
This is a reproduction of a library book that was digitized by Google as part of an ongoing effort to preserve the information in books and make it universally accessible.

Google™ books

<https://books.google.com>



THE LIBRARY



Wilson Library

ADVENTURES

OF

S U S A N H O P L E Y ;

OR,

CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE.

Mrs. Catherine (Stevens) Crone

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

SAUNDERS AND OTLEY, CONDUIT STREET.

1841.

In compliance with current
copyright law, the University
of Minnesota Bindery
produced this facsimile on
permanent-durable paper to
replace the irreparably
deteriorated original volume
owned by the University of
Minnesota. 1994

SUSAN HOPLEY.

CHAPTER I.

A GLANCE INTO THE INTERIOR OF DON QUERUBIN DE LA
ROSA'S DOMESTIC ESTABLISHMENT.

“Vois tu cette belle femme?” said the Marquis de la Rosa to his wife, as they were seated in a box at the Théâtre Français; “I think she is an Englishwoman.”

“Qu'est ce que cela te fait, toi?” answered the Marchioness.

“One is never tired of admiring beauty,” replied the Marquis, appropriating the compliment to his lady by a bow.

“Content yourself with what you have,” returned she, sharply. “It's more than your due.”

“Ma chère Dorothée,” replied the Marquis, “tu n'es pas aimable, de dire ça.”

VOL. III.

B

456822

JAN 2 '80 ALLEN

“C'est égal,” returned the Marchioness.

“Not to me,” answered the Marquis; “neither do I merit so ungracious an observation. Do I not comply with your desires in every thing? What can I more?”

“Cesser de m'importuner,” replied the lady, turning her white shoulder to the Marquis, and her face to the stage.

The advantage of this arrangement was, that Don Querubin could indulge himself with the contemplation of the English beauty as much as he pleased. The object of his admiration was not only young, and extremely beautiful, but she was also splendidly attired. Nor was elegance sacrificed to splendour; brilliant as were the jewels she wore, the graceful form of her white satin robe, and the inimitable fall of the rich scarf that was thrown over her shoulders, were not less attractive.

The power of her beauty was perhaps rather enhanced than diminished by an air of languor, almost amounting to melancholy, that shaded her lovely features. During the early part of the evening, she was alone in her box; and she sat in one corner of it, with her white arm, round which was entwined a jewelled bracelet, leaning on the velvet cushion in front, and her

eyes fixed on the scene, where a tragedy of Racine's was representing, which seemed wholly to absorb her attention. Many an admiring gaze was fixed upon her; and as the lenders of opera glasses passed between the rows of the pit, crying, "Qui veut de lorgnettes? de lorgnettes?" many more were borrowed for the purpose of being directed at her, than at Ma'mselle Duchesnois. But she appeared either unconscious of, or indifferent to the admiration she excited; till, later in the evening, a very elegant man, apparently of the highest fashion, entered the box, and took his seat beside her; after which some others joined them; and she occasionally took a part in the conversation, though still preserving the same air of languor and indifference.

"Criquet," said the Marquis, when he found an opportunity of confiding to his faithful valet the impression made upon him by the lovely stranger; "she is adorable."

"I don't doubt it," replied Criquet.

"And entre nous, Criquet, I think she looked at me."

"C'est possible," answered Criquet.

"We must find out who she is," continued the Marquis.

"That will not be difficult," returned Criquet.

"By no means," rejoined the Marquis; "since I am satisfied she is a person of the first distinction."

"And when we have discovered who she is," said Criquet, "après?"

"We'll procure an introduction, Criquet. Being a marquis, she cannot refuse."

"Et madame la Marquise?" said Criquet, raising his eyebrows, and folding in his lips.

"Ah! pour ça—" said Don Querubin, slightly shrugging his shoulders.

"Elle n'entend pas plaisanterie, madame la Marquise," observed Criquet.

"C'est vrai," replied Don Querubin, with a considerable elongation of visage. "I thought to have contented her by bringing her to Paris—mais!"

"You thought to have contented her!" cried Criquet, with an air of astonishment.

"No doubt," replied the Marquis; "wasn't it what she was always urging me to do?"

