with those of a place of confinement. The officer announced that they were to alight. Leaving the carriage, they straightway were received at a strong iron wicket-gate, by the Cerberus of the establishment, who, accustomed to such visitors, let them pass without a word. They proceeded with dismay in their hearts, looking around as if they were shut out of the world for ever. They walked between two high walls, on one side seeing nothing but a massive accumulation of brick, on the other looking through a succession of narrow grated windows, which disclosed the forms of a numerous company of prisoners seated in groups on benches and around tables. Again they came to an iron wicket, as strongly fortified as the first, where they were received by a second jailor; and some words having passed between him and the sheriff's officer, they proceeded onwards, winding their way through intricate alleys and walls, occasionally meeting men of dirty and unwashed aspect, until they reached a third wicket, opening upon a large open court, in which was seen a considerable number of people, the future companions in adversity of the unfortunate Abel. Here they stopped awhile until their conductor had made some short preliminary arrangements, when they were admitted within the wicket, and this they were informed was Abel's destined place of residence. It was a severe trial when they looked around them and saw the gloomy spot and the wretched men who inhabited it. On all sides were high walls covered with iron spikes, and every avenue was barred and defended to the utmost. Stone benches were placed against the walls, and the court-yard was paved with flag-stones. On first inspection, the prisoners made no impression of being in misery: many were noisy, apparently full of coarse gaiety; others walked and talked with seeming indifference; others again were taken up with various games; whilst here and there might be observed, groups seriously engaged in the discussion of their affairs. Some few, solitary and dejected, appeared wrapt in thought, and kept aloof from the throng. In some

places might be observed the wife and children cheering the spirits of the ruined father ; in others a daughter might be seen tending her sick parent ; and everywhere, and in every person, the reflecting mind would find ample materials for speculation.

When Abel, his sisters and niece, appeared, they made but a transient sensation ; for what is frequent, however distressing, soon becomes a habit, and is therefore beheld with indifference. When, however, Mary had come under the attention of the prisoners, her beauty became the theme of every tongue ; and, but for the desire of remaining with her uncle, she would willingly have left the dismal place. From the court-yard they had access to a room common to all, where tables were placed at intervals, surrounded by wooden benches, and thither they retreated to converse unobserved. This room, which was of large dimensions, and well lighted from the court-yard, scarcely wore the appearance of a prison ; and to those who could afford to pay for better food (which was supplied on the spot,) than the common bread and water of the establishment, the privations they were called upon to undergo, were not of that nature which are generally supposed to be the concomitant of a prison. Abel was informed that the prisoners enjoyed the advantage of a chapel on Sundays, and that an allowance of meat was given to each prisoner who attended divine service. Hardened, indeed, must that heart be in wickedness, thought Abel, which requires to be enticed by earthly food, to receive the advantage of heavenly ; and that small incident alone, more than any other, taught him what might be the character of his future associates.

Having duly paid the customary fees, and read all the regulations for ensuring order and cleanliness, he was told by the officer, that the governor of the prison was a most excellent humane man, who was ever ready to listen to complaints, and to further the comforts of those under his charge, and which he frequently did with most beneficial results. This was cheering intelligence to them all ; and they determined as soon as possible to make themselves known to one who might be of so much service in alleviating their distressing situation. Barbara and Fanny were dejected and oppressed with woful forebodings ; they could not suppose that what they saw before them was all that Abel had to suffer : the spirits of the one had entirely forsaken her, for she relinquished the hope of ever returning to the enjoyment of the world ; the other, who had never been burthened by responsibility, was quite bewildered and

astounded at the turn their affairs had taken, and lost in one great confusion of ideas, sat mute with despair. Although, in common acceptation, they were good religious women, performing the duties supposed to constitute Christians, yet this event showed how very far they were from enjoying all the advantages of that character in its brightest meaning. Their brother, on the contrary, who in truth had laboured unremittingly to act up to his principles, now felt the whole value of the faith which he professed; his cheerfulness never forsook him; with the same equanimity that he encountered loss of fortune, he met the confinement of his prison, and he would have faced death with the same constancy; he now felt the whole power of the support which religion produces; and instead of requiring cheering words to soothe his misery, he it was who gave strength to his desponding sisters. When they deplored the confinement to which he was condemned, the associates to whom he was united, and the long tedium of the days and nights which he would pass without occupation, Abel gave for answer, "Do not deplore my fate—I want but little; leave me alone with my Bible, and I have all that I require. If a man cannot succeed in making a paradise of his own breast by reflecting upon the glorious promises made to him therein, and battering upon his faith in them, then indeed he is much to be pitted; and wretched indeed should I be without such comfort. But, as I have a Bible, thanks be to God! and as my existence is taken up in thinking upon its contents, I am happy, and perhaps in reality, happier than most men."

"But surely," said Bab, "you are not going to sit down here for life, satisfied with your fate, whilst you have to combat the injustice of that wretch Tom Woodby?"

"Yes," said Fanny; "and not only of Tom, but of his whole odious family, who in our days of prosperity, professed friendship for us, and now look upon us as not fit to be spoken to. They treated us worse than dogs on that day when we dined with them. As for Lady Thomson, I really thought that she expected us to make her an apology for having bodies and souls as well as herself."

"My dear sisters," said Abel, "I would willingly pay Tom Woodby what we owe him, and we must labour so to do to the utmost of our ability; but as I cannot labour here, I must wait until other means are within my power. You must in the meanwhile support yourselves; and as it appears we are blessed with a good governor of this prison, I dare say he will assist us in disposing of your work."

Mary's eyes glistened at this proposal; and in her pre-

sent situation she professed herself happier than she had been for some time, principally because she had got rid of the odious importunities of Tom Woodby, and because she now really had a specific object for the exertion of her whole industry.

As the day drew to a close, they felt it necessary to return to Golden-square for the night, with the intention of hiring a new lodging in the neighbourhood on the morrow. They then took their leave of Abel. This was the first time they had been separated, and bitter indeed was the moment when they saw the gate turned upon them, leaving him a prisoner within. Although he was in the close relation of a brother, little did they know the strength of those inward feelings of his breast, which now made him anything rather than an object of pity—feelings of which only the possessor can possibly know the real power and extent. Barbara wept; Fanny would have bemoaned herself outright, had she not been checked by the gaze of the surrounding prisoners; and Mary, whose heart was ready to break from the intensity of her emotions, (loving her uncle with the most ardent affection,) stifled her grief, because she knew how much she would add to his affliction did she exhibit all her feeling. Abel turned from them and was soon lost among the crowd of prisoners; whilst they, escorted by the same sheriff's officer as before, bent their way homewards. With his help they secured lodgings in the neighbourhood of the prison; and having quitted Golden-square, we shall for the present leave them installed in their new abode, to relate other particulars necessary to the developement and winding up of this our history.

Should we have succeeded in interesting our readers in the fate of our simple friends, we fear that we must still call upon their sympathies for some indefinite time. We leave them in a wretched lodging, consisting of two small rooms ill furnished, and a most minute attic, where old Betty lay. We leave them to gain their livelihood by the work of their own hands, to struggle with poverty in every shape, and to combat the thousand distresses which belong to dependence. Unknown and poor, they were suspected and distrusted; without a friend, their days passed on in dull sameness; and were it not for the influence of Abel's conduct and exhortations, the practical advantages of which now shone with redoubled force, they would have sunk into hopeless despair, and have died the death of those broken-hearted wretches who live without God in the world.

CHAPTER X.

New characters described, important to the beginning of the end of this history.

WE must now direct the attention of the reader to an entirely distinct series of events, in which a succession of new personages are about to be brought before him. In the development of their actions, we have endeavoured to show how remote causes bear upon the lives and destinies of individuals; thus exhibiting the mysterious ways of Providence in producing results which, in the narrowness of man's perceptions, he may perhaps indistinctly anticipate, but cannot with certainty foresee.

We have before mentioned the name of Oldbourn as that of the person whom Mark Woodcock was commissioned to seek in some far-distant part of Asia, or wherever he might be. The circumstances which brought on this event we will endeavour to comprise in as small a compass as possible, and only put forth such a portion of them as may be necessary to the full elucidation of this our history.

Sir Roger Oldbourn was a baronet of ancient descent, of great wealth, and the owner of vast hereditary estates, who lived in the family mansion, surrounded by a park and all the concomitants of grandeur, situated in one of the eastern counties of England. He was the transmitter of a long line of faces,—or, as a wag in the neighbourhood once said, “of a line of long faces,”—and was now, owing to weak health brought on by constitutional gout, drawing fast to the close of his earthly pilgrimage.

Although his family was ancient, yet it was not numerous; for it was one of the marking circumstances of its history that the line had been carried on for the most part by only sons,—the males having always evinced strong antipathies to the marriage state, and usually marrying late in life, more for convenience's sake than for other motives, in order to procure heirs whereby to prevent the extinction of the name and the dispersion of the property. The father of the present baronet was rather an exception to the rule, for he mar-

ried at the age of forty and had three children—two sons and one daughter. The eldest was Roger; the second was Peregrine; and a daughter, married in early life.

All the Oldbourns had strong literary tastes, which were principally displayed in the investigation of antiquity. Their imaginations would take fire at the sight of an old urn or a rusty helmet, when the beauties of Nature would pass unnoticed. They had all been collectors in the various departments of antiquity; so much so, that the family mansion, Oldbourn Hall, was more like a museum than a living house. Ancient armour, Roman vases, cabinets of coins, bas-reliefs, bronzes, marbles, and every species of remains, were deposited throughout the house in conspicuous places, and formed the pride and delight of the family.

Sir Roger himself was a collector; but his tastes soared far beyond Roman remains—he aspired to the possession of Grecian treasures, and had been successful in the acquisition of some of the choicest specimens of art, the produce of the genius of that celebrated people. In his youth he had travelled in Greece, where his taste was formed; and he there became imbued with the superiority of the Greeks in matters of sculpture and architecture over every other nation of the world. This had become the predominant feeling of his mind, and his zeal for antiquity placed him foremost in the ranks of the virtuosi and antiquarians of his day. He wrote a celebrated essay upon the Siege of Troy, in which he disproved every thing which others had proved, and distinguished himself by disturbing the general belief upon several of the best authenticated events in ancient history,—writing dissertations to maintain that his facts were the only true facts, and his opinions the only true opinions. He became a member of all the learned societies in Europe, and consequently as many initial letters crowded after his name as are contained in the alphabet. With such occupations, and in the excitement of such pursuits, he quite forgot to marry; and old age already began to creep upon him ere he had provided himself with an heir to his estates. He consoled himself, however, by the reflection that he had a brother who would take that trouble off his hands; and about

the time we are now describing, his whole thoughts were turned to the accomplishment of that object.

He had ever been tenacious of the antiquity of his family; his pride of ancestry was excessive, and he allowed of no compromise when anything was proposed which might lower the dignity of his name. This was strongly exemplified in the treatment which his sister had met at his hands. She, when a sentimental young girl, against every wish of her family, had married a lieutenant in a marching regiment, of the name of Manby, no otherwise distinguished than as being very handsome, and poor as lieutenants generally are. She was in consequence entirely discarded by her family; and when her brother came into possession, with his title, he adopted all the family hates, and was inflexible towards his sister and her husband. We need not inform the reader that she was the mother of Edward, who, we hope, has made no unfavourable impression in our narrative, and of whose fate we shall have much to relate hereafter.

When the death of his sister and of her husband was announced to Sir Roger, we will not say that he rejoiced at the circumstance—for he was not in fact a hard-hearted man; but he felt like one relieved from the claims of a just debt;—he said to himself, with a sigh, “Poor thing! it is a mercy that she’s dead!” and honoured her memory by ordering a suit of black clothes.

But when, shortly after, he received a letter to inform him that that sister had left an infant son destitute and in want of every assistance, he became inflated and angry with ancestral pride as he reflected that his nephew’s name was Manby, and wrote back for answer by return of post that he must decline any interference with what did not belong to him; begging that the child might be taken to the father’s relations, for that ‘he could not be called upon to come forward;’ for such is the formulary on such occasions. The child did return to his father’s relations; and his paternal uncle, then a clerk in a brewer’s counting-house, and afterwards a brewer himself, brought him up—and we need not again repeat the career which he had run.

Sir Roger, however, was not inwardly displeased to know that he had a real and lawful nephew belonging

to the family stock in store, in case he did not marry himself, and in case anything should happen to his brother. This reflection soothed his indolence, cherished his objection to marriage, and gave him more leisure to write essays; and although he never openly made inquiries concerning him, or took any apparent interest in his fate, yet he managed to learn by indirect means that he lived, that he was strong and healthy, and that he would not be a disgrace to his name. He more than once, particularly when assailed by illness, had been on the point of sending for Edward and adopting him in his family; but he was as often stopped by that said feeling of pride, which made him feel that in so doing he would be open to associating with tradesmen, and known as the connexion of a brewer.

His brother, Peregrine Oldbourn, many years younger than himself, was a most thorough scion of the old stock in tastes and in disinclination to marriage, although he superadded a catalogue of eccentricities which, as they all had a "leaning to virtue's side," endeared him to everybody who knew him, and particularly to Sir Roger. Peregrine had early caught his brother's taste for antiquity and antiquarian research, and had been fired by the descriptions of his travels. He passed through school and college with high distinctions as a scholar; and not being satisfied with the bare acquisition of Greek and Latin, with great assiduity, he busied himself in the acquisition of the Oriental languages—laying up a store, as he said, for the time when he should travel into Eastern countries, where he hoped to make his own collections, and carry forward his own investigations. His whole ambition was to be a learned man and a great traveller: one of his earliest wishes was to become possessor of a certain altar dedicated to Bacchus, in the island of Delos, of which one sees a representation in Tournefort's Travels, and which, as will be narrated hereafter, he attempted to gratify.

At his father's death he became possessed of a small independent fortune, which amply allowed him to prosecute his own tastes; and when he left college, unlike other young men, who often devote themselves to pleasure and frivolity, he buried himself in his books, and led the life of a student. These habits brought

with them a train of eccentricities which increased with his years. He seemed by Nature cast in the mould of an old man, as if it were intended that he should begin life by the end instead of the beginning. His person was stiff, the shape of his face antiquated, and his dress in every way suited to these characteristics: no superfluous hair gamboled over his well-shorn face, no button compressed that which was intended to be unconfined, and no Crispin was ever allowed to plan a shoe that would generate an excrescence. His manners were distinguished by old-fashioned courtesy and a tone of great benevolence; but at the same time he was subject to such fits of absence, that a stranger often set him down as proud and supercilious. It was principally from this infirmity he derived the character of eccentricity with which he was destined to go through life. His early friends accused him of affectation: it is probable that had he been well ridiculed at first, the habit of abstraction which at length became part of his nature might have been destroyed, and that a sane mind would have thus been gained to the world. As it was, from at first becoming forgetful of times and places, he gradually became lost to all the common recollections so necessary in an intercourse with our fellow-creatures. He forgot the names of his acquaintance, often of his intimate friends; he as commonly arrived before his time at an appointed place as after it, and most frequently not at all. One of the principal feats in record against him was performed at an evening party, after he had drunk tea; viz. placing his teacup within a gentleman's hat who was standing near him, mistaking it for the servant's salver. Many and such like acts secured for him the imputation of eccentricity, which rendered him an object of kind remark to his friends, and of ridicule to his acquaintance.

Having quitted the university, he sought the first opportunity to put into execution his favourite project of Eastern travel; but this was delayed as much by the impediments which his brother threw in his way, as by his own habits of indolence, absence, and procrastination. His brother's object in keeping him at home was to see him married; but to this Peregrine was so much averse—at least before he had worked off his longing to apply his antiquarian lore to practical purposes, that at

length it was thought better to restrain him no longer, in order that by giving the reins to his desire, acquiescence might be produced by satiety.

At length he took his departure, anxious to go over the same ground in Greece which his brother had travelled before him, and bound by a promise that as soon as he should have entirely gratified his curiosity, he would return home and fulfil his brother's wishes by taking unto himself a wife.

We will not enter into a long detail of his travels through Europe, nor of the various adventures produced by his oddities and peculiarities: it will suffice to say, that go where he would, he was sure to sustain to the utmost the character of his countrymen for eccentricity. In France he was called '*cet insulaire bizarre,*' '*cet original,*' '*ce drôle de corps.*' In Italy, those who had dealings with him would first point to their heads, and then shaking their finger, would exclaim, *Quel milordo è un proco cosi, cosi.* There his enthusiasm for antiquity broke out in all its vigour, and he became the idol of cicerones and the milch-cow of the virtuosi. Before he was allowed to leave Rome, he was encumbered with so many genuine articles of the remotest antiquity—so many undoubted busts, such varieties of unique cameos, such specimens of rare intaglios, and so many things of which he was assured to be the only happy and highly enviable possessor, that already he might be said to have made a good collection. His ardour, however, was a little cooled when, after having paid a large sum for the indubitable fragment of an Apollo, which only wanted head, arms, and legs to make it perfect, described to him as having been recently dug up in the Forum, he found that a brother traveller had purchased a similar thing, only perfect, for a very small price, from the artist himself.

From Naples he crossed over to Sicily. At Pæstum he almost ran clean out of his wits with delight and antiquarian rapture; but in Sicily, going from one ruin to another, unchecked by the ardent heat of the sun, undismayed by difficulty and discomfort, he was obliged to stay his progress for a while, owing to a violent attack of fever.

This circumstance had one beneficial result, for it tended very much to cure him of some of those fancies and vagaries which had begun to unfit him for the com-

mon affairs of life: he was obliged to exert the energies of his mind as well as his body for practical purposes, and thus he was driven from that dreaming mood which bade fair to make him a totally useless member of society. As soon as he recovered, he embarked for Malta. There he sojourned some time, and then crossed the Archipelago to Rhodes. He landed in safety in Syria, and reached Aleppo in good health; and this was the last place from whence his brother had received any tidings of him.

CHAPTER XI.

A letter from the East, which, if out of place here, may be appreciated elsewhere.

SIR ROGER had long been in expectation of news from his brother, and began to be very anxious for his safety, because, in his last letter, he intimated that he was about crossing the Great Desert to Bagdad. However, his fears were relieved upon receiving a letter from him in perfect health, and full of ardour in his pursuits. The precise spot whence this was written was omitted, and only after an examination of its contents did it appear that it came from Persepolis. Not once had he named that place throughout the letter; by which he disclosed that peculiar quality of his mind which exhibited acuteness and intelligence upon matters of speculative interest, while it rendered him forgetful of the common forms and provisions necessary to the daily business of life.

As this letter is likely to throw light upon his character, and as moreover it contains some hints which may be thought worthy the attention of the learned, although it be inclosed within the leaves of a novel, we think that we cannot do better than to insert it at full length. It was as follows:

“From my tent, pitched in the
Great Hall of Columns.

“DEAR ROGER,

“My imagination takes me to the moment when

you will open this my letter and become informed of the place from which it is dated. If you have not lost all your former ardour for the sublime study of antiquity—if the interest which you once took in things gone by be not entirely lost in that for the things that are, you will rejoice to hear from a spot so interesting to the historian and the antiquary as the one from which I now write. I would not begin with so much enthusiasm had I merely to describe what I see before and around me—objects which have already been described, and which are now as well known in their details as any of the celebrated ruins of Italy or Greece; but I write with the more zeal, because I think that I have hit upon a better explanation of the history of these celebrated remains than, as far as I am informed, has been given by any preceding traveller. In two words, before I go further, I will say that the conclusion I have come to is, namely, this: that these ruins, in architecture and general character, afford specimens of the architecture and general character of the Temple of Solomon.

“Do not, now, I beseech you, begin to exclaim, as you are wont to do, ‘This is one of your paradoxes—this is one of your theories founded upon a crotchet and engendered by a conceit;—but hear me out, and you will see that I have more to go upon than you at first may conceive.

“My conclusion is mainly grounded upon several points of similitude which exist between the actual remains and the description of the temple given in the 1st Book of Kings, 4th chap., and in the 2d Chronicles, 3rd chap., and upon the coincidence which makes the rebuilders of the temple and the ancient possessors of this place to be one and the same personages.

“The first point of similitude which I find is in the general contrivance and character of the building. We read in 1st Kings, 6th chap., of a porch before the temple of the house; of windows of narrow lights against the wall of the house; of chambers round about; of a middle chamber; and of winding stairs into the middle chamber, and out of the middle into the third. Now here I can distinguish a porch—a porch too forming a principal feature of the whole building; then I find my windows of narrow lights, with my several chambers built round about; and also I am abundant in stairs, which may be called winding, inasmuch

as they go from one platform to another. All these different objects are of a peculiar style of composition, a little tinged with Egyptian taste, but otherwise quite unique: they compose an immense building, which, like the Temple of Solomon, might have been half house, half temple, built of stone; the masses, which are put together with considerable skill, seem to have been 'made ready before they were brought thither,' and when upraised in walls, have a striking and remarkable appearance.

“We also read that ‘the house of the forest of Lebanon,’ which appears to have been identified with the temple, was raised upon forty-five pillars. Now this great hall was supported by forty-eight pillars, exclusive of others in various parts; and it is moreover generally called by the natives *Chehel Minar*,—the Forty Pillars.

“The next point of similitude is, I conceive, to be found in the architecture of the pillars themselves. The description found in the 7th chapter of 1st Kings, 15th and following verses, of the two pillars of brass, and in the 3rd chap. of the 2nd Chronicles, 15th and 16th verses, evidently the same pillars, although their dimensions are given differently, appears very much to illustrate the very singular, and I believe I may say, the only pillars of the sort in the world, which are seen here erect in the building which I call the porch. In the sacred text, they appear to have been composed of base, shaft, and capital, as in the established orders; but the capitals were quite different from those known in Greece, inasmuch as there was a great accumulation of ornament. What ‘the nets of checker work,’ and ‘wreaths of chain work,’ and ‘the pomegranates,’ might have been, it would be difficult to say; but certainly the capitals of the pillars now before me, curious and complicated as they are, to my mind afford an explanation which no other capitals that I have ever seen can give me. I think much might be said in bringing out the similitude,—but that I cannot do in the short limits of a letter: it is enough to assert, that these columns, without any stretch of imagination, may be fairly said to have originated in the same school as those described in the Bible.

“The third very singular point of similitude is in the sculpture, and particularly in illustration of what both

in the Kings and in the Chronicles are called the cherubims. In Calmet we find some very full details upon this subject, although nothing conclusive; for on no subject, it appears, has there been so many unavailing conjectures as respecting the nature of these figures. Grotius says the cherubims were figures like a calf; Bochart and Spencer, an ox. Josephus says they were extraordinary creatures, of a figure unknown to mankind. Clemens Alexandrinus believes the Egyptians imitated the cherubims of the Hebrews in their sphynxes and hieroglyphical animals. The descriptions which Scripture gives of the cherubim differ, but all agree in representing a figure composed of various creatures—a man, an ox, an eagle, and a lion. Now, these most extraordinary figures represented upon the portals here combine these four characteristics; and I agree with Calmet, that in these interesting sculptures we may gather a very fair idea of the figure called the cherubim. May one not naturally ask, then, how got they here? If my conclusion be just, that the architect of the Temple of Solomon and of these immense structures, was the same; then the answer to be made is at once easy and natural, and the solution of the difficulty self-evident.

“The fourth point of similitude is the circumstance of overlaying the walls with gold. Everywhere the house of the Lord is described as being overlaid with gold: the walls, the cherubims, the carved figures, the palm-trees—all were overlaid with gold. Now, in every part of these ruins are evident traces of either gold or some bright metal having been let in. In almost all the large figures representing a royal personage, that is, in the tiara or crown, the beard, and the bracelet,—may be seen the remains of small nails—some in which the nails are still found, which fixed the plates of metal on the stone; and, I think, on examining the surface of the inscriptions, the sculptured palm-trees, and other figures, it is not difficult, to remark that they have been overlaid with some composition which in its original form very likely shone like gold, or by its colour was made to represent that metal.

“These different points of similitude, and the many others which I could adduce, would have produced comparatively but small influence on my mind, were they

not backed by the circumstance that the possessors of these regions and the possessors of Jerusalem were one and the same. Cyrus, upon becoming the sovereign of both Media and Persia, began the rebuilding of the temple, according to that renowned edict of his recorded in Ezra i. 2. After a suspension of the building, owing to the counteracting intrigues of the Samaritans, it was again set forward in the second year of Darius Hystaspes, and finished in the sixth year of that monarch's reign; he having discovered among the Jewish treasures at Babylon the rolls or books relating to the former structure, most likely containing the architectural plans and details of the building. Now, we ask, can any thing be more likely and more consonant to what a modern Persian monarch would do, than, whilst he ordered a continuation of so famous a building for the Jews, that he should build one also for himself, adopting the same style of architecture, and adapting many parts of the temple and of the house of the forest of Lebanon to his own use? It is agreeable to reason to conclude that the new temple was as like the ancient temple as possible; and every plan both of it and the house of the forest of Lebanon, which was identified with it, was doubtless preserved with as much care as were the gold and silver vessels of the house of God. That the second temple was as splendid as the first, is confirmed by the prophecy of the Prophet Haggai; and therefore we may affirm, that what we now see erect in the spot whence I am now writing afford a fair idea of what might have been the Temple of Solomon and the houses belonging to it, and consequently what sort of place might have been the spot which was glorified by the presence of our blessed Saviour in person.

“Of what may be said to the contrary by the Persian historians or traditionists, that these buildings were erected by their fabulous King Jemsheed, I take no heed. In matters of such remote antiquity I hold the Persian historians to be of no authority, for they do not possess any well-authenticated records, as far as I know, before the time of Mahomed: whereas, all my conjectures have been taken from that book of all truth the Bible, and, I flatter myself, are corroborated directly and indirectly by the testimony of the Greek historians and geographers.

“This place has also been called Istakher; and that city was said to have been built by Jemsheed. Now nobody adverts to a rocky eminence in the plain, crowned by ruined walls and towers, which is to this day called Istakher; and which, therefore, might make the Persian historians correct, whilst my suggestions may therefore be true also.

“Such, my dear Roger, are the principal arguments upon which, without vanity or enthusiasm, I hope to establish the facts for which I have been contending. I think they will be found of no inconsiderable importance as illustrative of both sacred and profane history; and in them, perhaps, the decypherer of the arrow-headed inscriptions may find a help to his studies. In many of the perfect and detailed sculptures we may be furnished with new lights upon the connexion which subsisted between the ancient Jews and Persians: for, in truth, I cannot resist identifying these two nations in my thoughts: the cast of their countenances is the same, they have the same turn of mind and pursuits, and the affinity which existed between them in the ancient times to which I have alluded—the one as conquerors, and the others as conquered—may perhaps explain why at the present day the Jew is more persecuted and degraded in Persia than he is in any other country of the East. In the mean while, if you are not wholly dead to antiquity, do, pray, at least, be the medium of communication with antiquaries. Stir up our old friend and partner in work, Dustiman; place the subject before him, and let him work it out. I am satisfied to have made the discovery—let others explore the mine; and, if I mistake not, it will repay them amply. In the mean while, I shall continue to make researches; and when we meet, I hope to find you ready to listen to the narrative of all my numerous adventures. Of the people with whom I now live, I shall indeed have much to say. In this part of Persia, they are a genuine people,—their faces are sculptured on the walls about me, and they answer in a thousand particulars to what is recorded of them in Herodotus, Xenophon, Curtius, P. Mela, Strabo, and many others. The former of these worthies flatters my predilection for the state of single blessedness whilst he describes their women as undeserving of regard; which makes me suppose that they

were the same worthless beings then that they are now. However, do not think that I say this to disqualify myself for my promise. As soon as I return, I will marry her whom you will set before me, without asking any questions—all I desire is that you make the selection. Find me a fitting person, and I marry; but let me not be at the trouble of seeking her. When that time shall come, is much in the hands of *takdeer*, as the Persians say, and also at the mercy of Turkish Tartars, post-horses, and Surigees: but everything being propitious, and no antiquities in the way, I may hope to be at the *Bab Homayan*, the Sublime Porte,—in other words, at Constantinople,—in about three months from this time.

“Ever, my dear Roger,

“Your affectionate brother,

“PEREGRINE OLDBOURN.”

“P. S. By the bye, there is one thing I have always had on my mind to tell you, but which somehow or other I have omitted from press of other matter;—which is, that a few nights before I left London, at an evening party at Lady—I forget who’s, I was made much of by a Mrs. Somebody and a very charming daughter of hers, to whom I fear I said many things which might have made her suppose that I had followed your wish in proposing marriage: but no such thing, to the best of my knowledge, took place,—at least I am sure that I did not intend it; although I found, to my dismay, in turning over the things in my baggage, that I had brought away the young lady’s Cashmerian scarf, which I fear I put into my pocket, taking it, I suppose, for my pocket-handkerchief. I quite forget the young lady’s name, and her mamma’s; although I think somebody said that she was the daughter of the member for York, or Cork, or some such place, and that he was celebrated for having made two famous speeches, one for, and the other against, some famous measure. Whichever way it may be, of this be certain, that I am not bound to any young lady in the world,—at least, I don’t think I am.”

CHAPTER XII.

The death of a bachelor described, who was sorry that he had not married.

THE letter which we have placed before our reader had taken six months to reach its destination, by the route of India; and when delivered into Sir Roger's hands, he was living in the family mansion in the country, confined by a violent paroxysm of gout, which had attacked him after a long previous state of delicate health. Although its contents gave him great delight, particularly as it proved his brother's excellent state of health, yet the now predominant desire of his mind,—namely, to see that brother married,—was left unsatisfied. He willingly would have sought that wife whom Peregrine promised to take to himself as soon as he should reach England, were he in a state to execute such a commission; but he was obliged to put it off, hoping that after the restoration of his health he would be able to bestir himself effectually. But Sir Roger's hopes were never destined to be realised: fit succeeded fit; the constitution, vamped up in one place, gave way in another: on one day hope predominated, on the next despair;—thus the decay gained ground till the decrepit baronet was announced by his physicians to be in a dangerous state; and it was gradually broken to him, that if he had any disposal to make of his worldly affairs, he should lose no time in so doing.