"There is no denying that," returned Criquet;—"mais!"

"Eh bien?" said Don Querubin.

"Il y a de ces gens qu'on ne contente pas," observed Criquet.

"That's true again," answered the Marquis. "But you must admit, Criquet, that she's very handsome?"

"Oh! pour ça, oui," replied Criquet.

"Belle comme une ange," added the Marquis.

"Hem!" said Criquet; "je n'en ai jamais vu."

"But to return to the beautiful stranger—" said Don Querubin.

"Objet, sans doute, plus interressant, à cet instant," observed Criquet.

"We must find out who she is, and then procure an introduction."

"Those are two different things," remarked Criquet. "With respect to the first, I undertake it."

"About it, then, mon enfant," said the Marquis; "we have no time to lose."

"C'est indubitable," replied Criquet, as he left the room.

"Monsieur," said Madame de la Rosa, flinging into the Marquis's dressing room, shortly afterwards, "that servant of yours is detestable."

"Comment!" said the Marquis; "is it Criquet?"

"Certainly," replied she; "his assurance is insupportable."

“Mais, mon amie !” said Don Querubin, in a tone of expostulation.

“Hold your tongue !” said the Marchioness ; “and don’t defend him.”

“I don’t defend him,” returned the Marquis, “if he is wrong.”

“Wrong !” ejaculated the Marchioness ; “of course he’s wrong ; but you, you’ll never admit it.”

“De quoi s’agit il ?” enquired the Marquis.

“It is,” said the Marchioness, “that I desire to have my carriage drawn by six horses at Longchamp, and he says it’s impossible.”

“Il a raison,” replied the Marquis.

“I knew you’d say so !” exclaimed the lady.

“I only say what is true,” rejoined Don Querubin ; “the thing’s impossible.”

“C’est égal,” replied the Marchioness ; “I’ll have them.”

“Mais, mon amie,” rejoined Don Querubin, “it cannot be. No carriages will have six horses but those of the royal family. Others must content themselves with four.”

“I shall have six,” rejoined the Marchioness.

“You’ll be turned back,” answered Don Querubin ; “you’ll not be permitted to advance.”

“J’avancerai,” answered the Marchioness.

“Mais, ma chère Dorothée!” said the Marquis; “listen.”

“I will not listen,” replied the lady. “I know very well that you and Criquet combine to impose upon me; but you’ll not find it so easy as you imagine.”

“I never thought it easy,” answered Don Querubin. “Je suis convaincu que tu as une sagacité adorable.”

“Aux autres!” returned the Marchioness, with a contemptuous curl of the lip.

“But with respect to the horses—” rejoined the Marquis.

“I shall have them,” interrupted the lady; and she flung out of the room, as she had flung into it.

“Ah Dieu! Criquet,” exclaimed the Marquis, when he was next alone with his faithful valet; “je suis au desespoir!”

“What’s the matter?” enquired Criquet.

“Je serai deshonoré—my carriage will be turned back—she insists on appearing with six horses at Longchamp!”

“Ne vous inquietez pas,” replied Criquet, with inimitable composure; “j’ai parlé au maquignon—elle ne les aura pas.”

“That’s well,” said Don Querubin, greatly

relieved. "It's to be regretted, Criquet, that she is not more reasonable on certain points."

"Doubtless," replied Criquet.

"Because really, au fond, she is a good woman."

"That may be the case," answered Criquet.

"I am sure of it," rejoined the Marquis.

"C'est heureux," replied Criquet.

"And I am convinced of her attachment to me," continued Don Querubin.

"That is certainly satisfactory," answered Criquet.

"Though, it must be granted that her temper is not always perfect," added the Marquis.

"That is a fact which admits of no contradiction," replied Criquet.

"Mais, allons, mon garçon," said Don Querubin, recalling his spirits, and shaking himself free of the Marchioness; "what news have you learnt of the fair stranger?"

"Ah, par exemple!" said Criquet, "voilà une histoire à raconter."

"What is her name?" enquired the Marquis.

"First," said Criquet, "what was the name of the belle Anglaise—the beautiful girl that coquin Gaveston was to send you and who never arrived?"