Mr. Fairfax, his solicitor, was immediately sent for; and soon after a post-chaise was seen bowling along the sweeping road that led through the park, and stopped at the door, where several anxious well-dressed lacqueys were waiting the arrival of its tenant. It disgorged a little business-like looking gentleman, who by his assiduity in attending upon the commands of others, appeared to have no time left to think a moment about himself, was straightway ushered into the presence of the impatient baronet. He approached the sick man with cautious step, who, wrapped up from head to foot in flannel, looked like the corpse which ere long he was destined to become, were it not for the still bright intelligence of his eye, which proclaimed that vitality so

tardy in becoming extinct would keep him hovering on the brink of eternity for some time, ere the scene closed upon him for ever.

With slow and painful speech he addressed Mr. Fairfax as soon as he was made aware of his presence, and said, "I have been advised to send for you,—I am glad you are come,—life I know is uncertain, and I would wish to reconsider my will."

Fairfax upon this said the usual consolatory words, called for pen, ink and paper, and settled himself before a table to write.

"I know that it is appointed for us all to die, and so I must think what is best to do. Peregrine is not yet returned; that letter" (showing the one which we have before mentioned) "makes his return uncertain. Still he must be made to marry, or else my estates will fall into other hands, which must be avoided. Considering his eccentricity of character, and his aversion to the marriage state, something must be done. Advise me, Mr. Fairfax."

"You can make his entering into possession conditional," said the lawyer.

"Can I?" said the baronet: "that's some comfort."

"Yes, certainly," said Fairfax; "conditional upon his marrying within a certain time."

"But mind ye," said Sir Roger, becoming animated, "the conditions must be such that the contingency of the property falling to my nephew must be rendered very improbable. Peregrine is my brother,—my beloved brother!" he added with a deep-drawn sigh: "God protect him! he is of the true stock of the Oldbourns. I would that I had married! I have been too much wedded to my books to care for anything else; but he must. We must contrive something:—we must get him a wife,—a young, healthy wife of good family. Have you no wives to recommend?"

At this question Fairfax made a pause, as if the question was one so new in law as to puzzle his sagacity. "No, no! we do not keep a disposable stock for such occasions," he said, smiling at the strangeness of the demand.

"A wife must be prepared for him,—that is the object I wish to accomplish," said the baronet.

"That may be done," said the lawyer; "but it must

be stipulated that if he does not marry within a certain time, then he forfeits the estate and it goes to your nephew."

"Not so fast," said the sick man with a groan: "can't he be obliged to marry and get the estate too?"

"That could not be," said Fairfax; "you cannot impose a condition without a forfeit,—the whole of our life is made up of conditions and forfeits."

At this remark the poor dying man sank on his pillow. "But," said the lawyer, seeing he had said too much, and raising his voice,—“But if Mr. Peregrine knows that he has to lose an estate worth ten thousand pounds a-year if he does not marry within a certain reasonable time, then, unless he be a madman,—which I believe he is not,—you can have no doubt but that your wishes will be accomplished; you will have compelled him to marry.”

"Shall I?" said Sir Roger with a faint smile: "then let us compel him by all means. But we must give him plenty of time to return home—we must not run him hard—we must get him an undeniable wife—we must not be hard upon Peregrine. The antiquities of the family are entailed, though the estate is not—entail my collection upon him too; and do not forget the illustrated copy of my Dissertation upon the Siege of Troy: let him have everything. You will find the catalogues here, all in good order: let everything be for him without a condition, except the house and estate."

"But you must describe your nephew," said the lawyer, after he had made a note of his client's wishes concerning his brother: "what is his name—where and what is he?"

"My nephew!" exclaimed the baronet as if he had received a sudden shock. "True, I have a nephew,—I wish I knew where he was: he is my nephew—my own poor sister's son." Then appearing absorbed in mental agony, he slowly said, "I have never seen him—I know not where he is: I fear this is wrong, very wrong. Mr. Fairfax, you must find him out for me immediately; and perhaps I may see him before—" (there he paused still more distressed,)—"before I die.—But I may still live—I am not so bad as that yet; perhaps I may still see Peregrine—poor fellow! But find out my nephew: his name is Edward—Edward Manby;

—he is to be heard of at Liverpool. I ought to have been more kind to that youth;—you must find him and send him to me immediately—something may be done: I will recommend him to Peregrine,—he shall do something for him,—I am sure he will, for he has a good heart, although he may be a little odd. I believe Edward lives with his——” he would have said uncle, but pride prevented the utterance of that word and it died on his lips. “He is to be found at Liverpool—I dare say the name is well known there;—send for him.”

“I will,” said Fairfax; and he immediately made a note to that effect.

Fairfax having succeeded in acquiring all the information necessary for drawing out the will, soon returned with it to receive the testator’s signature with all the proper witnesses. It was drawn up, leaving everything to his brother provided he married within six months from the time of the baronet’s decease. The inquiries which he had set on foot concerning Edward Manby had not proved successful in producing his presence. This piece of intelligence served much to embitter the last days of the dying baronet, who, although relieved by the act of making and closing his will, could not but feel that he had committed one long act of injustice in his behaviour to his nephew. He endeavoured to palliate it, and conceived that he had sufficiently done so, by leaving him a legacy, and by the stipulations of the will; which were, that should he succeed to the family possessions, he was to change his name and to adopt that of Oldbourn. He thought thus to have achieved a family conquest, and to have taken a great weight of dishonour from off the shoulders of his nephew. He did not long survive the transaction we have just recorded; but surrounded by all the exterior mockery of woe, whilst the true desolation was within, he was gathered to his fathers, and his death was trumpeted forth with eulogiums for his learning and his patronage of art, and his constitutional principles, and his various accomplishments; whilst that smaller eulogium in human estimation, his love of God, for which he would have given worlds, did not find its way into the pompous epitaph inscribed upon his tomb. The only consolation which he enjoyed before he breathed his last, was the reception of a letter from his brother announcing his arrival

at Constantinople; a fact of importance in the legal arrangements about to be made. As soon as the funeral was over, Mr. Fairfax determined to despatch some confidential person to seek out the new baronet, wherever he might be, having previously written the proper letter, announcing the death of the late dignitary.

Mark Woodcock, as we have before explained, was nominated to perform this service; and as the arrangement which took place on that occasion will throw some light upon the parties concerned, we briefly narrate the conversation which took place on that occasion. On the morning when Mr. Fairfax had made up his mind on the subject, he sent for Mark, who was busily employed, pen in hand, his head poring over parchment at his desk, and addressed him as follows:

“Mr. Woodcock, I have business of some importance to speak to you upon. I believe you talk French very well?”

“Yes, sir, I do,” said Mark.

“I hope I can depend upon your activity, discretion, and prudence.”

“I hope you can, sir,” said Mark, looking astonished.

“Do you know whereabouts Constantinople is?” said Mr. Fairfax.

“Constantinople!” said Mark; “whereabouts it is?—is it not the capital of Turkey?” looking still more astonished.

“To be sure it is,” said Mr. Fairfax; “but should you know how to get at it?”

Mark paused for awhile—looked up, then down, and then said, “How to get at it, did you say? No, sir;—do you?”

This question puzzled the chief as much as it did his clerk; who, putting as good a face upon his ignorance as he could, said, “I have never been there myself; but I suppose when once you are well on the high road to it, a good post-chaise and post-horses will take you there fast enough.”

“I dare say the Indian,” said Mark,—“him they call the nabob, who comes here sometimes about his claims,—would be able to tell us all about it: his country and Constantinople are both in the East.”

“It is possible he may,” said the learned solicitor;

“and you may immediately make all the proper inquiries. It is my intention to send you immediately to seek Sir Peregrine Oldbourn, who has lately arrived at Constantinople, with papers of consequence; and you must prepare yourself to start immediately.”

“Very well, sir,” said Mark with a thrill of joy darting through him; “I will get ready immediately:” and he was about leaving the room, when, reflecting a moment, he said, “Am I to let my beard grow?”

The man of parchment with a smile said, “I suppose you must do what is usual on such occasions: but recollect, prudence before everything.”

Mark, from the moment he had got permission to let his beard grow, felt that having once given the reins to the persevering hairs, they would grow with increased vigour; and flattering himself that with a beard on his chin, and with French in his mouth, he had obtained every requisite to make a perfect Eastern traveller, he immediately hastened to see all the Allnutts, as we have already described in the foregoing volume, to inform them of this new turn in his fortunes.

The result was, that ere many days had elapsed, Mark Woodcock, after having undergone the previous labour of getting a passport, securing letters of credit, and packing his portmanteau, was duly installed as a passenger on board the steam-boat bound for Rotterdam. The only trait worth recording before he left England was this, that by way of showing off his French at the passport-office, he insisted upon being called *Monsieur Bécasse*; for which he found himself so considerably laughed at, that he was satisfied to keep his knowledge in that tongue for better purposes.

CHAPTER XIII.

A cockney's travels through Europe, and his descent among the Turks.

WE would at once willingly take our reader to Mr. Mark Woodcock's arrival at Constantinople, whither we beg leave to announce that he succeeded in arriving

in safety, could we withstand the temptation of knowing what so pure a cockney thought and felt during his passage through scenes so totally new to him, and of which we conclude our reader would be as happy to be informed as ourselves. We therefore do not hesitate in giving the following extract of a journal which he kept, and which indeed he had been desired to keep by his chief.

“On board the London steamer, bound for Rotterdam.

“LEFT St. Katharine’s Dock at six o’clock in the morning: a great deal of company on board. There was a fellow who wanted to seize hold of my portmanteau and carpet-bag; but I soon let him know who he had got to deal with. I had no sooner put my great-coat on a place to secure a seat, than a lady tossed it away and sat down herself. I thought that this might be the beginning of foreign manners people talk so much of, and as she was a lady, I said nothing, but went down into the cabin to secure a berth. The man asked me, ‘What name?’ I said, ‘Woodcock.’—‘Woodcock,’ said he, looking over a list; ‘we have no Woodcocks here:—here are two Partridges though,’ said he, ‘if that will do, and one Hare.’—‘None of your nonsense,’ said I, thinking that he was laughing at me: ‘I am not to be run down in this manner, if you please.’—‘I beg your pardon, sir,’ said he; ‘I really had no thought of making game of you. I believe the fellow was a wag; and as he allowed me to take a place on a shining black sofa, with a shining black bolster to lay my head on, I said no more.

“There was a Dutch steamer that set off at the same time that we did; but we soon showed her what an English steamer can do. The Dutchman had no chance with us; and I soon found that it was quite true what I had often heard before, that a Dutchman can’t run: we saw nothing more of him after we had passed Deptford.

“I found a Frenchman on board, and I determined to try some of my French upon him; so when we were passing Greenwich Hospital, I went up to him and said, ‘*Est-ce que vous n’avez pas rien comme celui-ci en France?*’ The man stared, and making a bow, he said, ‘I no understand English.’ I never saw such a fool in

my life, for I thought at least that a Frenchman could understand his own language.

“We went on very prosperously, although the dinner was uncommonly bad,—the beef tough, the cabbage not half boiled, and the beer flat: but there was good music, and a fellow who played capitally upon the key-bugle and made a glorious noise. It was all very well until we came off Margate; but there it began to blow, and the company to look very uncomfortable. I was determined it should not be said that a man going to Constantinople was sick, so I bore up against it most manfully for some time, whistling and looking into other people’s faces: but what could one do against the whole ocean! I felt uncommonly unpleasant, and lay down upon the horse-hair sofa quite distressed. Mr. Partridge and son soon came tumbling over me to get to their resting-place, and Mr. Hare moaned as if he had been shot. I never shall forget what a miserable time I passed: I wished myself back in Lincoln’s-inn a thousand times, and vowed that nothing again should ever take me out of England by sea. I never slept a wink all night, and I should like to know who could with all the horrid noises about one’s ears—Mr. Hare’s in particular; but at last morning came, and we got in sight of the Dutch coast, and there the sea became smooth. After a great deal of zig-zagging, and what is, I suppose, called inland navigation, we reached the city of Rotterdam, in Holland, all the natives being Dutchmen. The cows are certainly fine; but as for their sheep, I did not see one,—although there were many wind-mills, and other implements of agriculture. Nothing, however, like the chimneys of our steam-engines did I see along the river, nor one patent-shot manufactory, which are so very handsome, and make the glory of old England. When I got on shore, I felt well all of a sudden; which is extraordinary, considering what a long voyage we had made. I was taken up before the mayor about my passport; and when he found that I was going to Constantinople, he looked at me and let me go. We all sat down to dinner at a thing they call the *table d’hôte*, which they might as well have called an ordinary, for it was exactly like one: and I must say this for them, that they had good fish,—although they hav’nt a notion of melted butter. They can

show nothing like our meat, although they talk a good deal about it; and indeed it was all very half-and-half sort of work compared with England.

“After dinner I walked out to see the city; and I was bothered out of my wits by a jabbering fellow who pretended to talk English, to go and see the statue of one Erasmus, whoever he may be: but when I came to see it, it was not to be compared to the statue of Queen Anne standing with her back to St. Paul’s. And then he wanted to take me to the tombs of two admirals; but I said we had admirals enough at home, and that our Nelson would beat all they could show. The best of it was, after I had killed myself in taking a walk with this fellow, he insisted upon my paying him, saying he was a lacquey out of place; but I sent him packing, for it was no fault of mine if he was out of place.

“There are hundreds of bridges here; but I am quite certain, were they all put together, they would not make one Waterloo, nor one New London Bridge. Then I heard so much of Dutch cleanliness!—I am sure I saw none of it in the men, or women either,—nothing to talk about. They were sluicing their windows, ’tis true, with water and hand-pumps, and washing out their houses from morning till night; but that is not cleanliness: I should like to look at their teeth, and their linen, and their nails,—there is where an Englishman looks for cleanliness.

—“The next day we set off in a Dutch steamer to go up the Rhine, a large river that winds up ever so far inland. There were some English people and a great many foreigners on board. The Frenchman who had come by the steamer from London was among them; and as he had found out that I could talk his language, we became friends, and he borrowed some stivers from me.

“At night we got to a place where we were to sleep. As soon as the boat arrived, everybody rushed out to get a bed, and I among the number; but I was surprised to find what beasts I had got amongst: they made nothing of sleeping half a dozen in one room, and some of them two in one bed! However, there was no help for it; and as I could no more set myself against foreign manners than I could prevent my being in Holland, I got into a bed in a room where there were seven other

beds besides mine, and men inside them. I had no sooner taken possession than I perceived the Frenchman looking about for a berth; and as he found them all occupied, to my astonishment, I perceived him as cool as a cucumber take up my bedclothes and prepare to come into bed to me. I immediately cried out, 'D—n it! *que voulez-vous?*' He still persisted, and was coming in outright, when I exclaimed, 'No, this is too bad!—*C'est trop mauvais!*'—upon which I lifted up my leg and kicked him clean out into the middle of the room. He came down with a great bounce, and cried out some of his odd words which denote rage. The noise he made awoke the others, who all poked their heads out, and in various languages made their complaints, until I was obliged to get out and expel the Frenchman by force, and locked the door upon him. We then all slept till the morning, when we proceeded on our journey; but I never saw *Mounseer* again—and he walked off without paying what he owed me.

"After this we got to Cologne, the place where the Eau de Cologne is made. I asked a fellow who understood a little French, where the Eau was made (for Eau means water), and he pointed to the river. I said, 'That will never do—I am not going to believe that all that smelling-water made up in long bottles packed in boxes, which is sold in England, is nothing but water taken out of this river!' I soon let him know I was not to be taken in, for who could doubt that the fellow lied? Cologne, however, is the very place in which it is made.

"We then proceeded in a larger and grander vessel, full of ladies and gentlemen, and got among mountains and old castles. Everybody seemed delighted, and called it the finest thing they had ever seen; but, for my part, I would rather take a row from London Bridge to Richmond, any day of the week, and dine at Eel-pie Island, which to my mind is a much neater place than anything we saw here. There was no end to the castles we passed, not one half as good as Windsor Castle, and thousands of towns besides. Then we saw the place where the wine called 'old hock' is made: they say it is *new* here, although we always get it *old* in England.

"In two days I got to a large city called Francfort, full of Jews as it could hold, and, I need not say, called

very rich; although, in truth, nothing is rich out of England—not even a Jew. I then took my place in a sort of stage-coach, not much better than our fish-carts that go between Portsmouth and London; and this, to my surprise, was called an ‘*Eel-waggon*,’ so that they take everything from us, even to their fish-carts, although these carry men and women passengers. This coach was to take me to Prague, the city where the battle was fought, and which I heard Miss Fanny Allnutt so frequently play on the pianoforte. I determined when I got there to see the field of battle itself, and to find out the exact spot where the prisoners groaned, in order to tell Miss Fanny all about it when I saw her again; but the people were so stupid that they could not understand me. They always said ‘*Ya, ya,*’ to all I said; but no field of battle did they show me, although I talked to them by the hour in French.

“We set off again; and there was an Englishman in the coach, to whom I imparted that I was going to Constantinople. When he heard that, he behaved with great respect, for he immediately began talking very learnedly about the Roman Empire, and Gibson’s Climb and Fall, and Bajazet, and Timur the Tartar, taking me for a traveller going out to write a book. I had seen Timur the Tartar at Astley’s, and therefore I let him know that I was not ignorant on that head. When we came to the stage called Dutchbrod, he took me up to one of the windows and pointed out what he called a curious inscription, thinking that as I was likely to publish it would do for me. Not to undeceive him, I did copy it; and sure enough it was curious, for there was something about a neat postchase, and horses and harness. It was this:

‘In questa casa travarete
Toutes es choses que vous souhaitez;
Vinum bonum, costes, carnes,
Neat postchaise, and horse and harness.’

My companion called it a polyglot inscription, whatever that may be, and said that in years to come it would puzzle the learned, as I am sure it did me.

“We travelled several days, and at length reached the capital of Germany. I never was in such a rage in all my life as on the day we reached this place. I call-

ed it Vienna, because it is always called so in England by all people, and by all the members of parliament (and they know better than any one;) but an obstinate pig of a German persisted in calling it '*Ween*.' However, I was determined that nothing should *wean* me out of what was right, so I continued pronouncing it 'Vienna.'

"I did not stay long in this place, where I understood nobody, and where nobody understood me; but after I had left it, I was very sorry not to have seen a thing which my travelling companion in the eel-waggon assured me was to be seen here, and that was the famous House of Austria. He assured me that it was the oldest house certainly in Europe, and perhaps in the world; and that the Emperor of Austria lived in it. I think that would have been a curiosity worth looking at—and I might have carried away a bit of one of the old bricks, to give to Miss Mary, had I thought of it. But now it was too late; and I came to a country where everybody talked Latin, down to the postboys. I was longing all the way to recollect some of the Latin I had learnt at school; but, do what I could, I never could get out more than *As in præsentî*. I did once try to make a handsome housemaid understand that I thought her so; and pointing to her face, I said, *Pulcher*, fair; *pulcherrima*, fairest: but nothing would do; and I think she said, *Thes asinus*, and went away laughing. That was the only adventure I had in Hungary."

It appears, after this, that our traveller, having reached the confines of Wallachia, proceeded with too much speed through that wild country to have had time or opportunity to write down his observations. Mounted upon a little open cart without springs, peculiar to Wallachia, and dragged with unceasing velocity by four horses through every impediment of mud and filth, he could do little else than ejaculate his execrations at the country, and compare it with England. We can conceive no human torture superior to that which a pampered cockney would suffer in being transferred at once from the corner of a comfortable stage-coach to a seat in a Wallachian post-cart; and although Mark had experienced a tolerable gradation of discomforts ere he got thus far, still he could not contain his rage when, hav-

ing arrived at Bucharest, he found himself bumped into a mass of dirt and mud.

“By the time he reached Constantinople, the youth who started from Lincoln’s-inn so fair and spruce, was transformed into one so dirty and weather-beaten, that none of his acquaintance could have recognised him had they seen him thus. His glossy hat was slouched; the colour of his coat was undefinable; and his beard and mustaches, which he had tended with increasing anxiety, were just sufficiently grown to make them the torment of his existence. Experience had not yet taught him that the manners and customs of nations must ever differ according to their various wants and necessities; for, comparing what he saw to what he had left in England, he never could understand why the Turks, possessing the most beautiful empire in the world, with every local advantage, should still have no other mode of travelling than on horseback,—should sit cross-legged, when they might sit on chairs,—should eat with their fingers, when knives and forks are to be had,—and should, in short, be in almost every respect the very reverse of what mankind are in England. In truth, Mark, at Constantinople, standing on the quay at Tophana, where he had landed, was as much a cockney as when he embarked in the steamer for Rotterdam.

CHAPTER XIV.

Mark Woodcock and Peregrine Oldbourn.—Contrast between a cockney and an antiquary.

IN the mean while, Peregrine Oldbourn, after many deviations from the straight road, successfully made his way from Persepolis, where we last left him, to Constantinople. He might perhaps have ended his days in the former place from sheer absence of mind, entirely wrapt up in the absorbing discovery which he had made, had not his long stay there been remarked by the authorities, who, supposing he was seeking those treasures which fame reports to be there extant, had

sent him a message to quit. He therefore took his departure, but came to another full stop at the ruins of the ancient Pasargarda, where his enthusiasm again broke out in the contemplation of what he could not doubt to be the tomb of Cyrus. Full of the recollections of the grandeur and achievements of that celebrated personage, he performed many extraordinary feats at his shrine; he passed one whole night extended in the identical narrow chamber where he supposed his hero's ashes to have once reposed; and conceiving himself to be the actual Cyrus, he did nothing but exclaim as he lay on his back, "O mortals! I am Cyrus, son of Cambyses, founder of the Persian monarchy and sovereign of Asia: grudge me not therefore this monument!" He walked round and round the tomb with all the humility and devotion of a pilgrim, and behaved with such grave reverence, that the natives, taking him for an English dervish travelling with the intention of fulfilling some penitential vow, treated him with high consideration.

He then proceeded to Ispahan, where he tarried but a short time, because it offered him but little antiquarian attraction, and thence to Teheran, where he passed several days in tracing the ruins of the ancient Rages, rendered famous in Scripture History by the history of Tobit. From thence he sought the remains of Ecbatana, in the modern city of Hamadan; and travelling northwards, made an attempt to ascend the Mountain of Ararat. Encountering sundry dangers in passing the frontier from Persia to Turkey, he continued his researches right and left through the ancient Pontus, Galatia, and Bithynia, until at length he reached Constantinople in safety.

There he first learnt the death of his brother, communicated by a letter from Mr. Fairfax; who at the same time making him acquainted with the provisions of the will, announced the approaching arrival of a messenger despatched to seek him wherever he might be, in order that no impediment should be cast in the way of fulfilling those provisions. Sincerely attached to his brother, he mourned his loss with a true and poignant grief, without reflecting upon the conditions imposed upon him ere he became possessor of his fortune. He deferred making any plan as to his return to England

until the arrival of the promised messenger; and determined to await him at Smyrna in preference to Constantinople, for he wished to visit the plains of Troy ere he quitted Asia; and thus, as he conceived, he would honour the memory of his departed brother, by examining on the spot the merit of those arguments which he had put forth in his celebrated essay touching the history of the siege.

When Mark Woodcock reached Constantinople, his first step was to ascertain where the new baronet was to be found; and, to his dismay, he heard that he must still travel on some two or three hundred miles. Sir Peregrine had omitted to do that which every man of reflection would have done;—that is, to have left directions what course the messenger was to pursue, and appointed him a rendezvous at some specified time and place.

The bewildered Londoner, in the new and curious world into which he had fallen, could scarcely recover his astonishment at all he saw, nor his regret at the necessity which impelled him still to travel onwards. Of Smyrna he had scarcely heard, excepting as a cognomen to figs; and from what he had already seen of travelling in Turkey, he was not ambitious of extending his geographical knowledge in that country. Faithful, however, to the trust reposed in him, and anxious to accomplish the object of his mission with as little delay as possible, he would not allow himself to tarry at Constantinople to satisfy his curiosity, but determined at once to proceed.

The little that he did see of the great Mahomedan capital gave him but little desire to inspect more; for in walking through the great bazaar, to his surprise he first saw a man with his ear nailed to his own door, composedly smoking his pipe, who, upon inquiry, he found was a baker undergoing punishment for using false weights. Walking still further on, upon looking up, his face had nearly struck against the feet of a Jew hung up under his own shed; and again, at the meeting of four streets, he discovered a dead body recently decapitated, and the head, by way of honour, placed under the arm, denoting a true believer, in contradistinction to that of an infidel, who would have had it placed between the legs.

Mark was perfectly horrified at what he saw, and anxiously inquired if these were common practices. He was informed that the grand vizier had just been making his rounds—for being new in office, he was determined thus to establish his authority, showing the inhabitants how well he could make them keep the peace. “Cutting off their heads!—that is one way of making them keep the peace, however!” exclaimed Mark.

Upon passing the royal arsenal in front of Tophana in a boat, suddenly, without the smallest notice being given, several loaded guns were fired exactly in the direction in which he was proceeding; and the balls fell all around, and one so near his boat, that the spray overwhelmed him.

“Holloa!” cried Mark, and looked frightened and alarmed.

“*Bir chey yok!*—it is nothing,” said his grey-bearded boatman. “*Kismet*—fate.”

Mark afterwards learnt that the Turkish engineers were proving some new guns. His horror increased every moment that he spent at Constantinople; and when it is considered how strong were his national prejudices and how contracted the span of his mind, one need not be surprised at it. Little did he know of governments beyond his own—little did he know of their theory, less still of their practice. He had witnessed enough tyranny in one day at Constantinople to have formed the foundation of a dozen revolutions in England. Here he saw men hung about and killed like mad dogs, nailed to door-posts, and fired at without a warning; and he wondered that the whole country did not rise up in a mass to resent such wickedness. No coroner’s inquest, no indictments, no judge, no jury!—without such things, he thought within himself, how can a country exist? “Well,” he said, “if I ever live to get back to England, I think I’ll make them stare a bit in Lincoln’s-inn.”

He proceeded at once to the consul, and entreated him to forward his departure to Smyrna as soon as possible, asserting that he would not live in such a country an hour longer than he could help, were he promised to be created lord chancellor the moment he had left it.

“My dear sir,” said the consul, “if summary justice

were not exhibited here, we should not be able to sleep secure in our beds. It is quite necessary to kill a few, in order to keep the rest quiet."

"They are not worthy to live," said Mark, "if they won't stick up for their rights."

"A Turk has no rights," said the consul, "but what the sultan chooses to give him."

"Then I would hang the sultan," said Mark. "I should like to see him before a grand jury for Middlesex!—they would find a true bill against him as sure as fate; and then I should like to know how he would look! Why, we should hang him up as round as a hoop before he could put in a word for himself!"

Being provided with a Turkish Tartar to accompany him, Mark crossed the Sea of Marmora in a five-oared boat, and landed at Moalitch, where he procured post-horses and proceeded to Smyrna by the usual route. He picked up a few words of Turkish on the road,—learnt to drink his thimbleful of coffee without sugar, to smoke through a cherry-stick pipe, and to eat with his fingers. For each of these feats he promised himself to gain much credit when he related them to his friends in Lincoln's-inn. Often, too, did he cast his thoughts upon the Allnutts, and particularly on Mary, enjoying by anticipation all the wonder he should excite in their breasts by the description he would give of his travels.

Having rested himself in a coffee-house for a few hours in the city of Magnesia, he then crossed the rugged pass over Mount Sipylus, and at length descended into the beautiful plain of Smyrna, terminated by the sea and its magnificent harbour, and surrounded by mountains and slopes at once verdant and sublime. He rubbed his hands in ecstasy on seeing a country which had the appearance of civilization, and which, as he approached the city, held out the promise of a good dinner, (of which he was greatly in want,) preparatory to accomplishing the object of his journey; for he hoped to see Sir Peregrine on that very evening.

He passed long strings of camels laden with the different produce of Asia Minor, going to the great mart; and as he remarked and smiled at their slow pace, he chuckled within himself when he reflected upon the speed with which things were carried on in his own country. How he yearned for the top of a stage-coach!

—how he groaned for the velocity of steam! At length, after being buffeted about on his jaded post-horse in the crowded streets, first struck by the side of a bale of cotton, then knocked back by a box of figs, he succeeded in entering the long court-yard of the hotel. Here he dismounted, and being received by a Greek waiter who spoke a few words of every living language, and perhaps thoroughly understood none, he was delighted to find that in that very house lived the object of his long search—Sir Peregrine Oldbourn.

Forgetting the good dinner which he had promised himself to eat, he at once desired to be introduced into his presence; which was done forthwith—and perhaps on the face of the globe two such originals both in character and appearance never stood erect before each other. Sir Peregrine eyed Mark from head to foot, whilst Mark did the same to Sir Peregrine. The former, a tall lank figure, with swarthy face and long perpendicular features, was accoutred in fragments of dress selected from each country through which he had travelled. Turkey furnished him with a red cloth cap; Persia, with a pair of crimson silk trousers of the most ample dimensions. He wore an English swallow-tailed coat, and waiscoat; and his feet were shod with the high heeled green slippers of the court of Teheran. Crape was wound round his cap; and his coat was black, for he was in mourning.

Mark, too, had been obliged to borrow from Asia to replace that which he had worn-out in Europe; for over his trousers he wore a pair of crimson Morocco boots as large as buckets; he had bought a party-coloured cloak which covered him with many folds; and his coat being worn-out, he had accoutred himself in his dressing-gown. His naturally fair face had been baked by the joint action of the sun and wind into a compound of villanous colours; and his beard growing therefrom did not add much to his beauty. Mark looked upon Sir Peregrine as the greatest curiosity he had seen since he left England; whilst Sir Peregrine thought that his countrymen must have altered much since his absence from home, if they resembled at all the one who now stood before him.