"Ah!" answered Don Querubin, with an in-

voluntary sigh; "which was the cause of our marriage; for I believe if Mademoiselle Doro-thée had not been incited by jealousy, that we should not have obtained the avowal of her attachment."

"That is extremely possible," replied Criquet.

"We might even never have known it, Criquet."

"I am disposed to think we never should," answered Criquet. "But to return to the belle Anglaise—what was her name?"

"Ah," said Don Querubin, "voyons!" and he took out his tablets to search for the name—"le voici—here it is—Mademoiselle Amabel Jons."

"C'est elle!" cried Criquet, hitting the table with his fist.

"Comment?" exclaimed the Marquis.

"I tell you it's her," answered Criquet—"her very self—Ma'm'selle Amabel Jean! I have heard her whole history from Madame Coulin here below; and from Truchet the tailor. She lodged, on her arrival in Paris, at this very hotel."

she

"Vous me percez le cœur!" exclaimed Don

Querubin, falling back in a sentimental attitude.

“*Ecoutez,*” continued Criquet. “It was exactly at the very period we expected her at Bourdeaux, that she appeared here, under the guardianship of a man that called himself her uncle—*mais c’était un filou—un escroc.* He called himself Colonel Jean or Jons—lodged here for a month—got clothes for himself and for her—was visited by the young men of the highest fashion, who swarmed about her like bees round a honey-pot—on dit qu’elle était toute simple—knowing nothing of the world—*credule comme un enfant.*—At the expiration of the month, they went away one evening in the carriage of the Duc de Rochechouart—she was seen no more for some time. At length, after several months, she returned as the Duc de Rochechouart’s mistress. But the report is, that she was deceived by a false marriage, in which that old villain Dillon, the Duke’s servant, officiated as priest; and we know how probable that is, since it was the office they did me the honour to design for me.”

“*Dieu juste!*” cried Don Querubin, lifting up his hands; “what villainy there is in this world!”

“You may well say that,” answered Criquet.

“But does she still live with the duke?” enquired the Marquis.

“Still,” answered Criquet. “Elle était sans ressources—she had no means of subsistence—her hopes of making an advantageous marriage were annihilated. Besides, they say the Duc is very much attached to her—that she is the first woman that has fixed him.”

“Quelle histoire !” exclaimed Don Querubin. “Do you know, Criquet, I must see her—I must indeed.”

“I don’t object,” answered Criquet. “But we must look about for an introduction.”

“I have rather a mind to write,” said the Marquis, “and tell her who I am ; probably she’ll not refuse me an interview, which I shall solicit in the most respectful terms.”

“It’s not amiss ;” said Criquet ; “write, and I’ll endeavour to deliver it into her own hands.”

“C’est bien,” replied Don Querubin. “Give me my portfolio at once, Criquet, that I may compose something suitable to the occasion. Or voyons.”

“MADAME,—There was a time when I had hoped to have been invested with the privilege of addressing you by a dearer title—[that will doubtless awaken her curiosity, and she’ll cast

her beautiful eyes to the bottom of the page, to ascertain the signature]—but some adverse destiny, which I am unable to comprehend, disappointed my expectations, and plunged me into eternal despair.

“For the purpose of augmenting my agonies, the cruel fates have decreed that I should not remain ignorant of the charms that I once hoped would have completed my bliss, and rewarded the most faithful and devoted of lovers. I was doomed to behold them, for the first time, last night, at the Théâtre Français; and having ascertained by my enquiries, at least by Criquet’s, which is the same thing—[Précisément, remarked Criquet,]—that the possession of so much beauty is no other than the lovely Englishwoman I had hoped to lead from the altar as Madame la Marquise de la Rosa y Saveta, I venture to petition for the honour of being permitted to throw myself at your feet, in order that I may have an opportunity of expressing my despair, and at the same time, the unceasing adoration with which I shall remain,

“MADAME,

“The most humble and devoted

“of your admirers,

“DON QUERUBIN, MARQUIS DE LA

“ROSA Y SAVETA.”

"It's perfect," said Criquet.