Mark having delivered his letter of introduction and the several despatches of which he was the bearer, Sir

Peregrine in a courteous and friendly manner, invited him to refresh himself by shaking off the dust of his journey, and then to join him at dinner, when they would talk over the object of his mission. Mark joyfully obeyed this summons, but not before he had cast an eye over the room which the baronet then inhabited. It was crowded with an immense variety of things of which Mark knew neither the use nor the value. Fragments of marble covered with Greek inscriptions, pieces of broken statues, ancient bricks, bronzes, old coins, books, drawings, various sorts of arms,—in short, the numerous articles which a man of learning and research is apt to collect in furtherance of his pursuits, were all heaped together, without order or discrimination, but quite in keeping, as a painter would say, with the appearance and character of their owner. Mark pondered over these things in his mind, wondering what could be the use of so much rubbish, as he was pleased to call it: but whilst he pondered, he hastened to reappear, more to answer the calls of hunger than to associate with his new acquaintance.

After they had sat and eaten, Sir Peregrine said, “So I perceive, Mr. Woodcock, by Mr. Fairfax’s letter, that the principal object of your journey is to settle upon the best mode of putting my lamented brother’s will into execution;—I mean that part of it which relates to my marrying within a certain time. Six months, I think, is the term specified.”

“Yes, sir,” said Mark;—“that is, if you do not happen to be married already.”

“I married!” exclaimed Sir Peregrine, starting from his chair; “Heaven forbid! Why, you do not suppose that I would marry a Mussulman!”

“No, Sir Peregrine,—no,” said Mark; “I could not think that: but I do not see why you should not have married a Mussul-woman or a Mussul-girl.”

“I am not mad enough to have done that, and it can never be,” said Sir Peregrine, smiling, “because by my brother’s will I am obliged to marry an Englishwoman of good family; therefore to marry an Asiatic is out of the question. But you must allow me to put you right upon the word ‘Mussulman,’ which, I perceive, like many of your countrymen, you have adopted as an English word: it is pure Arabic, and is applied to men

and women indiscriminately, to denote those of the true faith, or the followers of Mahomed. But I fear I am presumptuous in saying so much,—you perhaps may have acquired a knowledge of some of the Oriental tongues yourself?”

“No, sir, no,” said Mark, not in the least abashed; “I talk no Oriental tongue but French: I have picked up a few words of the Turkish,—just enough to say, ‘How d’ye do?’ and so forth.”

“And pray, what do you think of the Turkish language?” said the baronet. “It must be owned, its history is interesting, for it has travelled thus far even from the confines of China: it is the original Tartar language, although much intermixed with the Arabic and the Persic. What may you think of it?—I should like to know your opinion.”

Mark summoned up a look of wisdom, and, after some thought, said, “Why, Sir Peregrine, I think it is a very fair language—that’s my opinion of it.”

“Fair?” said the baronet; “ah, that is original! I have heard of a language being copious, energetic, and expressive; but I never heard of a fair language.”

“I think it fair in this manner,” said Mark: “When I meet a man, he says to me *Hush bull-dog*; and then, as a matter of course, I answer, *Hush gelding*. Now, if he calls me a bull-dog, it is but fair that I should call him a gelding—and that is what I call a fair language.”*

“Very good, very good,” said Sir Peregrine, amazingly tickled by this explanation,—“I think you have made out your position perfectly;” an acquiescence which flattered Mark’s vanity not a little, whilst his observations, in truth, afforded the baronet an insight into the capacity of his new acquaintance. Upon matters of business he found him, however, quick of apprehension, and worthy of his confidence; whilst Mark, after a conversation which lasted till bed-time, retired fully persuaded how impossible it would be to put into execution one principal point of his instructions; which was, to persuade the baronet to accompany him without delay to England.

* In truth, the usual mode of greeting among Turks is, *Hosh buldook*—well met; and *Hosh geldin*—well come.

CHAPTER XV.

The antiquary makes a confidant of the attorney's clerk.

SIR PEREGRINE was one of those absent men, whose mind would grapple with a subject with acuteness and perseverance when brought immediately before him; but as soon as that subject was exhausted would relapse into the absorption of his own favourite pursuit. Having fully discussed the subject of Mark's mission, he for that night dismissed it from his mind; and on the following morning, when they met, he almost seemed to have forgotten the motive for his coming.

Too full of his own subject to be correct in names, he thus addressed Mark:—"I have a question to ask you, Mr. Cockwood, which perhaps you can answer."

"My name is Woodcock," said Mark, looking much surprised.

"True, sure," said the other; "I beg your pardon: but pray, Mr. Woodcock, in your journey from Constantinople, I think you came by Magnesia?"

"Did I?" said Mark. "I don't know the names of the odd places."

"But you know that there are two Magnesias?" said the baronet.

"Are there?" said Mark; "that may be, but I only know of one—the best, and that is *Henry's calcined*."

"I mean the city," said Peregrine, smiling,—“the city you passed on the other side of yonder mountain. That Magnesia is called *ad Sypilum*, to distinguish it from the other farther to the west, which is called *ad Meandrum*. Now you know it is supposed that the famous murder of Niobe's children was committed near the road on which you travelled: did you remark anything?"

"Murder, sir!" said Mark. "You may be sure that is as great a lie as ever was uttered. The road was as safe and as quiet when I passed it, as any part of the road between London and Brighton."

"You mistake me," said the baronet: "I do not mean what has happened at the present day—I mean

the murder of Niobe's children by Apollo, as described in Ovid. You are acquainted with the famous lines, beginning *Lydia tota fremit*, and so on: well, it is supposed the whole transaction took place near Magnesia, and that Niobe's statue,—you know she was turned into a statue—you remember the famous description,

'Nullos movet aura capillos,
In vultu color est sine sanguine; lumina mœstis
Stant immota genis: nihil est in imagine vivi,'

and so on;—well, her statue is said to be seen on the summit of a hill, represented by a large stone, in the form of a weeping woman. Now, did you see such a stone?"

"I saw many large stones," said Mark; "but I did not see that one,—of that I am quite positive. You may be certain it is all a hoax, Sir Peregrine: you know those old writers were such liars, nobody believes anything about them now;—nobody believes anything about Jupiter, or Juno, or the Elgin Marbles, or any of that sort of trash, now-a-days."

The baronet, finding that he could elicit no information from Mark upon the researches which now particularly filled his mind, reverted to the subject which he fondly hoped would class his name among the celebrated travellers of the day. "You had no doubt heard of my discovery before you left England?" he said with confidence.

"I know of no discovery," said Mark with hesitation, "unless it be the North Pole. Did you discover that too? Every body seems to have discovered that!"

"No!" said the baronet with some little pique of expression,—“No, I have not been northward—I have only travelled in the South.”

"Well, then, perhaps it was the South Pole," said Mark: "I know there are two poles—I know that something was discovered."

"I have seen nothing of the poles, said the other: "I mean my discovery relative to the Temple of Solomon."

"No," said Mark, "I have heard nothing about that."

"That is extraordinary," said Sir Peregrine, "because I look upon it as one of the greatest discoveries made during this century; for if so, we have acquired the true and indisputable type of all church architec-

ture. Do not you suppose now, Mr. Woodcock," addressing Mark with increasing energy, "that the model and style of building of the Temple of Solomon having been once ascertained, every new church in England,—ay, throughout Christendom,—will be erected upon that model?"

"I hope you will arrive in time in England," said Mark, always keeping an eye to the object of his mission, "to stop the building of Marybone Church, and the new one at Brighton."

"I hope I may," said the enthusiast; "I am quite sure that the arguments which I have brought forward, and which are given in full detail in that manuscript," pointing to a pile of closely-written paper, "are quite unanswerable: for, Mr. Woodcock, between you and me,—and I don't wish this to go further,—I have acquired such a mass of evidence in support of my case, that I am quite certain to carry it in spite of all opposition."

"Juries are ticklish things now-a-days," said Mark; "they require a monstrous deal of evidence before they will give a verdict."

"I can prove," said the eager baronet, not heeding Mark's observation,—"I can prove that the Darius Hystaspes of Grecian history and the Darab of the Persians are one and the same person; and that Darab and Jemsheed, who is said to be the original founder of Persepolis, are frequently identified; and therefore the objection which may be alleged,—namely, that the present ruins being called in the Persic, *Takht Jemsheed*, or the throne of Jemsheed, must necessarily have been built by that king, falls to the ground. I think I have fully proved that."

"I think you have," said Mark, totally unmoved.

"I can also prove," said the other, "that the Jews and Persians of those days had great intercourse; and that Jewish influence being predominant at the court of Darius Hystaspes, it is fair to suppose, that monarch having ordered the continuation of the building of their temple, might have also commanded a palace or a temple of the same style and character to be built for himself; and thence the great structure of Persepolis, of which we see the remains at the present day. I can prove that beyond all contradiction."

“Can you indeed!” said Mark, looking more solid than before.

“I can prove, too, that it does not in the least signify whether Herodotus makes mention of the Jews or not, (although I think he does by what he says of circumcision,) because as they were but a very small tribe compared to the vast empire over which Darius reigned, they might and did very naturally remain unnoticed by the historian, in the same manner that one of the present day, writing the history of England and its possessions, would most likely make no mention of some obscure tribe in India or Africa. I can prove that.”

“When will he have proved everything?” said Mark in low accents to himself, beginning to get impatient at this demand upon his attention.

“Now, if you will promise to say nothing to any one,—mind, I say to no one, be he who he may,” said Sir Peregrine with a cautious and beseeching look,—“I will show you something which I have never yet shown to mortal man.—Will you promise?—it will prove all I have said.”

“Oh yes, I promise,” said Mark, glad to have come to an end of proving.

“Well, then, here,” said Sir Peregrine, who with great caution unlocked a drawer in his writing-desk, from which he took out a small box, upon opening which he drew forth some cotton, and out of the cotton he produced a small brass nail,—“here lies the proof—the proof of all I have said!”

“Is it indeed!” said Mark: “a little goes a great way here, if that’s all.”

“Now, do you see this brass nail?” said the antiquary. “Well, this nail, such as you see it, is the work of the ancient Persians, or of Jewish workmen working for the Persian king. It was extracted from a stone gateway at Persepolis, and taken from the wig of a sculptured figure. Now, this nail was used to fasten plates of gold on the very marble, and, if I mistake not, on the very wig; and does not this prove all that I wish to explain? First, it proves that Jews and Persians were much identified in manners and customs. Here is a positive proof that the Persians wore their hair full and curling as an ornament: and do not we read in Jewish history that the Jews preserved their

hair,—that is, it was allowed to grow as an ornament,—and as proved by its weight, it must have grown as thick and curly as the wigs we see sculptured on the marbles of Persepolis. In the second place, it proves that the walls and sculptures of Persepolis were overlaid with gold,—a circumstance repeatedly mentioned as existing in the Temple of Solomon; and therefore it makes it clear in that respect the two buildings were exactly similar. I only ask you, now, would you require anything more?”

“No, I require nothing more,” said Mark.

“I put it to you as an honest man—as a man of candour, as a man of understanding,” said the baronet, highly excited by his subject, “whether you would require any thing more than this nail—this small, though highly valuable nail—to be convinced that the Temple of Solomon was the prototype of the Palace of Darius at Persepolis?”

Mark felt himself duly exalted by such a flattering appeal, and calling up a corresponding look of dignity, he allowed that the nail had done all that was required, and gave his testimony in favour of the baronet’s theory; but, never forgetting the object of his journey, he said, “Surely you ought not to lose a moment in returning to England, in order to publish to the world the fruits of your discovery. Why, there is the Penny Magazine would print everything that you have said without charging you a farthing; although I can’t say as much for the other newspapers.”

This observation produced the effect of turning Sir Peregrine’s thoughts from his favourite theory and fixing them upon his future plans. He then informed Mark, that according to his brother’s will he had at least five months left for his homeward journey, he had determined to employ that time in making certain researches in the Archipelago, and at Athens; and that he then intended to charter a small brig, which would convey himself and his collections by sea to England. With respect to the wife, he declared that he intended to leave that part of the business entirely in the hands of Mr. Fairfax, who would be empowered to procure for him a person corresponding in every respect to the provisions of the will, who must be ready to receive and be united to him the moment he arrived in London.

When Mark heard this explanation of the baronet's intention, his first impulse was to shake his head and doubt; for he had seen enough of him to remain satisfied that left to himself, and particularly if his mind was set upon some new discovery, he would forget all time and space, all obligations to fulfil his brother's wishes, and ultimately lose that fortune of which he was intended to be the possessor. But, pondering deeper, suddenly a bright thought flashed across his mind. He conceived he might be the means of making the fortune of his friend Mary Allnutt, and rescuing her uncle and aunts from poverty; his heart beat with joyful anticipation at such a prospect. She, in fact, answered in every respect to the person described in the will; for she was at once healthy, of good conduct, and of good family. Mark, with this benevolent intention,—never having himself ventured to aspire to her favour, although his inordinate vanity had frequently led him to believe that he had made a lodgment in her affections,—could scarcely prevent himself from mentioning her name and perfections to his master's client.

"I think that may be done," he said to Sir Peregrine, "for we see such things managed every day. Mr. Fairfax has only to put an advertisement in all the principal newspapers, headed 'Matrimony,' and wives will spring up as thick as mushrooms. I know a man who was married in that way: he advertised, saw, accepted, went to church, and was married, and all within a week. Now you know that is doing a great deal,—particularly when a fortune is dependent upon despatch, as it is in your case. Egad! London is the place after all!"

"I am not very curious in wives," said the baronet, without any affectation of indifference: "all I want is a good legal wife: let her come within the description given in the will, and I require no more."

Mark could not refrain turning up his eyes with astonishment at his apathy and indifference; but when he considered that if once Sir Peregrine became acquainted with Mary's beauty and perfections, such feelings would soon give place to affection; and being in the main an amiable and well disposed man, his resolution was fixed to propose her to Mr. Fairfax as the baronet's future wife, never once supposing it possible that she might herself repel such good fortune.

Sir Peregrine, having signed and executed all the proper deeds brought by Mark, as well as a power of attorney empowering Mr. Fairfax to act for him in all that regarded the will, began to make preparations for his intended voyage, chartering a ship, loading thereupon his collection of antiquities, and making arrangements for receiving others. Mark had not been unmindful of his friends in England: he bought sundry boxes of figs, of which he requested Sir Peregrine would have the goodness to take charge, at the same time pointing out one direction thereupon affixed as particularly deserving of his care. That direction was to "Miss Mary Allnutt;" and when he said this, he looked narrowly into the baronet's face to discover perchance whether it might not indicate by look or by suffusion that he had awakened some sympathetic feeling;—but no, the long antique face said nothing, and Mark's heart smote him, lest in giving him to Mary as a husband, she might not have to wed a mummy.

We must now leave these two worthies to shape their different courses;—the baronet, to embark, more full of the ancient dead and their works than of the modern living and his own obligations; whilst Mark Woodcock, bestrode his post-horse, and anticipated at every step the happiness of once again seeing his friends in England, and returning to the joys of Lincoln's-inn.

CHAPTER XVI.

Edward Manby's adventures.

THE last we heard of Edward Manby was through a letter written to Uncle Abel from Liverpool, giving some account of Major Allnutt, received from the master of a merchantman just arrived from Vera Cruz. Since the reception of that letter no news had been received of him, to the astonishment of Abel and his sisters, and to the dismay and sorrow of Mary. It will now be our endeavour to give the reason for this silence.

When Edward was called away from London by his

uncle the brewer at Liverpool, instead of meeting with cheerful faces and looks of prosperity, it was gradually disclosed to him that his uncle's affairs were in a bad way, and that he was threatened with bankruptcy: losses which he could not foresee had overwhelmed him, and instead of offering his nephew a share in the concerns of his house, he was obliged to recommend him to seek his fortune in the best manner he could.

At the time Edward wrote the abovementioned letter to Abel, he was not fully aware of the complete ruin which awaited his uncle; although, by the hint he then threw out, it was evident that all was not right. When afterwards made acquainted with the whole truth, he was overwhelmed with disappointment, because, in addition to his grief for his uncle's misfortune, he felt how abortive were his hopes of shortly being united to Mary. Unwilling that she should partake of this affliction at a time when she and her relations required every support, he remained some time without writing. He was soon roused from his despondent state by hearing from the same master of the merchantman that a vessel was on the point of departure for Mexico, and that its owner being a friend, he would not only be enabled to give him a passage at a cheap rate, but procure him an excellent situation with one of the mining companies, where young men of activity and intelligence were much in request.

Edward had often thought how desirable it would be for his friends the Allnutts, and particularly for that one object of his thoughts, the lovely Mary, could her father be restored to them. By his activity and knowledge of the world, he would be able to extricate them from their difficulties, which at present appeared hopeless. He had often before turned over in his mind the possibility that he might himself become the means of producing this event, and had determined, should an opportunity offer, he would proceed to Mexico, in order to lay the state of his family before Major Allnutt, and thus induce him to return to England. He might thus also be enabled (and perhaps this was his real motive) to render the Major favourable to his passion for his daughter, and his consent being secured for their union, he felt that every difficulty would be removed. He therefore greeted with delight the offer made to him,

and did not lose a moment in consulting with his uncle upon its practicability. Of course his uncle encouraged his wishes,—for, alas! he had nothing better to offer; and thus, before another day passed over his head, he found himself plunged in all the bustle and hurry of instant departure. The vessel was hauled out and lying at single anchor, and he had not a moment to lose. He sat up all night (for she was to sail in the morning) writing a full account of himself and his future plans to his friend Abel. With that stream of religious hope in a good providence which ever flowed through his heart, every expression in his letter breathed resignation and cheerfulness. Whilst he described the ruin which had overtaken his uncle, and consequently the destruction of his own immediate prospects, he dwelt upon the new road of advancement which had opened to him. He trusted in a few years to realise a small independence; and if so, he entreated that he might be ever remembered as the unalterable friend of the family, and consequently that his means might be looked upon as theirs.

Having finished his letter, there was only one thing left to do, and that admitted of a question;—should he write to Mary and persuade her to inform her relations of their mutual attachment? He felt that no mystery ought to exist, but still the same delicacy which had opposed his making the disclosure existed now as before. He allowed that point to remain unsettled, determining to put the finishing stroke to his letter on board the ship on the following morning. With this resolution he lay down, hoping to snatch a few hours of sleep; but the painful emotions which engaged his mind at a moment so full of anticipation of the future, prevented all rest, and he rose early only to bid a hasty farewell to his uncle and his friends, and to get on board with the utmost haste.

The morning was lowering and tempestuous—the sails were already shivering in the wind, and there was every symptom of immediate departure. Edward's experience in naval matters was small, and he was not aware how nearly the anchor was about being tripped when he stepped on board. He desired the boatman who had conveyed him from the shore to wait a few minutes until he should give him a letter, and went straight into the cabin to close that began to Abel. With pen in hand and paper before him, the image of his beloved

came vividly before his imagination. Overpowered by his feelings, full of the miseries of separation, he sought the only relief he could obtain, and determined to pour out his whole heart to her whom he cherished more than life. He wrote as follows:

“I am leaving you, and that by my own act, God alone knows for how long. His holy will be done! and in his hands I deliver up my future fate; but if I do not relieve my feelings by writing to you, I fear that my heart will sink with utter despondency, and that I shall remain totally unfit for the task I have imposed upon myself. I leave you, Mary, with my heart so entirely absorbed by your image—with every feeling so full of the most devoted love, that were not my duties paramount to every consideration, I would return to you and never more be separated from the spot which you inhabit. But I am resolved to make myself worthy of you, that I may win your constancy by the excess of my devotion. I have written to your uncle the motives which have impelled me to take this step. Oh, may you soon see your father! I cannot write much, for we are about to sail; but I would whisper to you one of the principal wishes of my heart, and say, do not any longer keep our secret from your relations, for we must have no secrets for them. You will thus be protected from the addresses of others, and enjoy the satisfaction of relieving yourself from all mystery. Adieu! I fear the anchor is up; I hear the vessel rushing through the sea. Dearest Mary, my adored—my beloved, adieu! Even to the world’s end, and for ever, your faithful

“EDWARD.”

He folded up his letter in all haste, and then ran up on deck to deliver it to the boatman: but what was his dismay, when there, to see the boat already at a considerable distance, and the boatman rowing away apparently without concern! His first impulse was to roar out to the man with his utmost might to come back, and his next to entreat the captain to stop the speed of his ship. The wind blowing violently—the boatman heard not his voice. The captain said that it was as much as his ship and his situation were worth to back his top-

sails in such a sea, for now that it was coming on to blow, it was necessary to make all sail from the land: he therefore continued his course. Edward positively wrung his hands in despair: the whole mischief which this circumstance would produce started before his eyes at once; and he foresaw that his friends would impute to him negligence and ingratitude, whilst his adored Mary would weep over his inconstancy. He was a little appeased when the captain assured him that they could not fail to fall in with some vessel homeward-bound which would take charge of his letter, and he forthwith began to endite another in order to explain away the delay and disaster which had attended the first; but the surprise and indignation which he felt would naturally be produced by his silence haunted him and did not allow him a moment's repose.

After he had become sufficiently accustomed to ship-board to master the inevitable sea-sickness, day after day did he sit on deck anticipating the appearance of the much-desired vessel; but, as if it were intended that his patience should be tried to the utmost, he was daily disappointed. Every one on board excepting himself seemed satisfied; for the voyage had hitherto been uncommonly prosperous. The same favourable breeze which filled their sails on leaving Liverpool accompanied them across the Atlantic; and the captain and his crew, (for sailors are apt to be superstitious,) looking upon Edward as the fortunate one who had brought good luck, did not cease hoping that they might not meet the anticipated vessel, lest such an event should bring on a change. The favourable wind actually carried them onwards between Antigua and Guadaloupe, right through the Caribbean Sea, and to the northward of Jamaica, where it ran them into a calm not far from the Isla de Pinos, at the west end of Cuba.

It was here that Edward, who expected nothing but grateful thanks from the captain for his extraordinary passage, was surprised to hear the following exclamation: "D—n it! I would rather give fifty pounds out of my own pocket than this should have happened. This is the very place where poor Jack Hawlaway and all his crew met their death from those infernal Cuba pirates—the whole sea swarms with them." Then lifting up his voice, he roared out to the man at the

mast-head, "Keep a good look-out, and let us know when you see anything." All he got for answer was a drowsy "Ay, ay, sir;" whilst the captain's words struck dismay in the hearts of all who heard him. Edward eagerly inquired into the meaning of what he had heard, when the captain disclosed such a succession of horrors, in describing the lives and actions of pirates, that he succeeded in making Edward's blood run cold with horror at the atrocities described. First was an account of the *Rob Roy* from Glasgow, that had been plundered, her whole crew murdered, and the captain made to walk the plank; then followed a detailed story of what happened to the small American schooner, the *Margaret*, whose captain having valiantly attempted her defence,—for she was a beautiful craft, though extremely small,—the wretches had tarred and feathered him, and then, with savage jeers, informed him they would teach him the art of flying, and straightway threw him from the yard-arm into the sea. Much was said of a warm, well-built craft called the *Harriet*, laden with gunpowder, bound for Vera Cruz, which having plundered, the wretches had managed to blow up, with all on board; whilst there was no end to the histories of the slave-trade and its horrors, and the thousand evils with which it was attended.

After hearing these and such like stories, Edward was charmed to hear the captain give orders to make preparations in case of attack; all the firearms were in readiness, the guns shotted, the boarding-netting hoisted, and the cutlasses distributed. The number of seamen on board consisted of fourteen, including the captain, besides Edward Manby. They were all strong, able-bodied men, who did not give way to gasconading or bravado—for a thorough English sailor is seldom a boaster—but they seemed determined to do their duty to the utmost.

As the day drew to a close, the vigilance on board became the greater; for the first shades of night is the hour at which the sea marauder is most apt to be on the alert for prey. The eyes of all were directed to the verge of the horizon; and the captain was straining his sight through his spying-glass, when the man at the mast-head was heard to cry out, "A boat on the star-board bow!"

“What does she look like?” exclaimed the captain.

“A large boat full of men,” was the answer.

Immediately every preparation was made, whilst few words were said. The guns were run out, and every one was stationed at his post. The captain, a cool, determined man, went round the deck and addressed his men with encouraging words, whilst he concealed the danger which awaited them. He was particularly attentive to Edward, who by his mild and accommodating conduct had endeared himself to every one on board; and now he was happy to have found one so able to second him both by his advice and gallantry. He exhorted him not to thrust himself into danger, to act coolly, and not to fire his musket without aiming at some definite object. He ordered every open demonstration to be made to show that he was well prepared; whilst he entreated his men to act with prudence, and not to expose themselves unnecessarily. He made this demonstration upon the principle that rogues are always afraid of honest men, and that the determination of a few is frequently known to appal the illegal combinations of the many: and in this he hoped that he was not mistaken; for suddenly the boat, which was now visible from the deck, stopped rowing, and seemed undecided what course to steer.

This gave the captain a favourable opportunity for taking a steady survey through his glass of the craft and her contents, and he could plainly discern her to be a large row-boat, the masts and sails of which had been purposely lowered to prevent detection. She was full of men, and her appearance sufficiently announced their character and intentions: it was evident that they were nothing more or less than pirates. The point from which they came was extremely suspicious, and their manœuvres were calculated to increase that suspicion.

The captain looked around the horizon with a wistful eye, hoping that ere the awful struggle should take place some friendly sail might heave in sight, or that a breeze of wind might spring up which would enable him to escape from his awkward situation. He knew that both English and American ships of war were cruising about this very spot for the protection of trade: he inwardly prayed (for his agony was great)

that some help might be vouchsafed him; for in his inmost mind he felt that, if attacked, nothing could prevent their being taken; and that whatever might be his exertions and those of his brave crew, still, that they could do nothing against such overpowering numbers as he observed to be in the piratical boat. He hoped that the delay in their operations might be ominous of good; but, on making use of his glass a second time, he observed them again in motion steering directly towards him. He loudly exclaimed when he saw this:—“Now, my lads, look out! Here they come, and will soon be alongside.”

CHAPTER XVII.

A conflict with pirates described. Edward Manby's ill luck pursues him.

EDWARD did not remain a quiet spectator. He armed himself with cutlass, pistol, and musket; and in so doing he put up a mental prayer that the disaster which he and his friends on board apprehended might be averted, and that they might be left to pursue their voyage in peace. He did every thing to further the orders given by the captain; and showed by his looks and by the few words which escaped him how determined he was to lend every assistance that might be in his power. In the mean while, the piratical boat had arrived within hailing-distance; when the usual questions having several times been made and no answer returned, the captain ordered one of his guns to be fired directly at the boat. The shot fell at a short distance from it. This excited the invaders to increase their energy; and now might be seen at the helm a commanding figure of fierce aspect, who seemed to be the chief, and who urged on his crew with violent action and cheering words. More guns were fired, and still without effect. Several men in the boat were seen to fall from the effects of musketry, which only redoubled their efforts, and soon they were alongside. Now might be heard voices elevated in every tone and in various languages; and had any one on

board the English ship been cool enough to observe, he might have discovered men of all colours and all nations, deserters, outlaws, and murderers, a motley crowd, who usually make up the crews of piratical vessels.

The clamour that ensued as the invaders abandoned their oars and took to their arms was soon succeeded by the awful sounds of actual conflict, on which depended life or death, and in which were displayed the greatest coolness and determination on one side, with the most ferocious and barbarous exultation proceeding from superior numbers on the other. The clashing of cutlasses, the discharge of fire-arms, the cries of savage fury mixed with the agonies of the wounded, and an occasional heavy splash in the sea announcing the fall of some struggling wretch, were confounded into one general uproar. The result of the struggle at first was very doubtful, but at length it became evident that the superior numbers of the pirates would prevail. They had already succeeded in gaining possession of the deck, and most of the gallant crew was either slain or mortally wounded. Edward, his head bound with a handkerchief, had been fighting manfully hand to hand, and had received many a wound, which he disregarded so long as he could wield his sword. He espied the captain in mortal conflict with the chief of the pirates; and as he was about rushing to his assistance, he heard the captain exclaim, as he fell, "For Heaven's sake, Mr. Manby, surrender! all is lost."

The piratical chief, on hearing the name of Manby, suddenly turned round, and looking steadily at Edward, seemed overcome by his appearance. He desisted from taken any further share in the conflict, excepting to check the ardour of those of his men who were on the point of adding Edward to the slain. His exertions saved the life of our hero, who, however, to all appearance was left for dead; for he fainted from loss of blood, and was thrown on one side apparently without life. It was only by the exertions of the chief, who poured some spirits down his throat, that he was again brought to life; but when the reviving youth turned his eyes round and saw the fate that had befallen his companions, he wished that death might have been his fate also.

On all sides the deck was strewn with the dead and the dying,—some actually dead, others in the last agonies—and others again moaning with piteous accents, in all the throes and tortures of pain. The gallant captain was breathing his last, one hand still grasping a cutlass, whilst the other held that of a messmate who had just died before him.

To his astonishment, Edward perceived that the chief of the pirates was entirely taken up in tending his safety. When he had come to himself, the chief said to him: “Are you the son of Captain Manby, who, with his wife, died in Jamaica some twenty years ago?” Edward having answered in the affirmative, the other assured him he had nothing to fear, for that he would take care of him; and then, by the help of some of his men, having laid him on a bed in the cabin, and having ordered that no one should molest him, he busied himself in securing the advantages of the prize which he had made.

To the dreadful tragedy just described, which terminated by great loss of lives on the side of the pirates, and by a massacre of all the English with the exception of Edward, succeeded a scene of general pillage, followed by one of drunkenness and carousing. The nature of man, as existing in the wretches who had committed this deed, was entirely merged in that of the demon. So long as it was necessary to maintain discipline, the chief asserted that character pistol in hand; but when his object was gained, he no longer chose to preserve his superiority, but allowed the most unbounded licence to reign. The deck was now as much strewn with drunkards as with the dead; and in one loathsome simultaneous heap might be seen the wretch who had lost his senses by intoxication, lying side by side with the unfortunate man who had fallen by the sword.

The history of Edward’s miraculous escape was briefly this:—The piratical chief had been brought up a boy in the family of Captain and Mrs. Manby, when at Jamaica. He was treated more as their child than their servant; he had almost seen Edward born—had nursed him as an infant, and, in short, lived in the Manby family until the death of the father and mother, when bad courses and evil company gradually drove him to the desperate profession in which he has now ap-

peared before us. As soon as he heard Edward's name pronounced, struck by his strong likeness to his parents, he was immediately awed into generosity; and as in the heart of the most wicked there is ever a chord which, if properly touched, vibrates to virtue and repentance, so in this instance the ruffian softened into the lamb as soon as he caught a certain look in Edward's face which reminded him of all his charms as a child, and of all his obligations to his parents.

The whole gang were so entirely plunged in beastly excess, that no one remarked a slight breeze which had sprung up, and moreover that it was bringing up with it a gallant vessel under a crowd of canvass. The chief was the first to perceive this most unwelcome apparition; and immediately, with the assistance of such as were comparatively sober, he began to make all sail. His efforts were useless, for the chasing vessel was an English man-of-war, which had the reputation of out-sailing everything on the station.

Danger is an amazing quickener of the senses. So soon as it was known that they were chased by a man-of-war, the drunkards seemed all at once restored to sobriety; they fell naturally under the discipline of their chief, the decks were cleared, and everything put into order to meet the emergency. It soon became evident that all their efforts would prove useless, for the chase, to use a sailor's phrase, was overhauling them hand over hand. The captain of the pirates then called a council; and it was resolved to abandon the ship and to take again to their boat, in the hope of being able, by dint of rowing, to gain one of those creeks on the coast so well known to them, and into which no ship of any burthen could enter. Therefore, collecting everything valuable, they hauled their boat alongside, and with the utmost haste and trepidation entered it. But this their resolution was taken too late: the breeze was freshening, the sea getting up, and the man-of-war was now within gun-shot distance. However, they shoved off, and began rowing for their lives.

The captain of the man-of-war having observed this manœuvre, and having guessed the true state of the case, steered directly after the boat, leaving the ship to itself. The precision with which the shot was thrown from the bow-guns deprived the runaways of that cool-

ness so necessary in danger, and made them pull unsteadily; for they became apprehensive of instant destruction. At length a shot having struck the boat, a cessation of exertion ensued, and with that a determination to surrender. The pirates were taken on board; and as their profession could not be doubted, they were immediately clapped into irons, and it was announced to them that they would forthwith be taken to Jamaica, there to be tried for their lives before the Court of Admiralty.

All this while, Edward remained confined in his berth, scarcely able to move, but conscious that something had taken place to produce so sudden a cessation of noise and bustle. He lay in this state for some time, when the less boisterous noise of a new set of visitants met his ears; and soon after, the cabin in which he lay was visited by a youth in uniform, accompanied by several English sailors. He hailed this apparition with gratitude, for it was the signal of his delivery. He soon made himself known to the officer, who seeing a man disfigured by blood and apparently much wounded, incredulous of his story, at once classed him as one belonging to the pirates, and ordered him to be taken on board the man-of-war. This was immediately done; but when he made known his situation to the captain—gave proofs of his identity by referring to his baggage and papers, and moreover was confronted with his preserver, the chief of the pirates, who corroborated his statements, he was not only allowed to be set at liberty, but was taken under the special care of the captain, who treated him with the attention of a brother. In a short time Edward was restored to health; and the day he left the doctor's hands was the day he caught a glimpse of his birth-place, where he afterwards landed, with his heart full of gratitude for his preservation from a horrid death.

We will not delay the progress of our story by digressing into that of the unfortunate pirates, who were duly made a proper example of, and, by their execution, paid the debt of their numerous murderous crimes; nor will it be necessary to say, that Edward did everything in his power to comfort and cheer the preserver of his life during the short time he had to live ere he met that doom which by no interest or interference was

it possible to avert. The instances of good feeling which the unfortunate man had exhibited, were a sufficient warrant that he possessed other good qualities, which only required cultivation to create that repentance so necessary to salvation; and Edward did not fail to labour hard to produce such a result. The poor wretch wept like a child at his exhortations, and quitted life with more composure than he had ever before enjoyed in it.

Edward having been recognised by many of his father's and mother's friends in the island, was received by them with open arms. He remained long enough to show that he was worthy of bearing a name which his parents had rendered respectable; and the proofs of this were exhibited in the means freely offered him to prosecute the object of his voyage. Having at length been enabled to forward the letters which he had written to Abel and Mary, his mind was relieved from his principal anxiety, and he embarked joyfully for Vera Cruz on board the same man-of-war which brought him to Jamaica. The voyage to that place was short, and he landed with eagerness in order to make every inquiry concerning the object of his search—Mary's father. It was not long before he heard him mentioned; and, in truth, as he proceeded up the country, he found his name in every body's mouth; for it was impossible for one so full of energy and activity to remain unnoticed in a country whose characteristic is apathy and indifference.

Edward proceeded to Xalapa, and thence with all despatch to the city of Mexico. He was introduced to many persons who were well acquainted with Mary's father, and from them he learned that, having been disappointed in discovering the mines he was sent out to superintend, he had turned his thoughts to other projects, and proposed to the government many schemes for raising the republic to the highest pinnacle of perfection; and although his plans were not adopted, yet he was heard with patience, and greeted as a well-wisher to the state. Edward was informed that, in consequence of the failure of all his schemes, he had determined to cross the Pacific to further the interests of civilisation on the other side of the globe, and that he had recently departed for Acapulco. Being assured

that he might be overtaken ere he set sail from that port, Edward was not long in making up his mind what to do, and he determined to follow him with all speed. Accordingly, he hired mules, with a conductor; and taking no other baggage than was necessary, he departed, and rested the first night at San Agustin. Here he was shown the very spot where John Allnut had rested; and had the satisfaction of sleeping in the very bed in which he had slept. At Cuernavaca he was told that he would easily overtake him, for that he had passed by but a few days before. At the sugar-mills at St. Gabriel, the director spoke in high terms of Don Juan, as he called him, who had given him a good hint towards making some improvement in the machinery of his sugar-works: and at Tepecoaquilco, Edward was charmed at seeing his name inscribed with his own hand on the wall of the kitchen, with the drawing of a tea-kettle, by which he concluded that he had been decanting to his hosts upon the merits of that faithful administrator to an Englishman's comforts. The scratches were so fresh that Edward almost felt as if he were present. At Chilpantzingo Edward actually saw the print of his shoes before the door, and the circumference of his person on the dust of a table upon which he had sat; and he now made so sure of seeing him, that he allowed himself the indulgence of a longer rest, in order to relieve the excess of the fatigue he had undergone. He then pushed on with vigour for Acapulco, and was overwhelmed with joy upon hearing from a traveller going to Mexico, that the ship bound for the Manillas on which Mary's father was to embark was still at anchor in the bay.

A breeze in the mean while had risen, which refreshed the air as he rode into the hot town of Acapulco. He made at once for the house of the merchant to whose care he had been recommended, and the first question he asked was concerning the object of his journey. The taciturn Spaniard to whom he addressed himself very quietly took him by the arm, and leading him to an open balcony which overlooked the superb bay of the town, and taking a cigar from his mouth, pointed to a ship in full sail just turning a distant headland, he said, "*Alli esta Don Juan Allnutt;*"—in other words, "There goes John Allnutt."

CHAPTER XVIII.

The first dawn of hope occasioned by a common occurrence in an uncommon case.

TURNING from the face of dismay which the disappointed Edward made upon seeing the object of his long search sail away, we must leave him for the present to such adventures as the chapter of accidents may have in store for him, and return to the principal object of our story.

We left Abel a prisoner for debt, and his sisters and niece living hard by in a lodging, working for their daily bread. A prison life must ever be one of great sameness; and habit, which has very properly been called second nature, soon renders that bearable which at first appears intolerable. To Abel, whose mind was always contemplative, and to whom a constant sense of religion had rendered the vicissitudes of life much less startling than they are to the thoughtless, the situation in which he was placed produced but small effect upon the even tenor of his spirits, although it had an evident effect upon his health. His principal objects of his solicitude were his sisters and niece; for he was not slow to perceive that they did not possess sufficient fortitude to bear up against their misfortunes.

Bab's usual alacrity had given way to apathy and a mournful silence; Aunt Fanny, abandoning in despair all her pretensions to youth, had dwindled into a downright old woman; whilst Mary, who evidently forced herself to appear cheerful before her uncle, was daily wasting away, pale and wan, the victim of disappointment. So much time had now elapsed since any tidings had been received of Edward, that, although she never could entirely make up her mind to accuse him of falsehood and inconstancy, still his silence did appear to her so reprehensible, that she strove with all the powers of her mind to forget that such a man existed. With all the inquiries they had been able to make at Liverpool, the utmost extent of the intelligence acquired was, that

his uncle had become a bankrupt, and that Edward was gone off to America.

Such constant striving against the warmest and tenderest affections could not fail to produce the direst effects, particularly on one so confiding and so true as the gentle Mary. Her beauty, so symmetrical in form—so full of the exuberance of youth, had fallen away, and she became thin, wasted, and transparent;—her beaming look, which spoke the inward sunshine of the heart, and a cheerfulness of disposition upon which worldly cares had hitherto never obtruded their baleful touch, was supplanted by a sunken eye which looked upon space, by a blanched cheek which announced disease, and by a pensive look which was only varied by deep-drawn sighs and falling tears. Often did she sit for hours poring over the drudgery of work almost mechanical without uttering a word, and only showing that she was a sentient being by the occasional up-heaving of her woe-stricken breast. But when she proceeded to visit her uncle in his prison—to sit with him, to read to him,—upbraiding herself for so much weakness, and for placing so little dependance upon her Maker, she endeavoured to assume a tone of satisfaction; and those wan and sickly features would assume an unnatural mirth, which, alas! only spoke the more bitterly of her misery. When she conversed with her uncle, she received so much consolation from the piety of his conversation, that every worldly evil appeared obliterated; but when, confined to her miserable drudgeries in the smallest and meanest of lodgings, she was condemned day after day to encounter the unceasing moaning and never-ending complaints of her aunts, then her philosophy and resignation would break down, and she made up a third in the calamitous trio.

The usual tone of their conversation as they sat at work was something in this style:—"I think," said Aunt Bab, "that Mr. Barnes" (the governor of the prison) "ought to allow in fairness a larger portion of meat to Abel, who is more constant in his attendance in chapel than any other of the prisoners,—for we might then get something additional for ourselves. Abel encourages more men to go to church by his example than all Mr. Barnes's meat."

"Mr. Barnes has no business to be partial," said

Aunt Fanny in the same tone of complaint. "He allowed that tall, dirty-looking woman, of the Middlesex Ward, a penny more for her kettle-holder than he did for mine, which was worked with a great deal more care than hers. I think he is apt to be too kind to very tall women."

"If he don't mind," said Bab, sighing and laying her arms on her knees in listless languor, "he'll have a rebellion among the women. They think their two-penny loaves too small as it is, and if it goes on much longer, I should'nt be surprised if they were to let him know it too."

"What cheats all these prison people are!" said Fanny. "Would you believe it? that horrid woman to whom Mr. Barnes recommended us to sell our work,—Mrs. Cross they call her,—she only offered me eighteenpence three farthings for that beautiful handkerchief which Mary finished yesterday. You know it would have sold for ten shillings at least at Mrs. Woodby's bazaar. I think Mr. Barnes has no business to recommend such cheats to us."

"He does not know what women are," said Bab. "I dare say Mr. Barnes means very well; but he knows no more about women than that barber's block over the way. Milliners will get every stitch they can out of the fingers of the poor; and then, when they can't hold a needle any longer, they would make them work with their bare stumps. With all our labour we can scarcely pay our rent. I am sure," she added with a sigh, "I am wasted into a perfect skeleton!"

"And so am I," said Fanny with a corroborative sigh:—"I, too, that was once so plump! It does not signify talking and moaning, we shall never get fat again until Mexico pays her dividends."

"Then we shall never be fat again," answered Bab, "for that day is gone by. I begin to doubt that such a place as Mexico ever did exist; and I think that the whole has been a hoax of that wretch old Woodby from beginning to end."

"And there is poor dear Abel," said Fanny; "he really makes me quite angry! he is always taking that villain's part, and says he had a right to make the most of his money, whilst we are left to starve. Did you hear what the clergyman said last Sunday in his

sermon? 'The rich man who takes advantage of the necessity or the ignorance of the poor, although he may have the laws of man in his favour, will assuredly go with the accursed of God into hell.' I wish old Woodby had heard that!"

"And young Woodby, too," said Bab: "he has to answer for our present miserable state!"

No sooner had these words been uttered, than the noise of wheels (a rare occurrence) was heard in the narrow street, and presently a concussion, and a cry, and a general bustle. Mary, who had been sitting near her aunts, silent and absorbed in her own thoughts as usual, jumped up and looked out of the window. There she perceived a dray-cart that had caught the wheel of a gentleman's cabriolet and upset it, whilst the horse was kicking violently; and within she observed a youth in imminent danger of having his brains dashed out. Immediately the two aunts and the niece rushed into the street to endeavour to assist the sufferer; and when they got there, they found him in the hands of the collected mob, who announced that he was much hurt. The door of the house in which they lived being open and the nearest at hand, he was dragged into it; and we leave the reader to guess their sensations when they recognised Tom Woodby himself in the agonising youth! He had received a violent contusion on the head, which was bleeding violently, and was otherwise much wounded.

However horrified the aunts and the niece might be at having thus stumbled upon the person of all others whom they least wished to see, yet their benevolence was not to be checked even upon such an occasion as this; and the unworthy object of it was not long in meeting at their hands all the assistance and care which he might have received from those most tenderly attached to him. They laid him in a bed, bound up his wounds, and nursed him with constant care.

As soon as he became conscious of his state, and discovered into whose hands he had fallen, although convinced that he could not be better off go where he might, yet such little delicacy or generosity of feeling did he possess, that he soon concluded that all the care and kindness thus shown him could only proceed from motives of interest. His original object in coming thus far was to discover Mary's place of abode, in the hope that,

after having made her and her relations taste the bitterness of want, they would be likely to lower their tone of indignation and come into his terms; and now that he found them so very attentive and kind, he was confirmed in his first supposition; and we need not add, that no feeling of gratitude would prevent him from acting upon the baseness of his motives. Although he was not long in feeling better, yet he did not seem in the least inclined to return to his home, but adhered to the quarters into which he had fallen with the most impetuous resolution, notwithstanding the evident inconvenience to which he was putting the owners. At length he acquired so much strength that he could no longer find a pretext for delay; and with acknowledgments on his tongue for the kindness shown him, he went away with a treacherous determination in his heart to take advantage of that kindness in the furtherance of his wicked views.

Aunt Bab was not long in informing Abel of the circumstance which had occurred, and they speculated upon what might have been Tom Woodby's object in paying them a visit. She conceived that he had repented of his conduct and intended to remit his claim, and thus relieve Abel from his confinement. Abel argued, if such had been his intention, why did he not declare it? and as he had not done so, he feared that he was still planning views destructive of Mary's happiness.

The doubt was soon after cleared up by a second visit, when the wicked man's intentions were more fully developed, and, under the pretext of offering his thanks for the attentions shown him, he presumed to put forward his former pretensions to Mary's favour. She soon perceived his intentions, and then for the first time in her life she allowed the indignation which arose in her breast to vent itself in words. She upbraided him with being the cause of the miseries which now weighed upon them, with cruelty in enforcing his claims, with duplicity in his conduct to her, with ingratitude in now repaying the kindness which had been shown to him by his endeavours to degrade and ruin her.

Had he possessed one grain of proper feeling, his admiration would have been excited by the burst of virtuous indignation which broke from her lips, which not only lighted up her expressive features into a blaze of

beauty, but brought out all the graces of her person by the energy and earnestness of her action. But his wicked heart was not to be touched by any one generous feeling: on the contrary, the truths which were thrown into his ears by this seductive maiden first excited his hatred, and then increased his determination to continue his persecutions to their utmost extent.

Mary, who had taken the defence of herself and of her relations into her hands,—for Barbara was too much subdued by her miseries, and Fanny too imbecile,—insisted that the scene which had taken place between her and her persecutor should not be disclosed to her uncle. She would not allow the miseries which he endured to be increased by the impotent anger which would arise in his breast; but she continued day after day to visit him as usual; and endeavoured to control herself so effectually as to make it apparent that nothing had happened in consequence of the catastrophe of Tom's accident.

The aunts and the niece had frequent access to Mr. Barnes, the governor of the prison, who gave them every facility of disposing of their work, and thus relieved them from the pressure of abject want. At his house they received many alleviations of their misery, as much by his conversation as by the use of his books which he very kindly lent them to read.

One morning, when Mary and Aunt Barbara had called upon him to ask his advice upon some matter touching Abel's better comfort, Barbara first took up a newspaper which was on the table, and which she was ever glad to read—more to look over the advertisements than to read the news, because she hoped thereby to stumble upon something which might suit their case of want; and on this occasion one of the first things which struck her eye was the following advertisement:—

“MATRIMONY.—*A man of rank and title, of middle age, pleasing person, and possessed of considerable wealth, wishes to unite himself to a young lady of good family, of agreeable person, in the enjoyment of good health, who has received a good education, and is in every way a person of good temper and unimpeachable character. Money is of no consequence to him; therefore he requires no fortune from his wife. None but those who can answer to the character here required need*

attend. Undeniable references will be required. Apply to Mr. Fairfax, solicitor, Lincoln's-inn."

Barbara read this over and over again, her face flushing the while, and her attention so much absorbed, that she had forgotten the errand on which she came. When Mr. Barnes came in, she handed the paper over to Mary, who also was struck by the advertisement, and read it; but she read it without at first remarking how entirely the character and circumstances of the person coincided with herself; and although she felt an oppression at heart as the thought flashed across her mind that she now had an opportunity of liberating her uncle from prison and making him and her aunts happy, still the thought at first was merely transitory, like a passing cloud over a calm lake, and left her in the same mood in which it had found her.

Aunt Bab, who had been amazingly elated by the discovery she had made, had, however, sufficient delicacy not to urge it to Mary, but merely satisfied herself with remarking what a strong coincidence there was between Mary's situation and character with that required in the advertisement. Mary coldly smiled, but said nothing; still the thought returned with fresh vigour to her mind, and at length succeeded in taking such entire possession of it, that she could think of nothing else. She struggled within herself, as one of keen feeling struggles with conscience. She felt that Providence had placed relief within her reach, and that she was bound in duty to seek it: she felt herself called upon to make every sacrifice of her own feelings,—her long-cherished love for another, her own particular views of happiness in married life,—in order to emancipate her relations from their present hopeless state of misery and want. She thought to incur the severest reprehension were she to allow selfishness to interpose, and esteemed herself criminal in rejecting what was a manifestation of God's good providence in her behalf. On the other hand, she dreaded lest by indulging in such thoughts she might be acting with treachery and infidelity to Edward. His image now stood before her, and appeared to upbraid her for venturing to think of forsaking him. She saw in the husband who thus threw himself before the public, one who could only be the rejected of others,—a coarse, vulgar, and unrefined

tyrant; who would taunt her for her poverty, and who, after all, would perhaps not be sufficiently generous to withdraw her uncle from prison, or settle him and her aunts in a situation of respectability.

Thus dragged different ways by such opposite feelings, she became the prey of the most cruel uncertainty, and nothing could be more distressing than her appearance. Sleep fled her eyelids, she could not taste food, and she sat the figure of despondency. Her only refuge lay in prayer. Before the throne of the Almighty she threw herself on her knees, and in long mental prayer, accompanied by agony and a sense of her own unworthiness, she poured out her whole soul in supplications, praying that God's grace might be sent her to direct her steps and soothe her almost frenzied mind. She arose refreshed and comforted, for she saw the path of duty before her, and she resolved to pursue it in spite of every other consideration.

CHAPTER XIX.

As misfortunes seldom come alone, so is the reverse. much may be said in favour of what is commonly called a 'turn of luck.'

ONE of the collateral incentives which impelled Mary to think seriously of the afore-mentioned advertisement, was the dread of Tom Woodby's persecutions. She now felt herself so unprotected—abandoned as she supposed herself to be by Edward—she conceived that by acquiring a husband she would be free from one of her principal miseries.

Had Tom Woodby once more appeared, we make no doubt that she would no longer have hesitated to apply to the advertisement as her last resource. But another circumstance took place, which, coming immediately at the back of her cogitations, settled her uncertainty, and was the cause of leading on to her future destiny.

Two days after Aunt Barbara and Mary had read the newspaper at Mr. Barnes's, Aunt Fanny, casually

looking out of the low window of her apartment into the street, observed a tall figure, which struck her as one she had seen before, looking upwards and downwards—first into one house then into another, evidently seeking out the abode of some one. She saw him inquire at the barber's shop opposite, who, to her astonishment, pointed towards the house in which she lived. This still more drew her attention to the stranger, who, without looking up, straightway rapped.

“Who can he be?” said Fanny. Barbara then peered out of the window; and the moment she caught a glimpse of the head and shoulders of the visitor, she exclaimed, “I declare, here comes Mark Woodcock!” An electrical shock could scarcely have given a stronger sensation to the frames of the three who heard this name. “So it is!” said Fanny in a tone of delight which had long been foreign to her lips. “So it is!” exclaimed Mary in a tone of calmness and thought.

Their exclamations were scarcely over ere he made his appearance. Mark's joy on seeing them was quite equal to the pleasure which he diffused by his appearance. He was indeed much changed in looks, dress, and manner, since he had left them. Travel had done wonders for him; for it had destroyed many of his national prejudices, and had transformed the London cockney into a man of the world. He now talked with confidence upon what he had seen, and made his hearers stare by the variety of odd names and hard words which he mixed into his discourse. He began by informing them that he had sought their old lodging in Golden-square; but that the actual occupiers knowing nothing of them, he applied to his friend in Silver street, who informed him where he might seek them, for he had heard of the circumstance which had driven Abel to prison.

He was stopped here by Aunt Bab, whose indignation having long been pent up within her breast, at length found vent in a flow of passionate words. She was almost choked by the violence of her emotion. She went over the old ground of Woodby's deceit, of the neglect of his wife and family, and the villany of his son's conduct;—she moaned over their present apparently hopeless situation, of the little likelihood there was of Abel being released from prison, and the appre-

hension of their being doomed to toil and want without a hope of relief.

Aunt Fanny confirmed every word both by look and occasional affirmation. They appealed to Mark whether they were not privileged to complain, and inquired whether such injustice as that which they had received could ever be paralleled in the history of any private family.

To their surprise and further indignation, the only answer they received was an unfeeling smile, and an apparent indifference, accompanied by certain, to them, incomprehensible shrugs and signs. The words which Mark used were to this purpose: "Let us hope for the best;—you may do better by and by—things are not so bad as they seem; help generally comes when it is least expected." He then particularly addressed himself to Mary; described to her his travels, and especially his meeting with Sir Peregrine Oldbourn, of whom he gave a very favourable picture, touching lightly upon his eccentricities, but enlarging much upon his virtues. He no longer preserved that silence for which he had formerly contended as a duty in men of his profession, but described the situation in which Sir Peregrine had been placed by his brother's will, dwelt upon the wealth to which he was heir, and finally announced the singular mode which he had adopted of seeking a wife.

Mary had paid but slight attention to the first part of Mark's story, not having perceived what was in truth the drift of his discourse; but when he spoke of advertising for a wife through the newspapers, then she became quite alive to the subject. Mark's whole soul was engaged in the furtherance of the scheme which he had conceived at Smyrna; it had travelled with him back to England—it had been the theme of his thoughts and the great object of his expectations. When he found that Mary listened to him with sufficient attention, and when he discovered that she must have seen the advertisement to which he alluded, he then requested to be favoured with a little private conversation with Miss Mary; as he had something of importance to communicate.

Mary's face was in an instant flushed, for she felt that her destinies were about to be fixed, and that she

was now called upon to make up her mind upon the one great event of her life. She followed Mark into an adjoining room, to the surprise of her aunts, who wondered what such mystery could mean.

Mark, with as little delay as possible, informed her of the scheme, by which he hoped to secure her a handsome establishment and a good partner for life. He said that no one could answer so entirely to the qualifications mentioned in the advertisement as herself; and that he was quite certain that Mr. Fairfax, with whom the selection rested, would immediately accept her as the future Lady Oldbourn.

Mary, after a considerable struggle, in which her disgust at such a marriage was only diminished by love of her relations and desire to release her uncle from prison, making a violent effort over her feelings, addressed Mark Woodcock as follows:—"Mr. Mark, you have found me prepared for the proposal which you have been kind enough to make me; for by accident it so happens that I saw the advertisement you allude to. Worn out with the misery of seeing my relations almost dying with want—my dear uncle daily losing his health, I cannot withhold from you that I read that advertisement with considerable emotion, for it seemed almost addressed to myself. I perceived at once, that by making a sacrifice of my own feelings, through God's good providence I might be the means of releasing my relations from their present state, and giving them a chance of being restored to their place in society. I had therefore almost made up my mind before you came to present myself as a candidate for the advertiser's favour. After what you have said, I can no longer hesitate; but before I give my final answer, I must ask you this one question, and upon its result will depend my resolution. Should I accept, will sufficient money be advanced to set my uncle free from prison; and will a sufficient allowance be made to enable me to support my relations?"

"Upon that score," answered Mark without hesitation, "make your mind perfectly easy. I will answer for it, that all your wishes on that head will be met with liberality. Sir Peregrine is a generous man, upon whom considerations of money have no weight. Mr. Fairfax, too, you will find quite ready to accede to

your demands; and if after you have seen him matters are settled between you, another forty-eight hours shall not pass over our heads before Mr. Abel will be released from prison, and, together with your aunts, comfortably accommodated in some good lodging."

Upon hearing these words, Mary's countenance beamed with unusual lustre; her whole frame appeared to have received the infusion of a new feeling, for she felt that she was sacrificing her own happiness in order to redeem her relations from further misery. She seemed to glory in that power of overcoming herself, by which she was enabled to crush her own views, desires, and fondest feelings, in a magnanimous self-devotion to the happiness of others. She merely answered Mark, "Very well, sir; then it is agreed. Pray go and announce this to my aunts, and leave me alone."

Mark, struck with increased admiration at her manner, immediately did as he was bid; and as soon as the door closed, she locked it, then covering her face with her hands, fell upon her knees, whilst her whole frame was convulsed by the violence of her sensations. The satisfaction of an angel's mind beamed in her heart; but the weakness of her nature gave way before the greatness of the sacrifice she was about to make, and she was dissolved in an agony of tears. She would have prayed, but Edward's image stood before her. "Dear, dear Edward," she exclaimed, "forgive me! Wretched creature that I am! wherefore am I so wretched? May God forgive my ungrateful heart!—let me hold fast to his love and do his almighty bidding!" Then in mental prayer she poured forth ardent supplications for support, entreating that she might reject every temptation to think of herself, and receive strength to persevere in the good work she had begun. Long was she buffeted by her feelings, and long did she remain absorbed in thought, meditating upon the consequences likely to ensue should her determination be productive of its expected results.

In the mean while, Mark returned to the aunts, whom he had left in no pleasant humour at his apparent want of sympathy. They received him with cold and formal civility; and when they asked him what had become of Mary, to their astonishment—to their breathless astonishment, he announced, that she had

desired him to inform them that she was going to be married.

"Is it possible!" exclaimed Aunt Bab, naturally enough mistaking him as the object of Mary's choice.

"Well, this is extraordinary!" exclaimed Fanny, equally deceived.

"Yes," said Mark with the sort of air which might well have been taken for the exultation of an accepted lover,—“Yes, Miss Allnutt has been kind enough to listen to my persuasions, and she has accepted. She desired me to announce to you this piece of intelligence, which, she is persuaded, will make you happy.”

"Humph!" said Bab.

"Well, I declare!" echoed Fanny.

"We little expected this, and that's the truth of it!" said Bab.

"It has come upon us like thunder!" said Fanny.

"I am afraid that you are not satisfied with her determination," said Mark; "yet I have long thought it was the very luckiest thing that could happen to her."

"Indeed!" said Bab with an indignant toss of her head.

"There is no other person that I know," said Mark, "who is worthy of so much happiness."

"Some people, I do think," said Fanny between her teeth, "think mighty well of themselves!"

"I protest!" said Mark, "I expected you would appear a little better pleased at the good luck of your niece."

"Good luck indeed!" said Bab.

"Why, half the young ladies in London would give their eyes to stand in her shoes."

"Better and better!" exclaimed Fanny.

"Does not this place her at once at the top of the tree?" said Mark.

"Of what tree?" inquired Bab in disgust.

"Why, I ask," said Mark, "does not she attain rank, wealth, and an unexceptionable husband, at one grasp?"

"We never heard of any wealth before," said Barbara, a little softened.

"If there is money," said Fanny, "that alters the case."

"Wealth, to be sure there is, and rank besides," said Mark. "I would have made her a duchess had it been

in my power, for I am sure she is fit for anything: but surely you won't object to her becoming a baronet's lady?"

"A baronet's lady!" exclaimed Bab in utter astonishment; "how did you ever become a baronet? I thought you were plain Mr. Mark Woodcock, nephew of our Cruikshank. Surely the Turks don't make baronets?"

"You a baronet!" said Fanny. "Why, you have been made one abroad, then?"

"This is excellent!" roared Mark, breaking out into unrestrained laughter; "such a mistake is worth a farce! Who ever said I was a baronet?—you must be dreaming!" Then turning to Aunt Bab, he said, "Did not you say that you had read the advertisement in the newspaper headed 'Matrimony,' and that Miss Mary answered to the person sought after in every respect? Well, that is my advertisement,—or my chief's, Mr. Fairfax, which is the same thing. Sir Peregrine Oldbourn is the man seeking a wife: he has found her in Miss Mary, and she has agreed to become Lady Oldbourn."

As soon as this explanation was made, the joy which broke out in the hearts of the two spinsters is not to be described;—they could not contain their raptures, particularly when Mark further explained, that the preliminary to the whole thing would be the immediate liberation of their brother from prison, and their instalment in some comfortable house, with a suitable maintenance, until the marriage should take place.