"Vous trouvez?" said Querubin, with a gratified air.

"Nothing can be better," replied Criquet.

"I shall wait upon her without delay. Mais gardez-vous bien d'en parler à Madame."

"Assurément," said the Marquis; "la pauvre petite, elle crevera de jalousie."

CHAPTER II.

THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE WICKED BEGIN TO TREMBLE.

CRIQUET, who by the way thought himself quite as much injured as his master, by the adverse fortune which had somehow or other turned the fair Englishwoman's steps in the wrong direction, and thrown them both under the tyrannical dominion of the imperious Doro-thée, charged with Don Querubin's missive, proceeded to the hotel of the Duc de Rochecouart, and requested the honour of delivering a letter into the hands of Madame Amabel Jons ; and no difficulties being cast in the way of his admission, he was speedily introduced into an elegant boudoir, and found himself in the presence of its lovely inhabitant.

The hangings of the room were of pale blue satin, ornamented with a rich gold fringe ; and the chairs and ottomans were covered with the

same material. The panels of the walls, and of the doors, were adorned with beautifully executed arabesques, and finished with superb gold mountings; the carpet was of velvet; the tables of the most curious inlaid woods; the slabs of the finest marble, supported by richly gilt figures of cupids, and bearing vases of the most delicate china, filled with rare flowers. A splendid or-molu clock was on the mantel-piece; and a variety of equally splendid nothings scattered about the room. Books and music lay on the table; and beside them a guitar, on which the lady appeared to have been playing. Her own dress was in a style of simple, but recherché elegance; and her excessive beauty appeared, to the curious eye of the valet, fully worthy of the splendour by which she was surrounded.

Supposed to have considerable influence over the Duke, and by his liberality towards her having the command of a great deal of money, she was accustomed to receive many visits and applications, of one sort or the other—petitions for her interest, her patronage, or her charity; and she therefore received Criquet and opened the letter he brought without the slightest curiosity or emotion. But as she perused Don Querubin's epistle, the colour mounted to her

fair cheeks ; and as she finished it, there was some confusion in her manner, when she said : " I have not the honour of knowing the Marquis de la Rosa."

" That, Madame," answered Criquet, " is our misfortune ; and it is in the hope of in some degree repairing it, that I have done myself the honour of waiting on you. My master, Don Querubin, earnestly solicits the honour of throwing himself at your feet, as the only consolation that now remains to him."

" I scarcely know," replied the lady, " what purpose can be answered by such an introduction ; but if the Marquis desires it, I have no objection to receive him. If he will present himself here to-morrow at this hour, he will find me at home."

It is possible that Criquet's mission might not have been so successful, but the lady's curiosity pleaded powerfully in his favour. She could not help desiring to see the man who was willing to have raised her to the rank she had so much desired, and to have an opportunity of comparing what she had gained with what she had lost ; and certainly when the figure of Don Querubin presented itself to her eyes, it required either an excess of virtue, or of ambition, to regret

the exchange she had made in becoming the mistress of the elegant and accomplished Rochecouart, rather than the wife of the honourable, but extremely ugly old Spaniard.

The Marquis, who considered her not only a most lovely, but from what Criquet had related to him, a most injured woman, approached her with as much deference as if she had been a goddess; and he would have literally thrown himself at her feet, as he had threatened in his letter, but that Criquet not being at hand to help him, he somewhat distrusted his own alacrity in rising again; so he contented himself with raising her fair hand to his lips, and bowing to the ground.

“Madam,” said he, “you see before you the most disappointed of men; and whatever regret I may have hitherto felt, its poignancy will be from this moment tenfold augmented. You are doubtless acquainted with the hopes I was led to entertain, and which for some months I refused to resign.”

“Your disappointment, sir,” said the lady, “did not originate with me; or, at least, if it did do so in any degree, it was only my excessive inexperience that was in fault. I was conducted to Paris, while I thought I was on my

way to Bourdeaux ; and after my arrival here, circumstances occurred which changed all my prospects. The person to whom I was entrusted took advantage of my ignorance of the world, and I had no means of extricating myself from his toils."