They would have covered Mark with the approbation of an embrace, had he not fled to seek Mary, who, he hoped, would now be ready to receive him. They all three went in search of her, the aunts screaming out at the top of their voices the fulness of the joy which had so suddenly overtaken them.

Mary, unwilling that her aunts should know what had been the violence of her struggles, did her best to compose her countenance and to come before them with her usual equanimity; but Bab and Fanny, who worshipped the ground upon which she trod, were not slow in detecting the traces of recent weeping; and in embracing her with silent affection, they became themselves more inclined to weep than to give way to noisy mirth. They soon felt how great was the sacrifice she had consented

to make; they were convinced it was made to ensure their happiness, and this consideration gave a fresh tone of tenderness to their manners and attentions towards her. All that Mary said on the occasion was this:—
 “My dear aunts, let me entreat of you, do not say a word to Uncle Abel until the whole be settled, and then let me announce it to him. I know him so well, that if he once thought I was doing this to get him out of prison, he would rather die there than allow it.”

CHAPTER XX.

*A few hints dedicated to the curious in matrimony.
 The effects of an advertisement.*

MARK WOODCOCK returned the next day at an early hour for the purpose of accompanying Mary, escorted by Aunt Bab, to the office of Mr. Fairfax, to whom she was to be introduced, previous to the final settlement.

They found Mr. Fairfax a benevolent-looking man, with a quick eye and business-like manners, seated in a sombre, dusty room, surrounded by a multitude of chocolate-coloured tin boxes, the receptacles of the fortunes of his numerous clients, which, like a tradesman's stock in trade, were displayed with no little ostentation on and about his shelves. Among these the name of Sir Peregrine Oldbourn, Bart. shone conspicuous; and well did the family lawyer repay the confidence reposed in his integrity, by the anxious interest which he displayed in furthering to the utmost the wishes of the late baronet.

Aunt Bab, followed by Mary and preceded by Mark, ascended the well-worn staircase leading to the office, and entering the battered door, were introduced into an ante-room, where they perceived several women seated in a row, some gaudily, others more modestly dressed, but all wearing a veil, and all keeping it closely lowered over the face, who evidently were collected in consequence of the advertisement. They might have been

taken for the harem of a Mussulman, had a black guardian been at hand to control them.

As soon as Bab and her niece appeared, all the heads were immediately turned towards them, and a severe scrutiny took place, which was concluded by a contemptuous sneer. In truth, the scanty and much worn-garments, the faded colours of their bonnets, and the general pauper-like appearance of both Aunt Bab and Mary, bespoke anything but persons coming in search of a husband. Bab's squalid looks announced want and hunger; Mary, though pinched with ill health and poverty, still exhibited such forms of beauty, and such modesty of countenance, that even as she stood, it was impossible to see her without admiration; and all eyes, both of the clerks in the office as well as those of the expectant females, were fixed on her face.

"Wait here for a moment," said Mark, as he proceeded to announce their arrival to his chief; during which interval, Mary and her aunt had time to take a short survey of the assembled competitors. One was a tall, thin, and extravagantly-dressed lady, with ringlets flowing in such profusion, that it was evident they were a recent translation from the barber's block to her own head; and although her face could not be distinguished through her veil, yet there was visible a certain tinge of red, which might make one conclude that she was not so young as she had been. She sat in a languishing, serpentine attitude on her chair, putting out a foot which by its shape had evidently been the torment of the shoemaker's art. Next to her sat in strong contrast a short squat woman, who, wishing to add to her height, had drawn up the bows of her bonnet into perpendicular lines over her head, making her look like a low-built house with high chimneys. She breathed short and moved her feet, wishing thereby to touch the ground with them as she sat on her chair. There was a resolution in her gait which spoke the determination not to die single.—Then came one who seemed to found her hopes principally upon the attractions of her teeth, for her veil was lowered just sufficiently to exhibit her mouth, which she kept so disposed, that her teeth, which presented a formidable row, might be seen without interruption. Another hoped to gain admiration

by the exposure of her arm and hand, which she permitted herself to flourish about in various attitudes. In short, there was no end to the catalogue of pretensions which, in various modes, were put forwards in the hope of obtaining the prize.

Mary and her aunt had not waited long ere Mark invited them to walk into Mr. Fairfax's room, evidently thereby exciting the indignation of the ladies in waiting. Having already been prepared by Mark's description of his visiters, Mr. Fairfax received them with great kindness and civility; and he was not long in ascertaining how accurate that description was: Mary's beauty was not lost upon him, and the charm, simplicity, and truth of her manner, succeeded in making him ready to believe everything that might be advanced in her favour.

There was one thing upon which he insisted ere he gave his final acceptance, in order fully to put into execution the provisions of the late baronet's will; which was, that proper references should be given, who might report upon the respectability of the applicant's character. Upon this Aunt Bab looked at Mary, and Mary looked at her aunt, without knowing what to say, for to whom could they refer in London? At Ivycote, it is true, they had a host of friends; but they could not send Mr. Fairfax thither: therefore, with the exception of the Gould Woodbys, they were quite at fault. They forthwith mentioned their situation to Mr. Fairfax, who instantly settled that a reference to the Woodbys would be quite sufficient; for he added, whatever might be their hostility, they would never venture to vilify the character of the family; and he determined himself to call upon them that very morning.

Upon this Aunt Bab and her niece, escorted by Mark, left the room. As soon as Mark returned to the ladies in waiting, he announced to them in the civilest of manners, that the object of the advertisement having been accomplished, he was requested by Mr. Fairfax to relieve them from further attendance. This became the signal for the breaking out of that wrath which had been excited in the breasts of the expectants by the precedence accorded to Mary over themselves.

The tall, thin lady, standing up and raising her veil, whereby she disclosed a face that would have done

credit to a gorgon, exclaimed, "I won't stir till I have seen Mr. Fairfax, and so you may tell him. I came here first, and you hav'n't behaved like a gentleman to take in those *ladies* there," (pointing to Aunt Bab and Mary, making a most contemptuous sneer as she placed a strong emphasis upon that word,) "before me and the other *ladies* here. I don't see why the like of them is to take the lead before the like of us."

"Yes," said the squat woman, clenching her hands and showing a face upon which 'rum, cordials, and rich compounds,' were written in legible characters,—“Yes, *ladies* indeed! I wouldn't give that,” snapping her fingers at the same time, “for a whole house full of them! I should like to know why such a pair of *ladies* are to take the bread out of our mouths! I wouldn't demean myself so much as to drink out of the same glass with either of them!”

“We are scandalously used,” said the third lady, showing her teeth literally and figuratively. “We have as much right to be seen and heard as that person,” pointing to Mary with much contempt; “and we have a right to know why she is to be preferred to us. I don't think she can *bribe* very high,” she added ironically; “although we suppose that gentleman,” pointing to Mark, “can say why he has chosen to show her such special favour.”

“Why, ma'am,” said Mark with great good humour, “you can't all marry the gentleman: he did not advertise for more than one wife, and having secured that one, he is content. I am sorry that you should be disappointed. But you, ma'am,” addressing the gorgon,—“you are young enough and handsome enough to be independent of advertising husbands; therefore, why should you be angry? And you,” addressing the squat lady,—“it is evident that, happen what will, nothing can keep you out of spirits.” And then, making his bow to the teeth, he said, “As for you, ma'am,—you can never fear a rival, for in spite of everybody's teeth, yours must ever have the preference.”

With these and such like words he succeeded in pacifying them; and having once cleared the office of their presence, he was able to devote himself to Mary and her aunts, to whom he gave every assurance that before the next day was over, Abel would be set at li-

berty, his debts paid, and the family installed in a comfortable house. He took it upon himself to make all these arrangements, and informed them that, as soon as Mr. Fairfax should be returned from Mr. Woodby, he would wait upon them with the proper deed, which being signed by Mary, would bind her to Sir Peregrine Oldbourn as his wife, and secure to her the immediate advantages of that position.

Mr. Fairfax in the course of the morning walked to Baker-street; and inquiring for either Mr. or Mrs. Woodby, was introduced to the latter, who was seated in her drawing-room with her two daughters, together with our old acquaintance Lady Thomson and two gentlemen. Being unknown to them in person, he was received with that suspicion with which people are apt to view a stranger; but when he unfolded the object of his errand, he was not long in obtaining the most fixed attention to what he had to say.

"I believe," he said, addressing himself to Mrs. Woodby, "that you are acquainted with Miss Mary Allnutt?"

Upon hearing these preliminary words, every one present listened attentively, and Mrs. Woodby answered, "Yes, sir, I am."

"May I take the liberty of inquiring of you what may be her general character?"

"Her character?" said Mrs. Woodby in a tone of surprise. "As a governess, do you ask?"

"More likely as a housemaid," said Lady Thomson, tossing up her nose.

The Miss Woodbys laughed, and said she would make an excellent lady's maid.

Mr. Fairfax said, "It is for neither of those characters: I merely wish to know her general character for respectability of conduct, temper, and the qualities which constitute what is called an amiable woman."

"Oh, indeed, as to that," said Mrs. Woodby, "I believe the girl is well enough. I know that she belongs to a pair of silly old aunts, who have brought her up so much like a fool that she can't cry bo to a goose; and to a poor wretch of an uncle, who borrows money and won't pay his debts.—But pray," inquired Mrs. Woodby, "who sent you to make these inquiries? none of the family have been in my service; they lived in our

neighbourhood in the country, where they were obliged to sell all they had and leave it, and I know nothing more of them. I really don't see why I should be called upon to give the girl a character."

"The truth is," said Mr. Fairfax, "that a circumstance has occurred which is of consequence to Miss Allnutt's views in life, in which it became necessary that a reference of this sort should be made; and as she has no friends in London besides you and your family, she ventured to make use of your name."

"Friends indeed!" exclaimed Mrs. Woodby.

"She is certainly going out as governess," said Anne Woodby.

"Perhaps she is going on the stage," said Ellen.

"No, my dear, that can't be," remarked Lady Thomson; "what can an actress want with a character?"

"Allow me to say," said one of the gentlemen starting from his seat and addressing himself to Mr. Fairfax, "that the sort of undefined, and apparently unwilling approval of Miss Allnutt's character, which you have just heard, is not only an act of injustice to her, but one of reproach to the person who gave it. Miss Allnutt, sir, is as superior to the generality of her sex in the qualities of her mind as she surpasses them in beauty of person. She is as pure as a child, and as full of fortitude as a martyr. She may have heard of vice, but she can only know it by name. She is so little selfish, that, although she has a right to the adoration of mankind, she requires every one to be preferred before her. She does not know what deceit means—she is the very symbol of truth and sincerity. At the same time, every action is so much under the influence of prudence, that while she is an example of everything that is excellent, she does not allow her superiority to be even guessed at. Happy indeed will be the man who calls her wife! and happy are those who live under the influence of her charming disposition and endearing manners!"

"Well, I declare, my lord!" exclaimed Mrs. Woodby as she addressed Lord Demone; "who would ever have expected this from you? Have not you always been the first to laugh at the uncle and aunts, and to call them names?"

"But the first to admire the niece," retorted Lord

Demone. "I repeat again, that she is the most perfect woman I have ever known, or conceived could exist in this wicked world."

"When my lord does admire," said Lady Thomson, with a sarcastic sneer and a toss of the head, "he does it with a grace peculiar to himself."

"I suppose you mean to say, in City language," said Lord Demone, "'with a grace beyond the reach of *h'art*;' but in this case you are mistaken,—I am perfectly sincere in what I say."

"That was well put in," said Simpleton Sharp; "I never thought of that before: that City *h* has done wonders!"

"I am very much obliged to you, my lord," said Mr. Fairfax, when he had discovered who he was, "for this expression of your opinion—I cannot wish for a more satisfactory character;" and he was rising to take his leave, when Mrs. Woodby, with great importunity of manner, stopped him and said,

"Now you really must tell us who you are, and what has been the purpose of your inquiry—indeed you must; you can't come putting us to all this trouble without some return—it wouldn't be fair."

"My name is Fairfax; I have no need of making a secret of a plain fact," said the lawyer: "I am solicitor for Sir Peregrine Oldbourn; he is shortly to arrive in England, when he will marry Miss Allnutt, to whom he is to be this day affianced, and she will then become Lady Oldbourn."

"Mary Allnutt, Lady Oldbourn!" exclaimed Mrs. Woodby with wonder and mortification in her looks.

"It can't be!" said Lady Thomson.

"Why, she will become the wife of a baronet, and one of the richest of his order," said Lord Demone with exultation; "and she will be the mistress of Oldbourn-hall and of untold wealth."

"Whoever thought of this!" said Anne Woodby, as if gross injustice had been done to herself. "What will Tom say?"

"I wonder where Edward Manby can be?" said Ellen.

"But how can this happen," said Mrs. Woodby, with wicked joy in her looks, "when her uncle is now lying in prison, at the suit of our son Tom, because he

can't repay him a miserable hundred pounds. Surely Sir Peregrine ought to know that: is he aware that these Allnuts are actual paupers, and only fit for the workhouse?"

"Your son will this day be paid," said Fairfax. "Mr. Abel Allnutt will this day be liberated from prison, and the poverty and miseries of the family will from this day cease." Having said this with great emphasis and with a tone of exultation, he added with much ceremony, "I have the honour to wish you a very good morning; upon which, making his bow, he left the house; Lord Demone and his companion soon after following.

"Did you ever hear any thing like that girl's luck!" said Mrs. Woodby to Lady Thomson after a long pause.

"I never did," said Lady Thomson: "but I must do myself the justice to say, that I always said she was handsome, although I thought the aunts were poor creatures."

"I always liked Aunt Fanny," said Anne; "and Uncle Abel was ever good-natured to me."

"Old Barbara is a well-meaning creature," said Mrs. Woodby, "although she insists a little too much upon keeping old men and women warm. I suppose we shall have them back at Ivycote."

"I always make it a rule," said Lady Thomson, "never to think ill of any one because they are poor: I think we had better call upon the Allnutts as soon as we know where they live."

"Now I recollect it," said Anne, "there is a purse which I forgot to finish, and which I will send Mary immediately."

"Do; my dear," said her mother; "and write a note to Barbarossa, and ask her to dine whenever it is agreeable; and inquire particularly after Abel's old cough—do."

CHAPTER XXI.

A release from prison. The struggles of virtuous self-denial.

As soon as Mr. Fairfax returned to his office, he commissioned Mark Woodcock to take all the necessary steps for releasing Abel from prison, and for removing him and his family into an appropriate habitation; but, as a preliminary, to secure Mary's signature to a deed which would bind her to Sir Peregrine Oldbourn as his wife, whensoever he should appear to claim her as such.

Mary was awaiting the arrival of this moment with impatience, dreading lest her resolution should be overturned by the many suggestions of her imagination. She felt strong in the purity of her intentions, and in the conviction of doing right; but she had to contend against fearful opposition in her own breast. Edward's image was constantly before her in the attitude of supplication, and Sir Peregrine's as that of an odious tyrant. She longed for Mark's appearance with the document which she was to sign, when the excitement in which she lived might be abated by an irretrievable act; for the fever of indecision is more frequently allayed by a knowledge of the worst than by remaining in a state of doubt.

At length, when Mark really appeared, instead of meeting him, as she intended, with a cheerful countenance and an unflinching hand, the blood left her heart, and she fell into so long and painful a swoon, that her aunts became alarmed for her safety. They hung over her with solicitous affection; whilst Mark, with the deed in one hand and the pen in the other, shook his head and said, "There must be something more in this than meets the eye."

At length, when restored to herself she had swallowed a cordial, seeing Mark in the same attitude, she exclaimed, "For pity's sake, sir, let me sign! Excuse my weakness—let us not delay a moment!" He placed the parchment before her, gave the pen into her hand; the proper witnesses were present; when, after a pause,

in which she mentally prayed for support, she signed her name. She then immediately retired to her room, where she passed the rest of the day in constant prayer, which she had learned from the experience of misfortune to be the only effectual means of soothing the mind.

Mark then proceeded to the lodgings of Tom Woodby, whom he condemned to do that which he willingly would have refused,—namely, release his victim from debt, which he did upon receiving the full amount of his demand. We do not wish to detain our readers with an account of the base feelings which arose in the breast of this wicked gentleman when he was informed of the turn affairs had taken; but it was delightful to Mark to exercise an authority productive of so much good, whilst he excited an impotent rage in one who only practised evil. Leaving him to gulp down his mortification, Mark proceeded to secure a house in Gower-street—a sort of frontier position on the confines of gentility; which having done, he returned to give an account of his proceedings to his chief, who forthwith authorized him to conduct the whole family to their new habitation.

We have long abstained from noticing Uncle Abel, who has undergone at our hands nearly the same neglect that the modest and retiring man does from the world. His life in prison had been one of patient endurance, of humble resignation, and of cheering meditation upon the promises of Christianity. Such a being, totally divested as he was of every exterior attraction, is most likely to pass through the world unnoticed; and excepting in the possession of that sunshine of the breast which exceeds all price, and with which he was specially blessed, he could boast of no possession which insures what is commonly called enjoyment.

In the prison, his only recreation was the conversation of his sisters and niece, who devoted as much of their time to him as they could abstract from the necessity of gaining a livelihood; and at this precise moment, owing to the events we have described, he had been more than usually deprived of their society. This had surprised him, and he had become anxious to see them; when, on the morning after all the arrangements were made, he perceived Mark, accompanied by both his sis-

ters and his niece, at the wicket, begging permission to see him. This circumstance struck him at once as foreboding something new; and as soon as Mark exhibited the order for his freedom, his mind was so confused by a variety of emotions, that it was long before he could give utterance in words to the gratitude which beamed in his heart.

Unwilling in the face of the prisoners to describe the circumstances which led to his release, (for he was still ignorant of Mary's intended marriage,) his sisters exhorted him to lose no time in accompanying them to the house prepared for their reception; and he left his late miserable dwelling with the same equanimity which he had preserved on entering it, though not without a mental thanksgiving for so unexpected a mercy. When he found himself at liberty—restored to the open street, leaving the prison-gates behind him, he felt a renovation which was productive of buoyant spirits, and contributed to restore that strength which had been much impaired by confinement. During their progress in the hackney-coach, he became anxious to know the reason of this change; but he was not allowed to be fully informed until he reached his new home. He perceived by Mary's melancholy look and thoughtful manner, that something must have taken place which involved her happiness; but far was he from contemplating the possibility of her marriage.

At length they reached the abode in question prepared for them. It was one of those houses in which everything smelt new, in which every inch of mahogany was polished up to mirror point, and where every chair was fixed to its place with mathematical precision. Words cannot convey the delight of Aunts Bab and Fanny, nor the feeling of gratitude which Abel felt, at such a restoration to the world's comforts after their recent life of toil, pain, and privation. Mary's dejected mind was cheated out of its misery by the pleasure she felt at seeing her relations happy, and by the secret satisfaction of feeling that she was the cause of the change; and she would have been happy herself, but for a secret bodement, which made her dread lest the beautiful picture now before her eyes should contain a hideous reverse, which she felt would sooner or later be exhibited to her.

Abel being still to be satisfied as to the cause of this hitherto mysterious change, Mary, who had undertaken to disclose it, taking him into a separate room, seated herself by him, and straightway informed him of every circumstance relating to the engagement she had formed. Abel looked her steadily in the face, and whilst his heart dilated with gratitude at the knowledge that it was to her alone he was indebted for his present well-being; still her looks told him, that however great his happiness might be, hers was not without alloy. She endeavoured to conceal her real feelings; but he was too quick-sighted not to discover that she was playing a part: for whilst an artificial smile shone on her face, her breast heaved with unfeigned sighs. She made use of every innocent artifice to induce her uncle to believe that what she had done was not so utterly hateful to her as he might have supposed: but still he was not satisfied, and cross-questioned her so pertinaciously, that at length she fairly burst into tears, avowing that his doubts were in part true, but entreating him to question her no further. She made him aware that what she had done was not now to be undone; that she had bound herself by a formal deed to perform certain duties, in consequence of which she had received and was receiving certain benefits; and therefore it was no longer time to discuss whether she had done well or ill—by her act she must abide; and, with God's assistance, she hoped that she would be able to conduct herself without reproach in the new situation in which she was about to be placed.

Abel, seeing how much she was in earnest, no longer persisted in ascertaining the secret feelings of her heart: but their interview had scarcely ceased, before a circumstance took place, which effectually brought to light what poor Mary had so anxiously endeavoured to conceal.

Mark Woodcock, perplexed at not receiving any tidings of Sir Peregrine Oldbourn, (although from the nature of the man he might have expected as much,) had applied at the post office, hoping to discover some letter wrongly directed from him: but instead of a letter addressed to himself or to Mr. Fairfax, in the dead-letter office he found one addressed to Abel, which from the variety of scrawls over it, showing the various

places it had visited in search of its owner, announced that it had lain long unclaimed. Mark did not delay a moment in taking it to Abel, little conscious of the mischief he was about to produce. Abel, after looking at it for some time, at length exclaimed, "From Edward Manby, I declare!" Mary's countenance fell as she heard these words, and the colour forsook her cheeks. Barbara and Fanny were also present.

"My dear Mary," said her uncle, "here is a letter for you also inclosed." As he handed it over to her, he did not perceive how much her hand shook, nor how deadly a paleness overcast her features. She went to a distance to hide her emotion, and opening the letter with trepidation, read those warm and overflowing effusions with which the reader is already acquainted, written by Edward Manby on his departure from Liverpool. Her eyes could not second her desire to read the whole letter, for, suffused by rising tears, they but half performed their office; and with the letter half read, she hastily tottered out of the room with the intention of shutting herself up in her bed-room.

She had scarcely closed the door, ere the noise of a heavy fall was heard on the staircase. Barbara, Fanny, and Abel rushed out with one accord to see what had happened; when, to their horror, they discovered their too sensitive niece in a deep swoon, with her head resting on the balusters, lying her whole length on the ground, and blood flowing from a wound she had received in falling. In a state bordering upon madness, they raised her up, and straightway deposited her in bed. Abel picked up the letter which had fallen from her hand; and judging that its contents must have caused her present seizure, he hastily glanced his eye over it, and there he discovered what he had long suspected—how much she and Edward were attached to each other. His sisters were also soon made acquainted with this circumstance; and then, and not till then, did the whole mystery of her despondent state break upon their minds.

"My God!" exclaimed Abel; "and has she indeed sacrificed herself for us! Let me return to prison, and let me die rather than that this dear—this noble creature should thus suffer! I will immediately proceed to seek

Mr. Fairfax, and lay the whole of this sad story before him, and see whether it would not be possible to annul the engagement into which she has involved herself."

Barbary and Fanny shook their heads, not knowing what to say; but they insisted upon the necessity of sending for a physician, who, as soon as he saw his patient, pronounced her to be in a high state of fever. This melancholy intelligence put every other thought out of their heads for the present, and they all three united their utmost exertions to tend her with the most unremitting attention. That long restraint which she had laboured to place upon her feelings—that uncertainty in which she had lived concerning Edward—those fearful apprehensions that she was preparing a hopeless state of wretchedness for him as well as for herself,—all conspired to bring on this crisis, and the brain, from the bewildering variety of intense emotions which at the moment of the reception of the letter assailed it, became inflamed and soon announced its derangement. It was piteous to behold one so young, so beautiful, and so innocent, struggling with insanity! That form and those features, so full of grace and gentleness, were now torn by the throes and contortions of madness. But perhaps it was still more piteous to observe the despair—the absorbing despair of the woe-stricken relations. They fell at once from the height of the greatest prosperity to the depths of the greatest misery. Abel's habitual resignation gave way before the deep depression of his spirits, and he bemoaned himself at those sad inflictions which had led to Mary's present state; he could with difficulty restrain himself from venting aloud the bitterness of his anguish. Aunt Barbara, aided by the zeal of old Betty, was the only one of the three who had sufficient presence of mind and power of action to perform the duties of a nurse, and to see that the prescriptions of the physician were properly administered; for poor Fanny, as inefficient in adversity as she was wont to be frivolous in the sunshine of prosperity, was utterly helpless.

Various were the turns which the disorder took. Sometimes the name of Edward would come to her lips, when she would hold imaginary conversations with him, and cry and laugh by turns; then she would imagine herself to be governor of a prison, and order all

the prison-doors to be thrown open and the prisoners set at liberty. Afterwards she raved with every appearance of fury at some fancied injustice, and immediately after relapsed into the most womanish and endearing fondness for some imaginary benefit; but Edward's image was the most frequent on her mind, and she constantly appeared to screen him from some impending evil.

It would be in vain to describe all the vagaries and wanderings of a disordered brain—that strange piece of mechanism by which man holds his privileges as a reasonable being; but it will be sufficient to say, that in the case of poor Mary, that organ having been thoroughly ransacked by every diversity of aberration, at length showed symptoms of giving way to the skill of the physician, who, when he felt the uncertain, fluttering pulse, smiled as he foretold an approaching prostration of strength, which he asserted would mark the abatement of the fever. Abel at this intelligence awoke from despondency, and restored to his sense of a superintending providence, retreated to his own room to pour forth prayers for her recovery.

From the moment of her falling into an almost inanimate state, the doctor, calculating upon the power of a youthful and hitherto unimpaired constitution, announced her speedy convalescence, provided she was kept perfectly quiet and protected from all exciting causes. And he was not mistaken. Day after day her mind gradually though slowly was restored to itself;—her perceptions became correct—her observations showed that the crisis was over, and that she was restored to the world of reasonable beings. The first word she uttered which had the appearance of consciousness was heard by the faithful old Betty, who in her joy exclaimed, “Bless her little heart, she has just said, ‘Oh!’”

“Has she?” said Aunt Bab; “let me run and tell Abel.—The dear creature has just said, ‘Oh!’ Come, come!” she exclaimed to her brother, who, with outstretched hands and a face full of rapture, followed his sister to the bedside, and there to his delight he heard the scarcely audible voice of his beloved Mary saying, “Dear Uncle Abel!”

From that moment she began to mend; and the un-

remitting attentions and care with which her uncle and aunts watched over her, were gradually repaid by the delight of seeing her restored to life after they had given up every hope.

CHAPTER XXII.

Abel Allnutt's disinterestedness. He wishes to return to his prison.

ABEL and his sisters, whilst they tended their niece during their convalescence, were extremely careful in following the doctor's directions never to advert in the slightest degree to the cause that had brought on her illness. Neither the name of Edward, nor that of Sir Peregrine Oldbourn, nor even that of her father, were pronounced before her; but she was aware that Mark Woodcock never passed a day without making inquiries.

One morning, after Mark's visit had been announced, and when allusion was made to the goodness of his heart, and to the various good qualities which he possessed, Abel and Barbara being present, Mary of her own accord, and in a collected and firm manner, said: "My dear uncle and aunt, I fear that I have caused you considerable trouble and uneasiness. I have betrayed great weakness—that I know; but, thank God! let us hope that it is now all over. I have prayed earnestly for more strength of mind, and I feel that my prayers are heard. We may now talk with safety upon my future views and my future duties, for I am conscious that I dare meet them with courage."

Abel and his sister looked at each other with dismay, fearing the consequences of such a communication,—for Mary was still extremely feeble,—and the former instantly evaded the conversation she would have led to, by saying that it would be time when she was quite restored to resume the subject; but up to this moment, the doctor had only enjoined one precaution, and that was quiet,—constant unbroken quiet!

Mary would have continued; but both Abel and her aunt positively refusing to hear her, she was obliged to submit to their wishes, and she endeavoured to divert her mind with less exciting subjects. But this hint of the state of her mind made Abel determine immediately to put his original intention into execution, of annulling Mary's engagement with Sir Peregrine Oldbourn. To this effect, he sought the first opportunity, of locking himself up with Mark, in order to consult with him upon the fittest steps to take. He began by expatiating upon the excellency of Mary's character—a subject upon which he would never cease to talk, and asserted that it was entirely and solely in order to release him from prison, and to place him and his sisters in a comfortable position, that she had applied to Mr. Fairfax;—that in doing this she had committed the greatest violence upon her own feelings; for it was now plain—and it was a discovery they had only made at the moment of illness—that her affections were fixed upon another man. Who that was, he said it was not his intention to disclose, out of delicacy to all parties; but he was certain that if this engagement with Sir Peregrine Oldbourn were allowed to exist, so strong, as it had been proved, were her affections, that it would be the source of lasting misery and mischief to all concerned. He therefore entreated him to reflect how the engagement might be annulled.

Mark, who was one of the best natured, although one of the vainest of men, had never quite made up his mind, ever since he had known Mary, and particularly since the scene which had taken place at the signature of the deed, whether or not he was the individual upon whom she had set her affections. This excess of vanity (and how often does it not play the same trick to its ridiculous votaries!) entirely made him overlook Edward Manby, whom he but slightly knew, although of whom he had heard much, and thus his vanity made him conclude that he was himself the object of Mary's love.

There he was, seated opposite the anxious Abel, looking uncommonly pathetic as a swain, but very official and business-like as an attorney's clerk. Called upon to give an opinion upon a point of law, he sunk his finer feelings for the moment, and having cleared

his voice, he said, that he of course could affirm nothing positive as long as he had a superior to whom he must appeal: but this he must say, that the question was full of perplexity; that deeds were difficult things to set aside when they involved penalties; and that although Mr. Fairfax might be very well inclined to do anything to give pleasure to Miss Mary or her friends, still, acting as executor to a will, he had but one course to pursue, namely, to put the testator's wishes into effect. These, however, he asserted, were only opinions of his own, which, as they might be put aside by those of Mr. Fairfax, he recommended Abel immediately to seek that gentleman in person, and he avowed himself ready to accompany him there.