" I have heard something, madam," replied the Marquis, " of an odious imposition being practised upon you ; and from a circumstance known only to me and Criquet, my valet, I am too much disposed to believe the report well founded ; and I have requested the honour of this interview, madam, not only that I might enjoy the privilege of contemplating your divine beauty, which I had once hoped to call my own, but also to offer myself as an avenger of the wrongs you have received. I here lay my sword at your feet ; and I shall never consider myself worthy of wearing it again, unless you'll permit me to draw it in your cause."

" You are very good, sir," replied Madame Amabel, calmly ; " but it is much too late to think of avenging my wrongs, whatever they may have been. I don't deny that I was deceived ; but my own foolish ambition aided the deception ; and though the person to whom I was entrusted betrayed me, he was a villain,

unworthy the sword of an honourable man. Added to which, even were it desirable, I could not tell you where to find him. After he had received the price of his villainy, he disappeared, and I have never seen him since."

"And is there no other person, madam," enquired Don Querubin, "who merits your reproaches?"

"None, sir," replied the lady. "At least, whatever resentment I may have entertained against any one else, has long since expired. The truth is, sir, as you seem interested in my fate, that for nearly three months I believed myself the wife of the Duc de Rochechouart; and when, at the end of that time, I discovered the deception that had been practised upon me, I had become too much attached to him to desire to part. I married him from ambition, but I live with him because I love him. He leaves me nothing to wish for, but his name, that it's in his power to bestow; and that, now that I know the world better, I am aware I ought never to have aspired to. I don't deny that I am disappointed, and that my situation is not what I would have chosen; but it can never be mended now, neither do I desire to change it. It is therefore useless to speak more on the subject. Do you

still correspond with Mr. Gaveston, sir?" she added. "Do you know if he is married?"

"Le coquin!" replied Don Querubin, clenching his teeth; "le lâche! to betray such an angel. *I* correspond with him! Never, l'infame! But he is married, I learn from Monsieur Râoul. He married the daughter of his principal—the poor man that was murdered."

"Murdered!" cried Madame Amabel. Was Mr. Wentworth murdered? By whom?"

"By his servant, I heard," replied the Marquis; "but I never learnt the particulars; it was somewhere on the road, when he was travelling, I think."

"And how long is it since this happened?" enquired the lady. "Is it lately?"

"Oh no!" returned the marquis. "Let me see; we heard of it in Bourdeaux, about the time I was looking for your arrival. I remember, I had sent Criquet in to make inquiries at the Quay, and at the Bureau des Diligences, for I didn't know which way you proposed to travel; and there he saw Monsieur Râoul, who mentioned that he had just got a letter from Monsieur Simpson, to say his principal was dead."

"And that he was murdered?" said Madame Amabel.

"Assuredly," replied Don Querubin.

"I should like to hear the particulars," said the lady. "Can't you recall them?"

"I forget," returned the Marquis; "but perhaps Criquet may recollect; he is in the ante-room, if you'll permit me to call him in and question him?"

"Pray do," said Madame Amabel; and Criquet was summoned.

"Oh, oui," said he, on being interrogated. "I remember very well what Mr. Râoul told me. He was travelling, ce pauvre homme, returning from the sea to his own house, and he was murdered at an inn on the road, by his own footman?"

"By his own footman!" exclaimed Madame Amabel; "did you hear his name?"

"If I did I have forgotten it," replied Criquet; "the English names are difficult."

"But are you sure it was about the time you were expecting my arrival at Bourdeaux?"

"Précisément," said Criquet. "It was to enquire for your ladyship that I went to Bourdeaux, by the Marquis's orders; and I called at Monsieur Râoul's, to ask if there were any letters, and it was then he told me of it. He had just received the news."

"And it had just happened, had it?" en-

quired Madame Amabel. "Then it must have been after Mr. Gaveston's marriage?"

"No, no," replied Criquet; "it had happened some time before, I think; and for that coquin, Gaveston, he was not married till some time afterwards. We had him in Bourdeaux after the old gentleman's death; but he was not married then."

"It's very singular," said Madame Amabel. "I wish you could tell me more about it. Was the footman taken?"