Abel without further reflection acceded to Mark's offer, and soon he was in the presence of the solicitor. When Mr. Fairfax had heard Abel's story, he confirmed Mark's opinion, adding, that annulling the deed to which Mark was a party, putting aside the heavy penalty to which she was subject, was a matter of considerable and even vital consequence to his client; for should a proper wife not have been provided for him at the moment of his arrival—an event which might now be expected to take place at any moment, it might involve the loss of the whole of the Oldbourn estate. He, Mr. Fairfax, therefore, acting as executor and trustee, and as the friend of Sir Peregrine Oldbourn, must first consult his interests before he could listen to Abel's proposal. Then, putting on a smile, he said: "But, after all, Mr. Allnutt, are you consulting your niece's real interests in thus endeavouring to destroy a most advantageous match—one which ensures her handsome settlements and a brilliant position, besides the possession of a very amiable man, which Sir Peregrine assuredly is?—and are you not merely lending yourself to a girlish whim? for, in truth, it seems that she answered our advertisement entirely of her own accord, and she therefore could not have been very deeply smitten with the person in question.

Abel assured Mr. Fairfax that the step which he had now taken was entirely unknown to her; and although aware that he should be obliged perhaps to return to prison, yet he would much rather incur that penalty than run any risk of endangering his niece's existence.

Mr. Fairfax in answer gave him but little hopes of acceding to his wishes, and hinted that the utmost he could expect might be from an appeal to Sir Peregrine in person; for should he arrive within a few days, then time enough might still be left to seek another wife.

With this answer, Abel returned whence he came, deeply cogitating upon the chances which might prevent Mary from becoming the wife of Sir Peregrine. Ere he reached the house, he perceived a very fine carriage standing at the door; and when he entered the drawing-room, to his great surprise, he found Lady Thomson and Mrs. Goold Woodby and her two daughters seated in grand array before Aunts Barbara and Fanny.

As soon as he appeared, to his confusion the visitors all rose from their seats, and with a warmth of congratulation which he had never before witnessed, rushed towards him and overpowered him with fine speeches concerning Mary's future prospects.

"We have thought it our duty," said Lady Thomson, "to congratulate you on this happy occasion. We have heard of Mary's good luck with the sincerest satisfaction; and it is a duty I owe to myself to say, that I never heard of anything in my life which gave me greater pleasure."

"Yes," cried Mrs. Goold Woodby, having tried to thrust in her speech during Lady Thomson's effusion, "we came off the moment we heard it. It would have been shameful in us, such old friends too, not to come and give you joy. Believe me, we were not slow in putting in a good word, when Mr. Fairfax came to ask us about character and all that sort of thing; and we are quite delighted to find that it has turned out so well. I declare I am quite as happy as if it had happened to one of my own girls, for Mary has always been a great favourite of mine."

"Although her prospects look brilliant," said Abel, shaking his head, "yet in truth she would have been happier, and so should we all, had she remained as she was."

"This you can't say from your heart," replied Lady Thomson: "for does she not acquire wealth, rank, and title; and, let me ask you, would you deprive her of them? I can tell you a title is not so easily obtained

now-a-days. I owe it to myself to say, that my late Sir Peter had the promise of a baronetcy before he died; and although, as far as sound goes, one ladyship is as good as another; yet I'm not too proud to own, that a knight's lady is as little to be compared to a baronet's, as a cotton gown is to a satin one. No, no, don't think to make me believe you don't wish your niece to be a baronet's lady."

"And, although she will get her title by an advertisement," said Mrs. Woodby, "yet who is to know that? She will be as good a lady as the best of them. And, though she is going to marry a man she has never seen, who may be as old as the hills and as ugly as sin for what she knows, yet, what will that signify after the first fortnight. She will be mighty happy, I dare say, and well she deserves it too. I always said Mary was a nice, dear girl, and fit to sit at the head of any table."

Aunts Bab and Fanny, who at the first announcement of their visitors were taken quite aback by an honour so little expected, scarcely knew how to look; but their hearts were too full of the milk of human kindness to know how to be repulsive, and they could no more bear malice than they could condescend to commit an act of meanness: they therefore received them with their usual frankness of manner. Softened by the tone of adulation which their visitors adopted, they humbled themselves the more they were exalted.

"You are very kind to think so well of our poor Mary," said Aunt Bab; "I fear a high rank would never suit the lowliness of her mind."

"La!" said Mrs. Woodby, "how can you talk so? I declare Miss Mary is fit to be a queen, she is so superior:—she is almost as tall as our Anne, and a great deal broader across the shoulders than Ellen there, who is a poor thing after all."

"Indeed," said Anne Woodby, "she's much taller than I am: and when she is her ladyship, will be far taller and far handsomer than any person we know; although we do know Lady Thorofield, who is a peeress, besides Lady Thomson, and several other ladies."

"Ah, she is a sweet creature, and that's the truth of it!" said Lady Thomson.

"Yes, so dignified, and will look the thing well!" said Mrs. Woodby.

“Remarkably well in feathers!” said Anne.

“With her hair parted,” said Ellen.

“Sir Peregrine is a happy man to have got such a wife!” said Lady Thomson.

“We don’t know what sort of a looking man Sir Peregrine is,” said Fanny; “except that he has a long face and looks like a wild Oriental, as Mark Woodcock says.”

“You may be certain that an old baronet, as he is,” said Lady Thomson, “must look well. My Sir Peter, who was only a knight, was always reckoned like George the First.”

“Sir Peregrine, I hear, is not so old as that comes to,” said Mrs. Woodby. “Mr. Woodby is only a bit past fifty, and we haven’t a thought of calling him old yet, although one side of his head is grey and the other grizzle;—besides, the calves of his legs now are as good as ever.”

“A man may be an old baronet,” said Lady Thomson in a tone of superiority, “although he may be a young man. The Baronetage will settle that question.”

“I see,” said Mrs. Woodby, “you were talking of his creation, when I was talking of his real years, which, I believe, are more than Mary’s by a score, sweet creature!”

“If minds are congenial,” said Abel, “age does not signify so very much as the world generally imagines.”

“The high principles which you possess,” said Lady Thomson to Abel, “would make you contented under all circumstances. I wonder you do not take to the church, now that you have such a powerful nephew, who has—so I hear—several rich livings to give away.”

“If our Tom now had a turn for the church,” said Mrs. Woodby, “he would have had a good chance. Perhaps you may make a Bishop of Edward Manby, who is a friend of yours, I know, though we have not seen him for many a long day; and then he might marry Ellen there.”

“I don’t like the church,” said Ellen, without a blush, (for the world had long driven such amiable tell-tales from her cheeks:) “I hate a man who always dresses in black and must always be good.”

“You’re a fool for your pains!” said her mother.

“What signifies a man’s black coat, when he can give you two thousand a year, your coach, and everything handsome? That’s what your fine gentlemen with gold lace and long spurs can’t do, let them strain ever so hard.”

The conversation continued in this wise for some time longer, when it concluded, on the part of the Woodbys, by protestations of friendship, of devotion, of a desire to renew former intimacy; and on the part of the Allnutts, with simple thanks and expressions of good-will. The visitors would have repaired to Mary’s bed-room to nurse her, had they been allowed: Anne offered herself to sit up all night with her,—Ellen to read to her,—Mrs. Woodby to mix up her medicines;—they then promised to return the next day, to drive out Aunt Bab and Fanny; invited them to dine, and, in short, so loaded them with caresses, that the adulation was even too excessive for the simple-hearted spinsters to overlook. When they were fairly out of the house, Bab exclaimed, “Did any one ever see the like of that! What can have made them love us so much all of a sudden?”

“I think,” said Fanny, “they might as well have begged pardon for Tom’s behaviour.”

“Let us hope,” said Abel, “they will ever find us ready to pardon whatever may have been his or any other man’s ill-conduct. I am ready to forgive him; if he as easily can forgive himself, it will be well.—But let us think no more of that; our endeavours must now be directed towards Mary’s future well-being.” He then gave an account of his interview with Mr. Fairfax, and described the endeavours he had made to annul Mary’s engagement.

“What!” said Bab, “would you send yourself back to prison again, and us to beg our bread!”

“Then what will the Woodbys say!” said Fanny; “and Lady Thomson too? they won’t come inviting us to dine and drive any more—we shall be worse off than ever.”

“Let them say and do what they like,” said Abel with spirit; “let the world go its own pace, we have no business with it. Our business is to do our duty, and not allow selfish motives to prevent us from redeeming our dear noble-hearted Mary from a life of

misery. The days of our youth are gone by; her life is still to come. Shall we, in repugnance to all her feelings, and in direct opposition to a virtuous and well-grounded affection which she has conceived for for one in every way worthy of her,—shall we allow her to sacrifice herself for our advantage?”

“But, my dear Abel,” said Bab, “does it not stand to reason,” (taking up her old characteristic phrase, which she had lost in her misfortunes,) “that if Mary was to see you once more in prison, your health declining, and we paupers and beggars, relying upon the bounty of others,—does it not stand to reason that she would be infinitely more wretched than if allowed to work out the schemes she herself has set on foot, although it does involve the sacrifice of her own best affections? Believe me, she has strength of mind sufficient to meet such a sacrifice; her recent illness was owing to the violent state of excitement in which she had lately lived, keeping that secret which had she revealed would have given ease and freedom to her thoughts, and relief to her heart. Now, all being cleared up, her mind will gain strength, and she will be cheered by the delightful consciousness that she is doing good to those she most loves in this world.”

Fanny applauded this speech both by words and looks, for she always submitted to the superiority of her sister's common sense. Abel, too, felt the force of her words; but still he would have been happier were he allowed to be the sufferer instead of his adored niece. He concluded the conference by saying, that things at present must remain as they are, for Mr. Fairfax had asserted that he could alter nothing, and that the matter now rested entirely with Sir Peregrine Oldbourn.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A series of adventures portending ill luck, end in good fortune.

EDWARD MANBY'S failure in overtaking John Allnutt at Acapulco was followed up by a succession of misfortunes which ultimately drove him back to England.

Having watched the vanishing of the ship behind a distant headland, he sat down in despair, for at once he perceived it was out of the question to overtake the object of his search. Once launched into the Pacific, with a fair wind driving the ship from the coast, by what possibility could he hope to find him? He therefore submitted to his disappointment with the best temper he could, and soon after turned his steps towards the city of Mexico. There he sought employment in the service of one of the mining companies, and had succeeded in securing that object at Rio del Monte, when an accident occurred which prevented his immediately taking advantage of it.

Walking through the streets of Mexico, ignorant of the manners and superstition of the people, he met the procession of the Host, bound to the house of a dying man about to receive the extreme unction. The custom on such occasions is for every one to take off his hat and kneel until the coach in which the holy wafer is carried has passed. He did neither, but stood looking on with his hands behind his back, stopping the while near the shop of a shoemaker. Suddenly he heard certain shouts, and observed the faces of all present excited into rage, totally ignorant that he was the object of the commotion; and, before he was aware of the danger, he felt himself roughly seized by the collar, receiving the stab of a sharp instrument in the side at the same time. He staggered and fell, and looking round, perceived a ferocious-looking fellow brandishing the bloody awl in his hand, with which he had committed the deed. This was the shoemaker, a fanatic, who, having seen Edward's attitude, which he took for contumely, darted

forwards with zealous fury to avenge the cause of his religion.

The wounded man might have remained there and bled to death for what the bystanders cared, had he not been rescued by one of his countrymen, who, acquainted with the language and the people, immediately conveyed him to a place of safety, treated him with kindness, and straightway informed the English minister of the circumstance. Having thus laid the foundation for a warm discussion upon international law between the diplomatist and the government to which he was accredited, the kind stranger continued his attentions, and was rewarded by seeing his friend convalescent, before it was decided whether the shoemaker ought to be punished, or what degree of atonement was necessary to appease the anger of a government for such an outrageous attack upon one of its subjects.

Edward having recovered, though still weak from his wound, determined to proceed to Rio del Monte; but not taking proper precautions against the intense heat, he received a *coup de soleil*, as it is called, on his journey thither. This brought on more bleeding and more violent discipline, which, added to his first disaster, nearly brought him to death's door, and unfitted him for the duties he had to perform. Moreover, when at his post, an insurrection took place among the miners, fomented by evil-intentioned priests, and soon a report was rife that all heretics had tails. To this fable Edward had nearly fallen a sacrifice; for, taking a ride one day for his health, and rising in his stirrups, as Englishmen are wont to do on a trot, he was nearly stoned to death by a mob of miners, who swore he was giving himself this trouble in order to favour the tail which he wore secreted behind his coat. He was so entirely disgusted by such treatment, that to remain longer among so worthless a people he felt was time thrown away, particularly as nothing seemed to prosper with him, and therefore he resolved upon returning to England.

Being kindly furnished with money by the preserver of his life, who did not cease taking interest in his fate, he associated himself with a party of six proceeding to Vera Cruz, and with them hired one of those large, ancient-looking coaches, hung upon leathern upholders,

and drawn by a whole regiment of mules,—conveyances so well known to every Mexican traveller,—and soon after bade adieu to the capital of New Spain.

Much apprehension was excited at the time as to the safety of the roads. Bands of robbers infested the whole country, and particularly in the direction of Puebla; and every thing was said to dissuade the party from attempting the journey, but in vain. On an appointed day, they departed, well armed, and full of hope that no disaster would occur. Passing one of the pine-wood forests, so frequent on the road, suddenly they heard several shots fired, and then cries ordering the postillions to stop and dismount. The most active within the coach seized their arms and jumped out. Edward, still very weak, was fumbling for his pistols, when a discharge of small-arms, as if from a battalion of infantry, was directed against the body of the carriage, and he found himself beset by shot-holes, one ball having passed through his hat. Two of those who left the carriage were severely wounded, and two killed outright. All resistance was vain, and those left alive were too happy to submit to their fate and be robbed of all they possessed. This done, the gang withdrew from the field under the orders of their chief, the Captain Rolando of the day, and then left the unfortunate sufferers to make the best of their way.

At length they managed to reach Vera Cruz; and Edward, with joy and thankfulness, once more found himself treading the deck of an English ship. Much as he was persecuted by ill-luck on shore, so equally was he the favourite of Fortune at sea; for, escaping the dangers of yellow fever both at Vera Cruz and the Havannah, and being favoured in his passage through the Florida stream, he made one of the most rapid voyages across the Atlantic almost ever known; landing at Liverpool, safe and sound, quite restored to health, though with scarcely a shirt to his back, or a sixpence in his pocket.

Edward had lived with the image of Mary constantly before him—all his schemes were planned with her happiness in view, and there was nothing he undertook which was not directly or indirectly connected with the hope of one day possessing her as a wife. When he reached Liverpool his heart was full of apprehension,

and he dreaded to think what changes might have taken place during his absence. On landing, his first inquiries were concerning his uncle: he found that he had left the place, ruined and a bankrupt, and that his family was dispersed. His next care was to seek some friend who would furnish him with sufficient money to take him to London; and having secured a supply, he hastened to seek the object of all his thoughts. Upon his arrival, he straightway bent his steps to Golden-square, hoping to find Mary and her relations in the same place where he had left them. His heart beat audibly as he rapped at the door. It was opened by a strange face; and in answer to his inquiries he was informed that no Allnut lived there, and that the name was not even known. With disappointment in his heart, he next directed his steps to the banker's, where he felt certain of learning their address; but there too he was disappointed,—he was informed that their account had been closed for some time past; and Edward himself knew enough of Mexican affairs to be certain that their expectations concerning the dividends of the loan were still unaccomplished. He applied at the Post-office in vain—they were not house-holders, their name did not appear in any of the directories; and from Abel's habits he was quite sure that he could not be the member of a club. A thought struck him: he remembered that they were acquainted with Mark Woodcock; but where was Mark Woodcock to be found? He entered a coffee-house, hoping that in looking over a newspaper, with its numerous advertisements, to alight upon some article which might enlighten his mind. He seized upon a large sheet as broad and as long as a table-cloth; and after much tossing and tumbling, to his great surprise, nearly the first thing which caught his eye was his own name, in large characters: it headed an advertisement thus expressed:—

“EDWARD MANBY.—*If a person of that name, son of the late Captain Manby of Jamaica, will call at the office of Mr. Fairfax, solicitor, Lincoln's-inn, he will hear of something to his advantage.*”

“Can that possibly mean me?” said Edward. “It must be; and still, who can have anything to say to my advantage, wretched outcast that I am?” He read the advertisement over and over again with feelings we will

not attempt to describe, until he felt persuaded that he was the person designated; and although tired and jaded with his previous walk, he set off again joyfully and full of buoyant hope that Fortune had at length determined to turn over a new leaf in his favour.

When he reached Mr. Fairfax's office, he was fairly out of breath with haste: but collecting all his thoughts ere he ventured to announce himself, he entered the office. The first person he saw was Mark Woodcock; and again his heart was cheered by the sight of an acquaintance, who he felt could inform him of the only one thing he really wished to know.

Mark, seeing one of no very prepossessing appearance,—for Edward wore the same dress in which he had left Mexico,—looked at him as one with whom he might have associated in his own journey, and began to consider in what outlandish tongue he ought to address him, when the other stepping up to him said, "Sir, my name is Edward Manby."

"Is it indeed!" said Mark, heartily glad to hear the confession, and, without another word, dragged him before Mr. Fairfax, announcing his visiter with great emphasis. Mr. Fairfax, eyeing him well from head to foot, and making a succession of questions to ascertain his identity, to all of which he gave satisfactory answers, at length said, "I am very happy, Mr. Manby, to take you by the hand. I have repeatedly inserted advertisements in the newspapers similar to the one which you have read, but to no purpose. They were put in, in consequence of a clause in the will of your late uncle, Sir Roger Oldbourn, who was very anxious to have seen you before he died, by which act he has bequeathed you the sum of five hundred pounds free of all duty. That sum, as his executor, I shall now have the pleasure of paying into your hands; and I wish it were double the amount. Here is a copy of the will, which you will have the goodness to look over, and here is the money in a cheque on my banker." Upon which the solicitor put the document before him, and the draft for the money into his hands.

Edward stood like one entranced. He had heard, in early life, that he was a nephew to a baronet of the name of Oldbourn; but so little was he impressed with the importance of such a relationship, that it never occurred

to him it could be available as a matter of interest. This uncle had always been described to him as so entirely his enemy, that he scarcely could believe in his good fortune. He did not give himself the trouble to look at the will, but taking Mr. Fairfax's word, pocketed the money with as many expressions of gratitude as if the solicitor had given it to him from his own purse. He was bursting with impatience all this while to make inquiries concerning the Allnuts, and as soon as he had an opportunity, eagerly asked Mark whether he could give him any information concerning them, and what was their address?

To this, Mark, and Mr. Fairfax both, answered in general terms that they were well, and would no doubt be happy to see him; but being now entirely engrossed in the affair of the marriage, and daily expecting the arrival of Sir Peregrine Oldbourn, they inquired of Edward whether perchance he could give any account of his uncle, who was hourly expected to arrive from his eastern travels. Again Edward was surprised, for he avowed that he was not aware of possessing such an uncle, and made eager inquiries how he might become acquainted with him.

This gave Mark an opportunity for making a display of his knowledge of foreign countries. "Sir," said Mark, "you will become acquainted with a most learned gentleman: I know him well,—I knew him in that part of Greece called Asia Minor, where he had just arrived after making that famous discovery of Solomon's Temple at a place called Persepolis in Persia."

"At Persepolis?" said Edward; "I always thought Solomon's Temple had been built at Jerusalem."

"So every one thought until now," said Mark, "and you are right in thinking so; but since you left England all that sort of thing has been changed—Sir Peregrine has settled it beyond a doubt that it was built at Persepolis, and he'll tell you so when you see him."

"I hope soon to see him. But pray," said Edward, more anxious to know where the Allnutts lived than where Solomon's Temple was built,—“pray, where can I call upon the Allnutts?”

"Oh," said Mark, "I forgot—here is Mr. Abel's card." He would have said more, and proceeded to give an account of the present state of the family, but

that he could not take that liberty under the immediate eye of his chief; he therefore restricted himself to saying, that he hoped to see him often, as Mr. Fairfax would have much business to transact with his uncle; and having received an invitation to dine with Mr. Fairfax on the following day, he left that good man's house elated with joy, burning to throw himself at the feet of his beloved Mary, and anxious once more to identify himself and his fortune with the only persons that he really loved in the world.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Illustration of the saying, "Les absens ont toujours tort."

ABEL and his sisters had persevered in not allowing the least agitation to impede Mary's progress towards recovery; and they were well repaid for their care by the pleasure of seeing her restored to them, still very weak, but pronounced by the doctor quite convalescent. They made the day when she was to leave her bed-room an event of great rejoicing. An arm-chair was placed for her at the corner of the fireplace in the drawing-room, a curtain was drawn to screen her from draughts, and her aunts were all bustle and preparation. When she appeared, languid and pale, though beaming with a beauty almost transparent with delicacy, her uncle conducted her to her seat, his eyes swimming with tears, and his heart full of gratitude for the enjoyment of a blessing which he at one time thought had been lost to them for ever. They hung over her with the tenderest attention, and seating themselves around, gazed at her with rapture, scarcely daring to draw breath, lest by so doing they might discompose her nerves. Mary felt an inward satisfaction which she could only express by affectionate smiles, which seemed to say, that could she remain thus tranquil and thus surrounded for the rest of her days, she

would ask no other boon from Heaven. But, alas! how short-lived are our pleasures! Scarcely were they seated, when a hurried knock was heard at the street-door.

“Who can that be?” said Fanny.

“We must let nobody in,” said Bab.

“Not even Mark,” said Abel.

“Oh yes!” said Mary, “let poor Mark in; I am sure I am strong enough to see him. He is such a good-hearted creature—pray let us have him in!”

Abel was just turning towards the door to give his orders, when two or three rapid bounds were heard on the staircase, the door was violently thrown open, and to their surprise and dismay Edward Manby stood before them. Such a sight at so unprepared a moment may be better imagined than described, and indeed its effects were most disastrous. Poor Mary entirely lost all sensation, whilst her aunts, in utter dismay, their arms extended against Edward, rushed to receive her drooping head. Abel, with quick apprehension of the mischief about to happen, immediately took Edward by the arm and led him out of the room. Edward opposed with violence the urgent action of Abel, seeing the object of his dearest affections so overcome; but the words of Abel, who said, “Edward, you will kill her if you persist,” produced so instantaneous an effect, that he followed his conductor into the dining-room more dead than alive.

“What has happened?” said Edward; “in the name of Heaven, what can all this mean?”

“My dear friend,” said Abel, taking his hand with the warmest affections, whilst tears filled his eyes—“My dear Edward, excuse the reception you have met with; but you will forgive us when you know all. We are much to be pitied—that poor girl in particular; she has been dangerously ill, and the sudden sight of you has been too much for her. Excuse my anxiety; I must return to her for a moment; perhaps her seizure is only momentary; wait here till I come again, and then I will tell you all.” Upon which he hastened back to the drawing-room, whilst Edward remained below in all the agony of suspense, cursing his own imprudence for having ventured so thoughtlessly and so abruptly to intrude himself without due notice. He stood with ears

erect, awake to the least sound, and we need not describe his feelings, when he heard an order given to the servant to run for the doctor instantly. He would have flown himself—he would have run half the world over could he have done any good; but fearing by some second act of imprudence to produce more mischief, he condemned himself to pace the floor of the dining-room until Abel should return.

In the mean while, the endeavours of the aunts to restore their niece succeeded, and they were overjoyed to see her open her eyes and hear her speak, although they found it necessary to take her to bed again. She had fainted from quick revulsion, produced by sudden emotion; but as her mind was turned to coming events by constant reflection and daily preparation, and as she was not borne down by fever, the attack was merely one produced by weakness. As soon as she came to herself, they did not permit her to speak, although she was eager to ask all sorts of questions; and she allowed herself to be quieted when informed by Abel that he would undertake to explain to the unfortunate Edward the real state of the whole case.

When Abel returned into the dining-room, Edward flew towards him, accusing himself of every sort of imprudence for so thoughtlessly venturing to enter the house without being announced; but when he was assured by Abel that Mary was better, he allowed himself to be pacified. Then Abel, taking him affectionately by the hand, said, “Now sit down. I have much to say—much that will afflict you, for I am acquainted with your love for Mary; and it grieves me to be obliged to tell you, that you must prepare yourself for the bitterest of disappointments.”

“O Heaven!” exclaimed Edward, scarcely able to utter from emotion, “what is it?—tell me quickly. Is she married?”

“Have patience, my dear friend,” said Abel,—“you must know all from the beginning, or otherwise you will not be sufficiently able to pity and forgive her and us. In the first place then, to answer your question, she is not married, but I will not answer for what is likely to take place—she is engaged to another.”

“It can’t be,” said Edward, starting with violent emotion,—“it must not be; she has engaged herself to

me—she never can have changed! I am come to claim her as my own!”

“You must listen with patience,” said Abel. “When you have heard our pitiful tale, to what necessities we have been reduced, and what sacrifices this noble girl has made, it will then be time to draw your conclusions; and, if I have not mistaken your character, I am sure you will be the first to applaud the magnanimity of her conduct, although it may be at the expense of your own happiness.”

Edward sat himself down in a dogged attitude, as if prepared to undergo some act of torture; when Abel proceeded with his narrative. Beginning from the time of Edward’s departure, he laid great stress upon the miseries they endured in consequence of not hearing from him, and avowed that they allowed suspicions of his neglect to creep into their minds, until they received his letter, and all became fatally clear. When he described Tom Woodby’s conduct, Edward muttered between his teeth “The villain!” and when from that, having glanced at the dreadful state of want to which they were reduced, which had first turned Mary’s thoughts to the advertisement, Abel seized hold of Edward’s hand, and said, “Such, my friend, was our position, and such the motives which urged the conduct of Mary.”

Edward did not require more explanation, for his heart was already excited into the highest glow of admiration of her conduct,—he abhorred the pitiful selfishness, that could have angered him at the determination she had taken, and he loudly asserted that it would have been contrary to the noble disinterestedness of her nature had she acted otherwise. “But who is the man, after all,” said Edward, “that is to possess her? Is he known?—will he be kind to her—has she any chance of happiness with him?”

“Who?” said Abel. “What! have you not been told? Why, it is no less a person than your own uncle Sir Peregrine Oldbourn!”

Edward’s astonishment at this strange coincidence could only be expressed by exclamations of surprise; and however great might be his own disappointment—however bitter his anguish at this destruction of all his hopes, still there was some consolation for him to find

that she was to be married to a gentleman, and so likely to treat his wife with kindness.

Having heard Abel's statement, he abruptly departed, so anxious was he to be alone, in order, if possible, to regain possession of his equanimity. It was no easy matter to break down in an instant that structure of hope, and anticipated delight, which had so long existed in his heart, upon foundations so deep, that he conceived nothing could ever demolish them. He walked away sorrowful and almost broken-hearted. He longed once more to see Mary, were it only to assure her, that although it had been ordained she was not to be his wife, yet he would live in the hope of seeing her happy, and as a first step to secure that result he would leave England for ever, for he had not strength of mind sufficient to behold her with indifference in the possession of another. After such cogitations, he determined to return once again to Abel, to make him the confidant of his feelings, and with him to concert to what mode of life, as an alien from England, he could best turn his views.

When, after Edward's sudden apparition, Mary had come to herself, she soon regained possession of her mind, although her body was too weak to sustain violent emotions. Having anticipated this event, she had schooled herself to meet it; and would have done so with success, had Edward behaved with common prudence in announcing his arrival. Trusting to the excellence and nobleness of his nature, she subsequently determined to see him, to confide in him, to speak to him the language of friendship,—to explain to him that she had built her whole conduct upon the certainty of finding in him that same abnegation of self which she had endeavoured to acquire. Feeling strong enough to execute this resolution, she informed her aunts and uncle that she was determined to see Edward, for she was certain that was the only mode of accelerating her total recovery. They became alarmed, and said that they must refer to the doctor, who alone could judge whether she ought to be allowed such a licence. The doctor, who happened to be a philosopher as well as one skilled in bodily infirmities, immediately assented to her wish; for he knew that the only way to produce health of body is by first securing ease of mind.

When Edward called again, Abel informed him that Mary wished to see him; warning him of her feeble state, and hinting how necessary it was to arm himself with resolution to suppress emotions which would naturally arise upon seeing her again face to face. Although Edward was not quite prepared for this, still joy sprang into his heart at the very idea, and he assured Abel that he would master his feelings to the utmost of his power.

Mary lay extended on a sofa, pale, languid, and weak, though armed in her inmost mind with the resolution of a martyr. It was indeed a trial almost superhuman for a man in love to approach the idol of his heart in the manner that Edward was about to do, and, at the same time, to be precluded from the power of giving full vent to his feelings. When he entered the room, a clammy moisture broke out upon his forehead, and he would have clutched his own heart, could he have got at it, in order to enclose its emotions within his grasp. He approached her with a faltering step, and seized her hand, which she held out to him, whilst a smile broke upon her features which would have spoken volumes had she ventured to give utterance to the real sentiments of her breast. Nothing was said between them until Mary broke the silence, and said, "Edward, we are still friends, although our lot has not been cast as we had once intended. We are both blessed with a sense of religion, which, with the help of God, will make us fulfil the duties assigned to us in our different paths through life."

"You must support me, Mary," said Edward; "for in truth I have not yet had time enough to wean myself from—" he would have said his love; but he stopped short, and turning his head away allowed his tears to flow.

"The trial is a great one," said Mary, "believe me; I have gone through its various agonies. My wretchedness has brought me to the brink of the grave; and were it not for those dear relations so precious to us both, I would have wished that it might have been allowed to receive me. But why are we here but to be tried? I have been restored to life, but I have been taught that it is not given to us mortals to make up our own scheme of happiness according to

our own views—but our destinies are in other and better hands! Edward, I have been taught that those delightful visions of happiness which I had once formed of living in your company for the rest of my life must be driven from my mind, and that I am to belong to another—to one whom I have never yet seen,—to one who will probably be the one great trial of my existence—whose tastes, perhaps, are totally different from mine—who may treat me with indifference—who marries me only to fulfil a clause in a will—and one, in short, who will make me daily feel the necessity of fleeing to God as my refuge, as my only resource against despair. Edward, the decrees of Providence must be obeyed—I have in all humility bowed down my head to them; and I have said to myself, ‘Happen what may, I will strive to be contented with my lot!’ I am to promise to love, honour, and obey my husband that is to be; and as I hope for salvation,” said the animated maid, “I will exert all the powers of my existence to love, honour, and obey him. I will pray day and night for support: I will go straight forward to my duties, and will with God’s help exert my best energies to pursue with credit and honour the path that is spread before me.”

Animated with what she said, she rose from her seat, and in an attitude of supplication she said, “And thus, dear Edward, do I pray you to take the same resolutions. Look upon your present situation as one of trial; pray for support; whatever may be your position in life, resolve to perform its duties with unwearied perseverance, and the same result which has crowned my endeavours will crown yours, and we shall mutually enjoy that peace which the world cannot give, and which passeth all understanding.”

During this effort which Mary made over her weakness, Edward gazed upon her with a feeling composed of love, respect, and admiration, for she appeared to him as something more than human. His heart bent with entire submission to her wishes, and with the determination to imitate her example, he said with enthusiasm, “I will endeavour to render myself worthy of you, Mary. The same strength which has been given to you will doubtless be my portion also if I earnestly strive to attain it.”

He did not allow himself to remain with her after this declaration, but almost fled from the fascinating influence of her presence, fearful that his weakness might get the better of his nobler resolves. She hid her face with her hands lest a look from him might have overpowered her resolution; but when she saw him leave the room, the oppression of her heart found relief in a copious flood of tears, until they were checked by that appeal to Heaven in prayer, which always produced the effect of bringing peace to her mind, and restoring her to the conviction that all is for the best.

CHAPTER XXV.

Delusion, infatuation, and hobby-horse riding are nearly synonymous.

WE return to Sir Peregrine Oldbourn, who, shortly after Mark Woodcock's departure from Smyrna, having hired a vessel and embarked his collection of antiquities, sailed away from that magnificent gulf, infinitely more intent upon his antiquarian pursuits than upon acquiring possession of the fortune that was awaiting him in England. The episode of Mark's visit had made but a transient impression, and surrounded as he was by objects and places, which constantly revived his classic recollections, he allowed them to engross his thoughts more than the common-place business of everyday life. One of his earliest wishes had been to obtain possession of a certain altar in the Island of Delos, which he had seen portrayed in Tournefort's Travels, and to that spot he first bent his course. He reached it in due time; although during the passage he could not refrain from touching at Chios, to see the place where Homer formerly held his school—for the inhabitants still pretend to show the very spot on which he sat,—and could scarcely be restrained, in spite of wind and weather, from landing on every island to inspect every stone sacred to an antiquary's eye.

Before his bark cast anchor at Delos, he perceived an

English frigate in the offing, and without waiting to discover what she might be, he instantly went on shore, so anxious was he to see the object which had so long engaged his attention. At a small distance from the landing-place he perceived a party of English sailors hooting and making merry at some object at which they were casting stones.

“Go it, Ned!” said one voice.

“Now for a broadside!” said another.

“There goes her fin!” said a third.

“Here’s for her stern!” roared a fourth.

Sir Peregrine hastened to the scene of action; and there, to his surprise, his joy, and dismay, he discovered a most beautiful female statue of white marble, at which the idle sons of Neptune were directing the whole of their energies.

“For Heaven’s sake, stop!” roared the anxious antiquary, running towards the statue and screening it with his body. “I’ll give you any thing you like, but throw no more stones.”

The sailors, seeing so strange a figure before them, and hearing him speak their language, at once desisted; although they very probably would not have given up their sport, had not the midshipman in charge of the boat stepped up and rescued the beautiful statue from further demolition.

“They have broken off its hand,” said Sir Peregrine, almost crying with sorrow; and then he fell to making such extraordinary contortions, indicating delight of the highest order, that all the worthies present concluded they had fallen in with one of insane mind. “A first-rate Venus, by all that’s sacred!” he cried out in rapture as he stood gazing at the prize.

“Please your honour,” said a rough fellow, stepping up and touching his hat, “the Venus is only a sloop of war.”

“Stand back, sir,” said the midshipman, making way for the captain of the frigate, who had just returned from taking a walk through the island, and who having taken a long look at Sir Peregrine, still too much engrossed to observe what was going on around him, rushed up to him with extended hands, and at once announced himself as an old schoolfellow. The excited baronet could scarcely refrain from throwing himself

into his arms with joy, although perhaps this ebullition proceeded more from the delight of having found an old statue than an old friend, and the result of this meeting proved highly satisfactory, inasmuch as it was the means of putting Sir Peregrine in possession of the statue, for which he was too happy to remunerate all the parties concerned with more than liberality of ardent passion.

The precious object was conveyed on board his own vessel, and was placed in a spot open to his contemplation at all hours of the day. He entirely forgot his brother's will, his future wife, time elapsed or time to come, and everything that related to his obligations and engagements, in the ecstasies of antiquarian enjoyment; his Venus was all in all to him. He immediately began writing a dissertation, upholding her as something infinitely superior to the Medici Venus, or, indeed, to any piece of sculpture in the known world. He even forgot his dearly-beloved altar, which in fact had been carried away by a previous amateur: his mind seemed to have been swept of every other sensation or recollection, Persepolis not excepted, and he only lived in the joy and happiness of being the possessor of that which was to give him fame and pleasure for the rest of his days.

He proceeded onwards to Athens and cast anchor in the harbour of the Piræus. No antiquary could ever have been more blest with success and advantages of every kind, were he not oppressed by the weight of his overhanging engagement. When he saw the wonders of ancient art spread before him, he was lost in delight and astonishment, and he would willingly have passed the remainder of his days in worshipping at the shrine of Minerva; but as he dozed away his life day after day, lost in admiration, and living more among the ancient dead than among the things of the present time, every now and then a vision of Mark Woodcock would arise before him with a parchment in one hand and a wife in the other, and awaken him from his antiquarian trance.

He increased his collections all in his power, by purchasing fragments of every description. Doric capitals, shafts of columns, huge specimens from Pentelicus, friezes, metopes, and architectural remains, were loaded upon his bark, until she began to swim deep in the

water, when the master informed him that she could bear no more with safety. His time for departure now drew near, and he was about paying his last visit to the great fane, when stepping on board, he was informed that his ship had sprung a leak, owing, it was said, to the awkward loading of certain heavy blocks. He returned ashore; and as he stood on the margin of the Piræus, to his great dismay, he gradually perceived his floating treasures sinking inch by inch into the sea, until the hull of the vessel entirely disappeared from above the surface. The leak had become uncontrollable, and the vessel sunk in spite of every effort. He rubbed his eyes at the phenomenon, and danced about with unavailing supplications for help. His philosophy was not proof against such an event, and he cursed himself as the unluckiest of mortals, and his ship as the worst of ships. What could he do but rave?—At length, when the captain of his bark could with safety approach him, he informed that, having sunk in shallow water, it would not be difficult with proper help to raise, repair, and make her sea-worthy, but that such an operation could not be done in a day.

Sir Peregrine exclaimed, "I will stay here for ever rather than lose my Venus;" and so saying, he ordered every exertion to be made in furtherance of the captain's suggestions. Long indeed was the labour, and deeply did the time which it occupied trench upon the prescribed limits of his absence from England: he thought little of his wife and fortune, but gave himself up entirely to the hope of regaining possession of his treasures. To his delight, his extravagant joy, he had the satisfaction one morning, after immense exertions, to see his beloved Venus raised from the deep, uninjured, intact, lovely and attractive as ever: his transports knew no bounds, and he gave an entertainment to celebrate her reappearance. Little by little his whole collection was again restored, his ship repaired and fitted for sea; but so much time had now elapsed, that it was evident, unless favoured by the winds, it would be difficult to reach England within the six months.

He anchored at Malta after a short and prosperous voyage, and would have proceeded immediately to England, had he not, by great ill-luck, met with a party of French travellers, bound on a tour of science and an-

tiquity to Greece and the islands, to whom he could not refrain from exhibiting with pride and exultation the beautiful statue of which he had become the possessor. The principal person among the Frenchmen was an antiquary, learned in Greek, and one who had written many dissertations. Sir Peregrine had announced his statue as an undoubted Venus; but when it came before the eye of the Frenchman, he looked at it with the doubting aspect of a connoisseur, and after a short interval exclaimed, "Ah, bah! this is no Venus—this is Latona." Upon which issue was joined between the parties: Sir Peregrine felt himself bound to defend the position he had taken up, the Frenchman would allow of no appeal from his decision. The enthusiastic baronet, in the ecstasy of his admiration, determined to prove that his statue could only be the very identical *chef-d'œuvre* of Praxiteles, the famous Venus of Cnidus, which, with a body of stone, had melted a heart of flesh and blood, and quoted every author from Hesiod to Payne Knight to prove his assertion.

The Frenchman begged leave to inquire what business could Venus have at Delos? "Send her to Cyprus, to Cythera, to Cnidus, to Sicyon, and a hundred other places, and welcome," said he, "but do not let her come to Delos—that island sacred only to Apollo and Diana, and to their mother Latona, whose beauty and agony this statue represents."

"Agony!" exclaimed Sir Peregrine; "on the contrary, I submit it to every one who knows anything of a face, whether the expression of her countenance does not denote pleasure and joy."

Thence ensued a long argument upon the expressions of the human countenance. "But see," said the Frenchman, "here is a proof that it is Latona!—here on the pedestal is something like the wing of a bird. Now Latona was changed into a quail; therefore this must be that goddess."

"I do not admit that as any proof," said Sir Peregrine, "for Venus was the protectress of doves, swans, and sparrows."

Arguments were thus arrayed on either side, until the whole island became divided into two parties. Sir Peregrine went about canvassing with as much zeal for Venus as any candidate would for a metropolitan bo-

rough; whilst the Frenchman thought the honour and glory of his country were concerned that he should make good his claims in favour of Latona.

Sir Peregrine was sitting down seriously to publish his views upon the subject in a pamphlet, when the arrival of a packet with newspapers put him in mind that there was such a place in the world as England, and that he had a great deal to do in it; so, without further delay, he packed up his Venus and his dissertations, and without saying a word, or taking farewell of any one, he embarked and sailed away, leaving the field in full possession of the enemy, who took care to have it well understood, that with whatever weapons, the pen or the sword, France was sure to cover herself with glory.

The baronet, full of the subject which had occupied his mind at Malta, had leisure when on his passage to Gibraltar to arrange his thoughts into the shape of a learned essay, which he intended to publish the moment he should reach England; and thus did he lose sight of that fortune and all its alluring concomitants, which to every other person but himself would probably have kept his mind in a ferment of impatience and anxiety.

The time was drawing nigh when the term fixed in his brother's will would elapse, and still he was in the middle of the ocean thinking upon Venus. Having passed Gibraltar, he got into the Bay of Biscay, where, as usual, he encountered a gale of wind, which came on with a violence that put all his speculations for the present out of his head and made him think seriously upon the safety of his treasures. His vessel was deeply laden, and she laboured much, to the great dismay of all on board, who were aware that the only method of lightening her was to throw overboard a great part of her heavy cargo; but who was there bold enough to suggest this expedient to the doting and enthusiastic antiquary!

At length the storm increased so much, and the vessel was so constantly overwhelmed with waves, that the master took courage and ventured to speak to Sir Peregrine. He sidled up towards him as he stood on the deck gazing at the storm, and prefaced what he had to say with the preliminary observation, that it was dirty weather, and that it was likely to come on to blow. He

stood by for a while to observe what effect such observations would have, when Sir Peregrine remarked, "Why, sir, how much more would you have it blow!"

"We can't go on much longer," said the master, "without lightening the vessel. She won't rise to it at all: something must go overboard, or we shall go down."

"Sir," said the baronet, "I don't understand you. What is to go overboard?"

"Some of the cargo, if you please, sir," answered the master.

"What!" exclaimed Sir Peregrine, "would you throw the works of Phidias into the deep?—would you throw part of the Temple of Minerva into the Bay of Biscay? There is sacrilege in the very thought! Are you aware, sir, that you are the carrier of treasures—of part of the works of the most celebrated people of antiquity, whose skill, taste, and knowledge in the arts have never been rivalled, and who exercise influence over all the nations of the present day? If you were to throw any of my blocks of marble overboard, they are lost to the world forever, and I should like to know how you could ever replace them?"

"As for that," said the master, "I would get you as much stone as you like from Portland, a great deal better than what we have got on board; and there is no end to the granite one can get from Aberdeen."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed the indignant antiquary, "did you ever hear of Phidias working with Aberdeen granite? I tell you again, if you throw any of my marbles overboard, you may as well throw me after them."

The master walked away grumbling, muttering between his teeth that he would not risk his life and that of his crew for a parcel of old rubbish, and actually was beginning to get the gear up for hoisting some of the bulkier fragments from the hold, when, to his joy, he beheld a break in the sky to windward which portended fine weather, and he straightway returned to Sir Peregrine to inform him of his hopes. The event proved as he anticipated—the storm subsided, and ere a few days had elapsed, the cheering cry was heard from the mast-head of "Land on the starboard bow!" On the following morning, the vessel was abreast of Scilly, running up Channel with a fair wind; and hav-

ing made her passage good as far as Dover, she hove to off that port for a pilot.

Here the reader might suppose that Sir Peregrine, considering how much he had at stake, would straight-way have landed, ordered a post-chaise and galloped off to London; but no,—nothing could separate him from his statue; but a very short time was left ere the prescribed six months would elapse, and still he continued on ship-board, subject to the uncertainty attending winds and tides, determined never to abandon that which he cherished more than life until he had deposited it in a place of safety.

CHAPTER XXVI.

One of the three great miseries of life according to the Italian proverb, is, "Aspettarre e non venire."

THE time was now so nearly accomplished when Sir Peregrine should have arrived, that all the parties interested in that event began to be seriously apprehensive that some accident had befallen him.

Mary, ever since her interview with Edward, had not intermitted strengthening her mind by religion and reflection, in readiness to meet her future partner in life. Her aunts lived in a constant state of fidget, vibrating betwixt expectation and apprehension; and Uncle Abel's philosophy was not proof against the fear and uncertainty attendant upon an event in which the happiness of his precious niece was so much compromised. Mr. Fairfax was considering what steps he could take to secure the arrival of his client, for he began to be seriously apprehensive that his eccentricities might defeat his late brother's schemes in his favour; and Edward was kept in suspense as to the line of life he should adopt, having determined to see his uncle before he took a final resolution. Mark Woodcock alone, from his knowledge of the man, had made up his mind that he would not arrive in time to fulfil his engagements.

Reports had reached England of the disaster which had befallen Sir Peregrine's vessel at Athens, although he himself had not written, and they added to the uncertainty and expectation into which every one of the parties concerned were thrown. Among others, the Goold Woodbys had been informed of what was passing, and, like all small folks who are happy to be concerned in the business of the great, they were constantly calling upon the Allnutts and making themselves officiously active in what concerned them not.

Mrs. Woodby, just returned from paying a visit to Aunt Bab, came rushing in to her friend Lady Thomson with a face beaming with importance, and exclaimed, "Do you know what has happened? Why, I declare if there isn't Edward Manby, there!—you know who I mean?—that young man who was Tom's friend, nephew to the brewer at Liverpool, and who went off nobody knew where; well, he is likely to come in for at least ten thousand a year, and a great house and park."

"Is that really possible!" said Lady Thomson, equally astonished.

"It is as true as you sit there," said Mrs. Woodby. "I have just heard it from Barbara Allnutt, who is in such a taking lest her niece, after all, should only get the old baronet without his fortune!—which, you know, is the principal thing."

"Well, that will be extraordinary!" said Lady Thomson: "but how can this happen?"

"Why, it seems," said Mrs. Woodby, "that according to old Sir Roger's will, if his brother does not marry within six months after his death, then the money and estates go to the nephew. Now, Edward, we knew before, was nephew to a baronet, and this is he;—isn't it a strange incidence?"

"Strange indeed!"—Coincidence, you mean, my dear."

"I mean what I mean," said Mrs. Woodby. "Now, the present baronet, Sir Peregrine, is a very eccentric man, one they call a great absentee, and it is supposed he has forgot all about it; for instead of coming straight home to his business, he is gone to discover the Temple of Solomon in Persia, and he is no more likely to get home within his time than he is to fly."

"The man must be a fool," said Lady Thomson: "the

Temple of Solomon was built at Jerusalem—any one can tell that. I make it a rule to set everybody right, and I'll tell him so when I see him. If such is the case, I wish Miss Mary Allnutt joy upon her old baronet! Why, she may just whistle for it, and remain Mary Allnutt for the rest of her life."

"But what a piece of luck for our Ellen!" said Mrs. Woodby. "As soon as she hears this, the girl will become as much in love with Edward as ever she was; and as he can't get Mary now, whom he used to be going after when they lived at Ivycote, why, it's perfectly certain that we may get him if we only look sharp, and if Mr. Woodby will only bestir himself, and not be thinking all day long about his patent steam-apparatus."

"But what if Mary was now to throw over her old baronet and marry Edward?—there is nothing to hinder her," said Lady Thomson.

"Why, you see," said her friend, "that girl is one of your out-and-outers in doing what is right; and she wouldn't go from her word, not to please the king himself; and it's her being a saint, as she is called, that makes me think that our Ellen is secure of Edward. Why, she's engaged to Sir Peregrine by a bond—she's set her hand to it—she and her family were taken out of prison on account of this bond, and they have been living on it ever since. She can't be off if she would."

"I owe it to myself to say," said Lady Thomson, "that if I was Mary Allnutt, I would no more marry Sir Peregrine without his fortune than I would marry you. I think I know what is right and proper, and all that, as well as any Mary Allnutt in the kingdom; and if she is fool enough, only because she has signed a bit of parchment, to tack herself to a beggarly baronet all the rest of her days, why, joy go with her! However, she knows her business, and I know mine; but if I was her, I would marry Manby, without the shadow of a doubt."

"That is what she shan't!" cried out Mrs. Woodby, perfectly outrageous at the view her friend had taken of the case. "I do not see why we are to be done out of a good thing when it comes in our way. We have as much right to Edward Manby as the Allnuts. We were in love with him first; he was our Tom's friend—he used to live at Belvedere when he had'nt a house to

go to; and now that he is to be well off in the world, it is only doing what he ought to do, and it will be a crying shame if he don't, to marry our Ellen. We 'll have him here to dinner as sure as fate, and you 'll see how I'll manage him! I know Ned pretty well I flatter myself; he will go through fire and water to please me, and he 'll marry when I hold up my finger and tell him to do so." Upon which Mrs. Woodby bustled away to seek her daughter Ellen, to inform her of the turn which affairs had taken, to order her to be in love again with Edward, and to write him a pressing note of invitation to dinner, and to stir up her husband to be kind and attentive to the youth.

In the mean while, there was great commotion in Gower-street, produced by a hasty visit from Mark Woodcock, who came to announce that Sir Peregrine and his vessel had been seen off Dover, and that Mr. Fairfax requested that every thing might be in readiness at a moment's notice for the wedding.

"Do not be in such a hurry," said Aunt Bab to Mark; "do explain yourself a little more. What preparations are we to make?—how can we marry without a husband?"

"Sir Peregrine will be here in another hour, perhaps," said Mark: "he must either arrive to-morrow or not at all, for the six months, according to law, will be expired to-morrow night at twelve o'clock—that is, as soon as the clock strikes one—and then, if he be not married, the fortune goes to Edward Manby, that's all."

"But what are we to do? I only ask that," said Bab.

Do?" said Mark; "why, ar'n't there clothes to be got, a ring to be purchased, and a veil to be thrown over the bride's head? Why, if you had seen the veils that I have seen in Turkey, where the women's eyes are peering out of a slit in the muslin, like bull's-eyes out of a bulkhead, you'd be surprised, and know what a real veil was."

"But at what time will the ceremony take place? arn't we to see Sir Peregrine first?" said Bab all bewildered.

"I know nothing of that," said Mark: "all that's kittsmet, as we say in Turkey; or fate. He may or may not come, and then you may cry *Inshallah* or *Mashallah*, as you please: *Inshallah*, please God—*Mashallah*, thanks be to God."

“Now do not tease us,” said Bab, “but speak plain sense. Who is to get the clergyman?”

“Leave that to Mr. Fairfax,” said Mark: “he gets the licence and the *mufti*. Get you Miss Mary quite ready: don’t let her wince when she sees Sir Peregrine—for I promise you he is a rare one; only take care he don’t marry you instead of Miss Mary, which he is just as likely to do, for he is mad after antiques.”

As soon, as he was gone, Aunt Bab immediately made a report to Mary of the message, as well as to her brother and sister. Mary received it as a martyr would receive the order of being brought to the stake: her feelings had long been prepared for this event; and although her cheek was pale and her heart beat with unusual violence, still she demurred not, but did all that was necessary to be done.

Fanny had never yet entirely subdued the surprise which she evinced at the first outbreak of the whole affair of the marriage; for she could never comprehend how a girl was to be married without courtship, and without any visible sign of a husband: she therefore contemplated the approaching hasty preparations as a mockery, and inquired if Mary was to be married to a name, and not to a substance. As for Uncle Abel, as long as the baronet did not appear, he continued to speculate upon the uncertainty of all human schemes, and upon the possibility that his dear niece might still be remitted the trial of marrying one whom she could not love. However, when he heard Mark’s message, in humble resignation he clasped his hands, bent down his head, and exclaimed, “God’s will be done!”

The aunts busied themselves in making the proper purchases—the ceremony was appointed to take place in Gower street—a bridal supper was prepared. Old Betty, as much bewildered and astonished as aunt Fanny, went about setting things in order and arranging Mary’s wardrobe as if she were about to depart from them for ever; and there was grief and heaviness at the bottom of every heart in the house. No one knew what was to come forth from this strange state of things,—this husband and no husband—this fortune and no fortune—this great estate and no estate:—was Sir Peregrine in existence, or was the whole thing a mockery? Mark went and came a hundred times during the day, answering every question with dubious answers,—at one time

giving hope, at another creating despondency. Mr. Fairfax himself was obliged to come and apologise for this uncertainty—this appearance of deceit and juggle.

The day—the last day of the expiring six months at length came; and, perhaps, during the course of no other persons' lives, was such a day ever passed as was passed by the family of the Allnutts, and those interested in the events of which it was portentous.

Edward Manby, who was one of those principally concerned in the result of the events of that day, had of course been informed of the exact position in which he stood. He was poised upon the alternative of fortune or poverty,—of possessing her whom he cherished more than life, or of losing her and happiness for ever. Notwithstanding his high principles, he could not refrain from being agitated by a thousand conflicting emotions. When Mary entreated him to resign himself to their separation, he had done so out of devotion to her, from that spirit of resignation which always beamed in his heart; but now such a strange concurrence of circumstances had accumulated, that his imagination never conceived could have occurred. If his uncle did not arrive by one o'clock after midnight of the following day, he became the owner of a large fortune, with the chance of possessing Mary: if, on the contrary, he did arrive, then he remained an outcast, an adventurer, and a dependant upon his uncle's bounty.

Early in the morning of the day in question, a message was sent from Gower-street to inquire from Mr. Fairfax whether Sir Peregrine was arrived. The answer was, "No, but that he was expected every moment." At noon Mark Woodcock came to say, that he had not yet appeared; but that a messenger had been dispatched in a swift rowing-boat down the river to discover the vessel, and, if possible, to bring Sir Peregrine back with him.

Towards dinner-time another message came to say, that the vessel had certainly passed the Downs, and, as the wind was fair, Sir Peregrine might be expected during the evening, and that at eight o'clock the clergyman would be in waiting.

The Miss Goold Woodbys offered their services to be Mary's bridemaids, and their mother and Lady

Thomson threw out hints of their desire to be invited to the wedding; but the intimation was received with great coolness; for how was it possible, even with the best of feeling, to encourage the advances of friendship from persons so utterly unworthy of esteem? Mary's bridesmaids were to be her aunts; a family arrangement much better suited to the quiet ceremony which was about to take place.

The proper license having been obtained, every arrangement was made preparatory to the wedding. The two aunts appeared in their best, having made up new dresses on the occasion. Abel did not spare his black trousers and silk stockings, whilst old Betty looked renovated in a handsome gown and fresh-coloured ribands.

Mark Woodcock, at the appointed hour, introduced the clergyman, announcing that it was Mr. Fairfax's intention to bring Sir Peregrine as soon as he should arrive. Mary was in readiness, but we will not attempt to describe either her appearance or her feelings. They could be explained by no comparison that we can devise; for that of a criminal led to execution would be too strong, and that of a lamb led to slaughter inappropriate.

The whole party (excepting the clergyman) might be said to be in a high *fever* of excitement; for even Mark, from the intense interest which he had taken in the whole transaction, was scarcely in possession of his reason. The evening was passed without scarcely any other words being heard, but ejaculations such as these: "He will certainly come"—"I wonder whether he will come"—"'Tis strange he does not come"—"He must come"—"It will really be a miracle if he does come now." Then, when the least noise was heard, "There he is?—No—it is not him.—I think there was a knock; no—it was not." Then, as fast as the hours passed away, every one said, "'Tis now past ten;" then, "Eleven is striking." From that hour to twelve, Mary's heart almost beat audibly: her aunts were obliged to administer restoratives. Mark frequently looked into the street, for his impatience had exceeded all bounds;—Abel walked about and said nothing;—the poor divine was kept in small chat by Aunt Fanny; whilst Bab nursed Mary. Twelve o'clock struck:

Mark returned from the street looking in a state of bewilderment; the clergyman drew forth his book, and squared the table with two candles upon it. The hands of the clock pointed to half-past twelve: a dead silence ensued,—nothing was said, excepting now and then Mark exclaiming, “How odd!” The minutes were counted,—a distant rumble of a carriage was heard in the street: “There he is!” said Mark. The carriage went by: “No, it’s not him.” One o’clock struck: Mary was borne away in violent hysterics, and the whole scene closed for the night. Edward had been watching at the door.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A meeting takes place which portends the termination of our history.

THE next morning, Mr. Fairfax having requested Edward Manby’s attendance at his office, informed him with all due formality that, as executor and trustee of his late uncle Sir Roger Oldbourn’s will, in consequence of his brother not having complied with the provisions thereof, he, Edward, was become possessor of the fortune and the estate, provided that in addition to his own name he took that of Oldbourn.

Edward at first would not believe that such could be the case, nor was he satisfied until he perused the precise words of the will, when he found that in truth he was endowed with the wealth alleged by Mr. Fairfax. Staggered by this intelligence, he could scarcely be said to be overjoyed, for it did not include the possession of the only treasure which he prized in the world; namely, the hand of his beloved Mary. We pass over all that was said on the occasion—the exclamations of surprise at the non-appearance of the intended heir, and the congratulations on the accession of the more fortunate one; but go at once to where Mary, her uncle and aunts, were collected together in earnest discussion upon the strange event which had taken place. Mary’s agitation

on the preceding night had been so great, that her relations were fearful lest her former disorder should return with a fatal result to the future sanity of her mind; but so well had she succeeded in acquiring control over her feelings, that, to their astonishment, the next morning, they found her in full possession of her reason. She had ardently prayed for a speedy termination to her present state of uncertainty; and, in so doing, she strengthened that resignation which is the basis of every religious feeling, and presented a calm, though serious aspect, when every one who saw her expected to see her sinking under nervous agitation. Bab came to the conclusion that her intended was a madman,—Fanny asserted that she would rather die than marry one who had forgotten his engagements,—and Abel avowed that all was for the best, not daring to give utterance to his hopes that the present contingency would bring about that result for which they all so much yearned.

During their conversation, Abel was called away to attend one asking to see him; and he immediately suspected it to be Edward Manby. He was not mistaken: the first impulse of Edward, after the interview which he had had with Mr. Fairfax, was to seek his friend Abel. When they met, Edward informed Abel of the new and extraordinary aspect which his affairs had taken, and proclaimed his intention of renouncing the fortune of which he had become the possessor, in favour of its intended owner. He was determined to do this principally from the desire of not destroying the prospects of Mary; and then he continued to argue, that as the object of the testator was about to be fulfilled in the marriage which would speedily take place, he did not see why he was to take advantage of a mere casualty in order to destroy the real intention of the will. He said this with a humility of feeling, and with a total absence of display, that can only belong to the really pure and honest of heart, and the effect which it had upon Abel was as if an angel spoke.

Abel said little; for his heart was too full to utter; but his whole manner showed how deeply he was affected. He would have given free scope to the expression of his hope; but he feared to excite Edward to expect what perhaps might never come to pass, seeing that Mary was still as much bound as ever to the baronet:

he therefore restricted himself to making him assurances of his friendship, and expressing his admiration of his noble and disinterested conduct.

Edward no sooner returned to his lodgings, than he received a note from Mr. Fairfax, informing him of the arrival of his uncle, Sir Peregrine Oldbourn, and requesting him to call, in order that he might have the pleasure of making them acquainted.

It appears that this event,—namely, the arrival of Sir Peregrine,—took place just twenty-four hours after the time that he ought to have arrived. Having resisted landing at Dover, he persevered in accompanying his antiquarian treasures to the very custom-house in London, by which act he dispossessed himself of the fortune awaiting him; a circumstance which almost passed unheeded in his mind, so totally was he wrapt up in his own immediate pursuits. To the very last, he would not separate himself from his Venus; but having landed the statue, with his baggage, he betook himself to an hotel, of which he had not happened to forget the name, where having established himself with his foreign servants, he then sent for Mr. Fairfax. In the room allotted to him, he deposited his beautiful statue, together with other of his favourite relics, and there he awaited the solicitor; the whole scheme and object of Mark Woodcock's visit to him at Smyrna being faintly present to his memory.

Mark, at the request of Mr. Fairfax, accompanied him to visit the baronet; and we would endeavour, were it in our power, to give to our reader the impression which Sir Peregrine's whole appearance made upon the matter-of-fact man of business, and in some less degree upon his companion. He was arrayed in a suit of clothes made by a Greek tailor at Athens, which he fondly flattered himself would place him on an equality with men of the best fashion in his own country, and these he put on out of compliment to London, because usually he clothed himself with any piece of Eastern costume that came to hand upon getting out of bed in the morning. He consequently looked more like a convict condemned to do penance in bags with holes cut into them, than a gentleman dressed for pleasure. The fashion of his face and hair was still Oriental, for it had been trimmed by a Greek barber: he wore yellow pa-

bouches, and a sash round his waist, and disdained the use of a neckcloth.

When Mr. Fairfax entered he was seated on the ground cross-legged, examining an old coin; and when he arose to receive him, the solicitor looked some time at him ere he could believe that this was the representative of a long line of baronets. Sir Peregrine inspected them both, and recognising Mark, he exclaimed, "Ah! my dear Mr. Wood, how do you do?" Mark took him by the hand and said, "*Cock*, if you please."

"Ah, true, true," said the oblivious man; "you always were jealous of the cock.—How do you do, Mr. *Cockwood*?"

"*Woodcock*, if you please," cried Mark.

"I beg your pardon, I shall have it at last. But is this Mr. Fairfax?" Upon which, the recognition having taken place, the antiquary turned round, and pointing to his Venus, exclaimed, "Here let me introduce you to the wonder of the age! Of course you have heard of my celebrated Venus?"

"No, sir," said Mr. Fairfax; "although I have seen your live one."

"Ah, that's very well," said the antiquary, not in the least heeding to what he alluded; "but you know perhaps that some have asserted that it is a Latona? But that is a fallacy, believe me it is. I think I can prove beyond a doubt, that this is either the *chef-d'œuvre* of Praxiteles—the very Venus of Cnidus, which, in the frequent revolutions among the Greeks, might have been deposited among the wonders at Delos. But it is not a Latona—it has none of the characteristics of that goddess;—do you think it has, now, Mr. Fairfax?" said he, turning abruptly towards him.

"I really cannot say," said the man of business.

"You cannot say!" exclaimed the antiquary. "Maybe then, you are a Latonian—pray explain your reasons."

"Indeed, sir," said the lawyer, "I am not versed in these matters: I can scarcely tell you whether a piece of art be well or ill done. I am a great deal better versed in statutes than in statues."

"But you, Mr. Woodcock," said the enthusiastic man,—“you have been in Asia, you are a travelled man, you have seen the miraculous works of the ancients on

their own soil; tell me, have you ever seen anything more exquisite in its proportions, more lovely in its expression than that statue? Now tell me honestly."

"No, indeed," said Mark with hesitation, looking all the while with a critic's eye at the beautiful object before him; "no, I can't say I have, although I have seen all the old things in the British Museum."

The antiquary turned away without saying a word more, when Mr. Fairfax, having summoned up all his courage, said, "We have been waiting for you with extreme impatience, Sir Peregrine; and it is very painful to me to inform you that you arrived just twenty-four hours too late to save the fortune left to you by your late lamented brother. Every preparation was made to the very last moment, in order that you might fulfil his intentions; a wife, a most charming and unexceptionable young lady, was awaiting you—and had you but arrived a day sooner, I should have had the great satisfaction of accomplishing, as executor and trustee, the wishes and intentions of my late lamented friend and patron. But as it is, the law must take its course; and the estate goes to your nephew, Mr. Edward Manby. The wife is still at your disposal—she is bound under a bond to marry you, and by that bond she still abides."

Sir Peregrine, during this speech, sat immovable; his countenance never changing, nor his person exhibiting the least sign of agitation. After having kept silence for a short time, he said, "Am I bound to marry her?"

"Why, sir, as to that," said the lawyer, "although there are penalties on both sides, still I think, if after you have seen her you would wish to be disengaged from your obligation, there would be not much difficulty to encounter."

"That's well!" said Sir Peregrine; "we must see what is to be done. You will advise me;—I have been unlucky in my voyage,—was detained at Athens by an unforeseen accident; but the possession of that beautiful object" (pointing to his statue) "has repaid me for all. You know the Oldbourns make but poor husbands, and perhaps the young lady will have a lucky escape if she does not marry me. However, I have no objection to see her; I would not do an improper thing on any account."

Mr. Fairfax then entered into a full explanation as to

the steps he had taken to procure a proper wife; that he had succeeded in securing one who corresponded in every respect to the person described in the will, and particularly dwelt upon the ancient descent of her family, a circumstance which he thought would be likely to awaken an interest in his client's breast.

Sir Peregrine listened with attention; but antiquity, as characterising a living person, had no charms for him, and he waved the subject as if he were anxious to drive the subject of marriage from his mind. "I make no doubt," said he, "that the lady is everything that is proper, and I am much obliged to you for the care that you have taken of my interests; but I think, Mr. Fairfax, you said that my nephew is to have the Oldbourn property? Let me see my nephew—I long to see one of my own family; and allow me to ask you something about him. Does he show any of the Oldbourn blood? My poor sister was a charming creature before she married; but after that fatal event we never saw her more."

"Your nephew," said Mr. Fairfax, "is a most remarkable young man, and will not fail to do credit to your name, or to any name that he may bear. It is indeed a great pity that he was so neglected by his mother's family; but the circumstance of his having been buffeted about the world, may perhaps have been the means of forming his fine manly character,—a character which, had it run the usual career of young men of family and fashion, might perhaps have remained commonplace and insignificant. I think you will be greatly pleased with him. I have written to inform him of your arrival, and I shall not fail to bring him to you immediately."

"Do you think he has any love for antiquity!" said the baronet, quite elated with Mr. Fairfax's description. "Has he sufficient taste to appreciate the Oldbourn collection?"

"I believe him to be very highly educated," said the lawyer, "and am sure that he has a mind sufficiently refined to appreciate excellence wherever he may find it."

"I long to show him my Venus!" exclaimed the antiquary.

"If any one can value it as it ought," said Mr. Fair-

fax, "you may be certain that he will. I have never before met with a person possessing so true a judgment as Mr. Manby; but I will forthwith bring him to you, and you shall judge for yourself." Upon which, taking their leave, the solicitor, followed by Mark, left the room.

As soon as they had got fairly into the street, Mr. Fairfax exclaimed, "Well, I never could have conceived the existence of such an individual! Why, he out-stoics every stoic of ancient times! he gives up an immense fortune as easily as I would relinquish my breakfast!"

"But he would not give up his statue, though," said Mark; "he'd fight till he died first. Old rubbish is the god he adores—he doesn't care a pin for lucre. Why, he has got an old brass nail that he wouldn't give for any amount of three per cents., or for any quantity of lands and tenements that you could offer to him. Just ask him to show you that old nail, and you'll see what a fuss he will make about it!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Apparent miseries work for our good. When happiness does come at the end of a book, it is generally supreme.

As soon as Mr. Fairfax reached home, he found Edward Manby waiting for him, who, anxious to become acquainted with his uncle, had not lost a moment in obeying the summons he had received. The lawyer giving him an account of his first interview, prepared him for the sort of personage he was about to meet; and thought it right, moreover, to hint the repugnance which he still showed to marriage, and the desire he expressed to be freed from the bond which at present united him to Miss Allnutt. When Edward heard these words, he was seized with a confusion of sensations so sudden that

he was scarcely able to stand. A vague and indefinite hope had occasionally run through his mind that some casualty might operate in his favour and give him the possession of his beloved Mary, but he always chased the thought from his mind as felicity too much for mortal to expect. When he heard from Mr. Fairfax how likely it became that this hope might be realised, he could scarcely restrain his emotion. He endeavoured to suppress it to the utmost of his power, and hoping that his agitation was unobserved by his companion, he followed him to his uncle's.

Perhaps another less scrupulous than Edward would have now annulled the intention of restoring the fortune which had devolved to him; but as he walked onward he determined even now, after what he had heard, not to be cheated out of his integrity, and he strengthened himself in his original resolution by every argument which honour and honesty could devise, notwithstanding the fascinating hope that had been held out to him.

When Edward entered the room with Mr. Fairfax, his uncle immediately stepped up to him and welcomed him with as much cordiality as if they had been long acquainted. He eyed him with great earnestness, and as soon as Edward spoke he exclaimed, "The Oldbourn nose and mouth all over! I see your mother's expression in every look!" Without scarcely giving him time to speak, he took him to his Venus and said, "There! what do you think of that?" expecting that one with Oldbourn blood in his veins would instantly be as much fascinated by a piece of antiquity, as a thorough-bred pointer would with the scent of game.

Although Edward's mind and heart were full of other things, still, being an excessive admirer and an equally good judge of art, he could not refrain from being much struck by the beauty of the statue before him. His admiration was genuine—his first sensations true, and his observations so just, that Sir Peregrine could almost have devoured him with delight. The antiquary first looked at him, then at his statue, then at him again, as if his existence depended upon Edward's decision.

At length he said, with an inquiring look, "You agree that it is a Venus?"

“Certainly,” said Edward—“but perhaps——”

“Perhaps what?” exclaimed his uncle.

“—Perhaps it might be the Phryne as Venus Anadyomene of Praxiteles. I think it was consecrated in the Temple at Delos—does not Pausanias say so? I dare say you will help me if I am right—but you must know best.”

Upon hearing these words, the antiquary positively danced about the room with delight; then running up and embracing Edward, he exclaimed, “My dear nephew, you are right—you are right. The whole thing is now before me—we both are in the right. Praxiteles did make a statue of Phryne: it was his masterpiece. She put a trick upon him: he was struck by her beauty at the sea-shore—he there planned his Venus coming out of the sea. You are right—and this is the very statue, there is no doubt of it. I’ll throw all my dissertations in the fire and write new ones.”

Charmed with Edward, his learning, and his taste, he could not sufficiently express the delight of possessing him as a relation, and he would have continued to descant upon the everlasting subject of his collections and his literary schemes, had he not been stopped by Mr. Fairfax, whose time being precious, put him upon the less agreeable subject of his own affairs. It was then that Edward, having made a few preliminary remarks upon the delicate situation in which by circumstances of a most extraordinary nature he had been placed in an energetic and decided manner avowed himself ready to renounce in favour of its intended owner the large fortune which had devolved upon him.

The lawyer and the antiquary upon hearing this declaration looked both equally astonished. “A second Zeno!” exclaimed the one,—“This is unheard of!” exclaimed the other.

Sir Peregrine at length, apparently laying aside all his eccentricities, and talking like other men, said with emphasis, “My dear nephew, the little I have seen of you has excited my highest admiration, and this last trait of your character convinces me more than anything else, that you alone are worthy to possess the fortune which by circumstances has fallen to your lot. In your hands it must and shall remain—for in truth it will be a great relief to me that this arrangement should

hold good. I have a fortune sufficient at present for all my wants—more would be an incumbrance. My pleasures lie in my books, my antiquities, and in the society of men of my tastes; and now that I have found in you one whom had my brother known, he would have cherished even as much as I ever will cherish;—I am sure he would have been delighted to know that his fortune was to fall into your hands;—I therefore insist upon your retaining the possession of that which was intended for me. Your society, your house and its vast collections, will ever, I am sure, be open to me the same as if they were my own; and I shall enjoy everything that I can require, without the trouble of superintendence. But there only remains one thing to dispose of, which, I will not hide from you, gives me serious uneasiness;—that is, the young lady who is to be my wife.”

At these words all Edward's agitation returned, and one might have seen every pulse throb, so seriously was he excited. Mr. Fairfax, looking at him, and understanding the confusion of his looks, said, smiling, to Sir Peregrine, “Why, as to that, sir, your nephew there, who in taking every thing from you, seems only to increase your pleasure, I make no doubt will take your wife off your hands, as well as your fortune.”

“Will he indeed!” exclaimed the baronet, his face lighting up into extravagant joy, as if he had received a reprieve from death.—“How can this be?”

“My dear sir,” said Edward, “I will not detain you by a long recital of the various extraordinary events which have so fallen out as to make the interesting person whom I had once hoped to call my own, and her who is bound to you as your wife, one and the same individual. In renouncing her hand, you put the seal upon my happiness, and, I may venture to say, upon hers. Necessity of the most pressing nature threw her into your hands—earlier attachment into mine. Should you confirm your resolution after you have seen her, (which, alas! I fear and doubt,) you will render two mortals supremely happy.”

The baronet was a second time thrown into a rapture of delight. “You charm me,” said he. “You ask no sacrifice of me—it is a blessing which you confer. I am not made for married life—I can add to no one's

happiness, and therefore it is wicked in me to attempt it. I therefore freely give up my pretensions to you; and now let us go and say so to the lady herself, for already I ought to have gone through the ceremony of being presented to her."

The ecstasy of joy into which Edward was thrown upon finding the turn which his affairs had taken may be more easily conceived than described. He felt as if the whole were a dream, and had not sufficient power over himself to decide at the moment what to do; but whilst his uncle went to prepare himself for going out, like one impelled more by instinct than reason, without saying whither he went, he left Mr. Fairfax in the room by himself, and having got into the street, he actually ran, for walking was too slow for his impatience, and scarcely knowing how he had got thither, he found himself breathless and bewildered at the door of his friend Abel. Knocking violently, he was immediately admitted; and when he saw him, threw himself into his arms.

"What can have happened?" said Abel, staring with astonishment. "Edward, are you mad?"

"I am very nearly so," said Edward, "but with joy. Mary is mine—for ever mine! Oh, let me see her to tell her so! I have spoken to my uncle, and he gives her up. Where is she?"

Abel, having in some measure anticipated this event, caught the infection of Edward's joy, and exhibited strong symptoms of the greatest exhilaration; and he would have seconded his desire to be the harbinger of the news to Mary, had not his prudence very seasonably overtaken him and made him pause.

"My dear Edward," he said, "for pity's sake calm your feelings: let us be cautious—this must be broken to Mary by degrees, or else we may have to rue our precipitation. Her state of health is far from strong; her nerves at this particular moment are so treacherous that any great shock of pleasure or of pain might destroy the powers of her mind, and the consequences might be fatal. Let me first go and prepare her to see you."

Edward with repugnance consented to his proposal; and he condemned himself to the penance of being supremely happy by himself, in the very same spot where not long since he had been so supremely miserable.

Ever since the night when she waited with bitter expectation to be united to her intended, Mary had been torn by a thousand conflicting hopes and fears, which combined would probably have destroyed the equilibrium of her mind, had she not been supported by the all-powerful aid of religion. She never for a moment allowed herself to lose sight of its consolations; and having made that take the first place in her mind, the world and its cares became secondary in her consideration. She was seated in the drawing-room with her aunts: they had heard the rapid knock of Edward at the door, had duly wondered what it could portend, and had scarcely finished their speculations, when Abel, with a face usually so calm and serious, now so beaming with joy, came in, and with cautious words and mystery in his manner, prepared his niece for what was to happen.

When ecstasies are once elicited, what language can give a due description of the exciting causes? The woe-stricken maiden having at the first word of hope pronounced by her uncle caught up the whole of his meaning, as when a match is put to a grain of powder in a train of fireworks, the whole ignites and casts a brilliant and dazzling light, so she suddenly was excited into rapturous delight. When she heard the words, "Sir Peregrine annuls the bond and Edward is here," she flew towards Abel, and throwing herself upon his neck, wept aloud, thus relieving her heart of that accumulation of woe that had so long preyed upon it, and hailing the happiness of her future life as a gift from Heaven.

The old aunts almost danced with joy, and whilst Abel was giving courage and pleasure to Mary, they ran down stairs to Edward, who having expended part of the ebullition of his feelings in kissing their old faces, in another second was locked in the arms of the adored and expectant mistress of his heart.

They had not long enjoyed the raptures of interchanging their mutual sentiments, before Sir Peregrine and Mr. Fairfax were announced. Uncle Abel and his sisters received them with the greatest welcome in their looks, and although they said little, evinced by their attentions and the pleasure which beamed in their faces how much they would say when a proper opportunity should offer.

Sir Peregrine, having abstracted himself from his favourite pursuits, did not allow his usual absence of mind to stand in the way of his good-breeding; and although nothing could entirely subdue the habitual eccentricity of his manner and appearance, still nothing also can entirely conceal those particular tokens by which a man is discovered to be a gentleman. In making a few polite speeches, apologizing for the delay of his appearance, and explaining that delay, his eye caught a glimpse of Edward; who had retired to the recess of the window with Mary, both their backs being turned towards him, and he exclaimed, "So, my gallant nephew, you are here! we thought you lost."

Edward turned quickly round, and with him his fair companion, beaming with a beauty so entirely captivating, that as she approached the baronet, he retreated some steps, as if his own statue had received animation and was walking towards him.

"This is my niece Mary Allnutt." said Uncle Abel to the awe-stricken gentleman, who stood with his mouth open and with his eyes as much fascinated as when he had been first introduced to his Venus at Delos.

Without replying a word to Abel, he turned towards Mr. Fairfax, and in an under voice said, "Is this the lady whom I have kept in waiting?"

Fairfax having assured him that it was, he assumed the look of a man angry with himself for having given away a good thing. His usual apathy and indifference of manner forsook him; he almost coloured—his hands became spasmodic—he said a few incoherent words, and looked anything but like one of the Grecian sages whom it was his ambition to rival.

Edward, who stood by observing, dived at once, with the quick apprehension of a lover, into his uncle's sensations; and a deadly fear overtook him, lest he should have repented of the cession he had made, and require the accomplishment of his bond. As fast as this fear increased, so did the colour forsake his face; and had Mary not been taken up with making herself agreeable to one who now was entitled to her gratitude, she very probably would not have so exercised her dangerous power of fascination.

Mr. Fairfax, seeing the effect which Mary's beauty

had produced upon his client, and having cast an eye of commiseration upon Edward, now came forward, and taking the bond from his pocket, said to Sir Peregrine, "This is the bond which Miss Allnutt has signed, which I executed in your name, and which bound you to each other as man and wife. Is it your mutual pleasure that it be destroyed?" In saying this he held it in both his hands, in the act of tearing.

Sir Peregrine with unusual activity bounded forwards, and seizing it, said, "Stay your hand!"

Edward on seeing this became pale, and even looked like death. He could not utter a word, for what could he say? His uncle held the deed fast clenched, and, with eyes devouring Mary's beauty, looked like that figure in the well-known picture which stands wrapt in uncertainty between Virtue and Vice. "I am Miss Allnut's slave!" said the baronet, at length finding courage to speak: "let her pronounce my doom, and I obey."

Mary having by this time cast her eyes upon the desponding Edward, and catching the contagion of his fear, with woman's wit, and with a voice as gentle and persuasive as the softest harmony, said, "Mr. Manby and myself are both of us dependent upon Sir Peregrine Oldbourn's generosity. A word from him will render us happy—the contrary I fear!" and she finished her sentence by tears.

Edward's uncle, upon hearing these words, without a moment's delay took the deed in both his hands, and tore it in half, saying aloud, "What folly have I been committing!"—then thrusting forward his hand to Edward, he said, "Excuse my weakness—I was not prepared for such incomparable beauty, such surpassing excellence! May every blessing and happiness attend you both! There! take her—no one can merit such a treasure as well as yourself: and now let us think of the wedding."

CHAPTER XXIX.

Should we have led the reader to make one serious reflection when he closes our story, we shall conceive our labours well repaid.

WE would willingly here have closed our narrative; for, having secured happiness and prosperity to our principal personages, we do not think that in justice the reader can require more at our hands. Still, we feel called upon to administer poetical justice to those who, in a secondary capacity, have been accessories to producing this result, and we begin with the Goold Woodbys.

Edward having returned to his lodgings elated with love and joy, was surprised by receiving a visit from Tom Woodby. It seems that his mother, in consequence of the scheme which she had put forth in the conversation with Lady Thomson, recorded in a former chapter, had written first a pressing invitation to Edward to dinner, and afterwards one still more pressing to take up his quarters in their house. These he had most positively rejected, and for obvious reasons. The wily woman, determined not to be foiled, persuaded her son to endeavour to renew his former acquaintance with Edward; and this visit was the result of that act of persuasion.

Tom approached him with outstretched hand, and with every cringing and fawning demonstration of intimacy; when Edward stopped him short, and rejecting his hand, said, "Mr. Woodby, I will be plain with you, and explain in two words why I disclaim all further intercourse with you and your family. Your conduct to me when I was in adversity does not warrant this proffered friendship now that I am likely to enjoy the reverse. Of that, however, I take no count; but the knowledge which I have acquired of the base conduct of your family to my friends, and who are shortly to be my relations, the Allnutts, and your own atrocious profligacy, impels me to inform you that I feel myself degraded by any further acquaintance with you. I

therefore request you to leave me instantly, and never again to show your face within my doors."

On hearing these words, the defeated wretch exhibited all the villany of his nature in the expression of his countenance, and began to bluster and to talk of satisfaction; when Edward, opening the door and pointing to it, said, "This, sir, is your way out; and now you know the terms upon which we are and ever shall be towards each other."

Tom would still have delayed, and continued to bluster; but seeing the cool and determined position which Edward had taken up, he thought it proper to retreat, exclaiming as he made a rapid descent down the stairs, "You shall hear from me again!" accompanying this vain threat by a running fire of oaths, which continued *crescendo* until he closed them by a violent concussion of the street-door. It need not be said, that Edward never felt the result of his threat, nor ever saw him more.

When the Woodby family, foiled in securing the friendship of either Edward or the Allnutts, became acquainted with the result of Edward's history, and that he was to marry Mary Allnutt, (for the strange event was in everybody's mouth,) they felt as if a personal injury and insult had been done to them, and they went about almost foaming at the mouth.

"Is it not a shame," said Mrs. Woodby, "that those infamous people should be marrying at this rate, when we were the first to make them acquainted? And if it had not been for our fancy-ball, and our house, and our supper, they never would have known each other—a set of proud wretches, with their earl for a relation! But I 'll be even with them—I 'll let them starve first, before they shall ever set foot in Belvedere Hall again!"

"The girl, after all, is not to be Lady Oldbourn," said Lady Thomson. "In justice to myself, I must say, that it would have been a crying shame, that a pert thing like her should have walked out of the room before me!"

"I wonder Tom did not call that poor creature Edward Manby out," said Anne, "for his impertinence in saying he no longer wished for our acquaintance. If I was a man, I 'd go and pull his nose."

“Edward can pull noses as well as the best of them,” said Ellen, still upholding the former man of her heart. “Although he is a faithless villain, still he is no coward.”

They almost worked themselves into a fever of envy as fast as they heard of the excessive happiness and prosperity which now pervaded the Allnutts. Ivycote was once again to be inhabited by Uncle Abel and his sisters,—the Mexican funds were looking up,—and John Allnutt was soon expected. Their evil passions were kept alive by Mark Woodcock, who, with the best of dispositions for doing good, had a sufficient spice of malice in his composition to enjoy their torments, did not fail to inform them, in the most high-sounding words, of the flood of wealth and worldly prosperity which was daily pouring over them. Even he, Mark, had the satisfaction in his own person to add to their mortification; for Mrs. Woodby, viewing him as a rising man in his profession, and as one who in the course of things was likely to be one of those who rub themselves against lords and dignitaries, had selected him as fit to be a son-in-law; but the clear-sighted lawyer soon perceiving her intentions, did not leave her in doubt about his views, for he ceased to accept her invitations, and, to use his words, “cut the old one dead.” And the event proved the excellence of his discrimination: for old Woodby having speculated in the funds out of his depth, became half-ruined,—was obliged to sell Belvedere, to put down his fine carriage, his servants in plush and tags, and to retire to a villa at Brixton; whilst Tom became a blackleg of the first notoriety, his nose being so accustomed to pulling, that it was the acknowledged place of essay for young practitioners in gambling and broils. Anne at length succeeded in marrying Captain Swaggle, who was fairly cajoled into thinking her “a great City catch;” and Ellen, after many unsuccessful attempts at gaining an establishment, went upon the stage and acted chambermaids or love-sick damsels.

As for Lady Thomson, having made her last curtsy to the Woodbys and their prosperity, avowing that she owed it to herself and she always made it a rule never to associate with those who could not keep their own coach, she duly bestowed herself upon another rising

family, new to wealth, aspiring to fashion and Cheltenham, and in the same manner as she had presided over the destinies of her former friends, so she ruled over her new; trading upon the advantage of being her ladyship, and hiring herself out as a sort of job Lady Bab Frightful to novices in the ways of the world. Lord Demone continued to be a wit and a sensualist as long as he had sensation and intellect left to support those characters; after which he became a morose old man, at variance with the world, complaining of its neglect, and dying with regret that he had not made a better use of life. Simpleton Sharp, having strained hard for nearly a quarter of a century to say a good thing, at length succeeded in producing a tolerable pun, upon the celebrity of which he lived contented, and which contributed much to make him die happy.

Thus having given a short sketch of those who probably have created as little interest in the breasts of our readers as their prototypes in reality would be likely to do, we hasten to return to the scene of joy and happiness which we had left. There only wanted one requisite to the complete satisfaction of all parties, and that was the return of Mary's father, an event which was not long delayed. Accounts were received from him from the East Indies, which he reached after leaving Acapulco, having previously touched at Manilla; and he announced his intention of returning to England through Egypt, in order to make the ruler of that vast country partake of his schemes for improving and civilizing his dominions.

In the mean while, preparations for the wedding went on with the greatest vigour. Aunt Bab, who had never before presided at such a ceremony, lived in a state of constant wonder and alarm at the immense number of things which she was assured were indispensable for the outfit of a modern bride; and when the French milliner gave in a catalogue of the articles which composed the *trousseau*, (which Bab always pronounced *trusso!*) her face exhibited a length as long as the said catalogue. As for Aunt Fanny, she lived in a state of joyful excitement, looking over gowns, examining petticoats, and trying on silk stockings.

At length, some few days before the ceremony was to take place, John Allnutt, or, as he was usually call-

ed, the Major, actually did arrive; and we will not attempt to describe the joy which he diffused by his timely appearance. Mary's happiness was now without alloy, for she was blest by her father's approbation of her marriage; and Edward was delighted to be acquainted with his father-in-law, and at length to see the man whom he had chased from the Atlantic to the Pacific without seeing him. The Major was revelling in delight; and having now seen enough of the world to find out that its inhabitants were determined to go their own way to work in search of happiness, he allowed every preparation for the wedding of his daughter to proceed unmolested. But one thing which pleased him more than all, was, that he was enabled to make an appropriate gift to Sir Peregrine Oldbourn, and accordingly presented him with a most magnificent mummy which he had brought from Thebes. Sir Peregrine was much moved by this delicate attention, and in return selected from out of the Oldbourn collection, much prized by the learned, and highly valued by collectors on account of its scarcity, a Roman weathercock, with all the proper rust upon it, and with the points of the compass properly marked, which he duly laid at the feet of his intended father-in-law. These and such like acts of friendship having taken place, a perfect union existing between all parties, all legal adjustments having been concluded by the active Mark, who became all in all to the whole party, the happy couple were duly taken to St. George's church, and thence launched into matrimony through the medium of a new travelling carriage and four horses, which darting through the gaping multitude, carried them to the shades of Oldbourn Hall.

There they lived—there they flourished, dispensing happiness to all around; and there we will leave them to the undisturbed possession of their well-merited felicity.

Those who, like children, read the fable merely for amusement's sake, without looking at the 'moral' at the end, to such we recommend them here to close the book.

The few words we have still to say will explain why we have exalted the lowly Abel to our title page, when perhaps it may be said he is not the principal person concerned; and those few words we wish to produce as our "moral."

Ever since that good man's confinement in prison, his health had been on the decline. On a person and features like his, which always looked sickly, the progress of disease was not so remarkable as upon that of a man in strong health: consequently, although he himself felt that his strength was much impaired, and that the functions of life were gradually declining, still others did not perceive the decay. His affectionate niece, it is true, would occasionally, with tears in her eyes, gaze upon his calm and resigned face, and, taking his hand, would entreat him to tell her whether he was quite well, and he would assure her that he was as well as usual; but others, and even his sisters, did not remark the slow effects of a fatal disorder. He indeed in secret cherished the hope that his life might be a short one: he lived in one continued act of preparation for death,—his thoughts were entirely abstracted from the world; and whilst others only dreamt of realities, he, with speculative contemplation, would endeavour to pierce the secrets of that future state of existence which is promised as the haven of rest from the cares of this life.

With such a mind, and with such views, whilst he was overlooked among men and even contemned as insignificant, he enjoyed more real happiness than the most blessed in worldly circumstances basking in the sunshine of the world. It is because he was in our estimation as nearly perfect in character, exercising the many virtues which form the Christian man, that we promoted him as the hero of our title-page,—a promotion which he would certainly never have enjoyed from other hands; for we suspect that there are many such characters in existence, who, with the ill looks of our hero, enjoy also his modesty and his peace of mind, and it is to do them honour that we venture to take this step.

The honeymoon had scarcely expired before the happy Mary was called upon to attend her sick, and (it was no longer a secret) her dying uncle. She was accompanied by Edward, and with breathless speed

reached the house in Gower-street where he lay. They found him in full possession of his reason, though scarcely able to make his words understood. But words were not necessary to explain the state of his mind, when his countenance, upon which was imprinted the liveliness of his faith and the soothing character of his hope, was there to speak for him. Could he have thus been paraded among the haunts of the wicked, and exhibited to the thoughtless man of the world, with a superscription to say, "See the death of a true Christian;" such an exhibition would have tended more to draw men from evil ways, and bring them to a sense of what they will all surely come to, than all the sermons and homilies in the world.

With slow accents, he said: "Though death be bitter, still this is happiness—this is my happiness; therefore rejoice with me. I know that you have all the same hope that I have; therefore we only separate to meet again. I die, relying on the promises of our Saviour.—Dearest Mary, and you, my good Edward,—you must and will have your trials; but faint not, persevere in all good. My dear Barbara, and you, my dear Fanny,—but a few more years and you will be where I am; then think on me, and think how happy I am. John! take my place,—comfort our sisters, I bequeath them to you."

These words were said at intervals; but whilst they gave pain to the dying man in the utterance, they extracted a beaming of almost divine expression from his sinking eye; and certainly, if the grave was ever swallowed up in victory, it was here. He died with Mary's hand clasped in one of his, and Edward's in the other; and holy was the sorrow which burst forth as soon as his soul had taken its flight. May the death of every one of my readers be like his!

623

THE END.





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