"Oh no," answered Criquet. "I remember now—he was not taken, and it was for love he did it. Gaveston himself told Monsieur Râoul so, when he came to Bourdeaux—for, for our parts," added Criquet, looking at Don Querubin, "*we* never spoke to him."

"L'infame!" exclaimed the Marquis; "never shall he set his foot within the château de la Rosa."

"But go on," said Madame Amabel; "and tell me all you can remember—you say he did it for love?"

"Oui, oui," answered Criquet; "so said Gaveston. It appeared that he was in love with one of the servants of the house—a very handsome girl, *mais qui avoit le diable au*

corps—and she would not have him because he'd no money. So he robbed the poor old man, and murdered him, and they both went off together."

"What! the footman and the dairy-maid?" exclaimed Madame Amabel.

"I can't say whether she was the dairy-maid," answered Criquet; "but I know it was one of the servants of the house, and that they both disappeared after the murder, and had not been heard of since."

"Grand Dieu!" exclaimed Madame Amabel. "And it was Gaveston who told this story?"

"It was himself," replied Criquet. "I didn't hear him, because, as I said before, we don't speak to him; but I had it from Mr. Râoul, to whom he related the particulars."

"Grand Dieu!" again exclaimed the lady.

"Mais c'est un coquin, ce Gaveston," added Criquet, observing that for some reason or other she was very much affected by the intelligence; "he's not to be believed. Perhaps there's not a word of truth in the story."

"The fact of the murder cannot be doubted," said the Marquis, "because the news came from Mr. Simpson, who is an honest man."

"But why do you doubt Mr. Gaveston's

word?" enquired Madame Amabel; "have you any particular reason for doing so?"

"Because he's a villain," answered Criquet.

"It's too true," rejoined the Marquis; "read that letter, and you'll be convinced of it;" and he handed her Gaveston's letter, which he had brought with him.

"Grand Dieu!" once more exclaimed Amabel, who seemed quite overwhelmed with these discoveries. "What could be his motive?"

"We never could conceive his motive, madam," replied the Marquis, "to tell you the truth. Could we, Criquet!"

"Never," answered Criquet. "Had it not been for that infamous clause at the termination of the letter, we should have supposed that you were some young lady, perhaps a relation of his own, for whom he wished to obtain an advantageous settlement; and that he had proposed the alliance from knowing my lord the Marquis's predilection for the ladies of your country."

"It was so I understood it," returned Madame Amabel. "The fact is, Mr. Gaveston desired to make love to me on his own account; but aware that he was engaged to Miss Wentworth, I wouldn't listen to him. He then pretended to be my friend, and told me that he was

acquainted with a nobleman at Bourdeaux, who had commissioned him to look out for an English wife for him, and that he would send me there, only that I must mention to nobody where I was going; and he himself arranged every thing secretly for my journey."

"It is quite true that I had said to him that I wished he would find me a beautiful English bride," returned the Marquis. "But it was a villainous thing of him to propose a false marriage, and I cannot conceive his motive for doing it."

"I think I can," said Madame Amabel. "He thought that my ambition would inspire me with a desire to visit England as a marchioness. I remember hinting something of the sort, for I was very vain, and as silly as a child; and he wished to put that out of my power. But are you sure he married Miss Wentworth?"

"He married the daughter of the murdered gentleman, beyond a doubt," replied Don Querubin; "since which, he no longer takes an active part in the business. The correspondence of the firm is carried on through Mr. Simpson."

"That was the clerk, I think?" said Madame Amabel.

“He was,” replied the Marquis; “but he is now a partner.”

“I should be happy to have his address,” said the lady, “if you could give it me.”

“I can procure it from Mr. Râoul,” replied the Marquis. And he and Criquet took their leave, charmed with Madame Amabel, and with permission to repeat their visit.

CHAPTER III.

SUSAN VISITS HER OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

THE injury Mrs. Aytoun's health had sustained, proving of a more permanent nature than was expected, she was at length recommended to try the effects of travelling for a year or two ; in pursuance of which advice their little establishment was broken up, and their servants discharged. She accompanied her husband to the continent, and Susan found a situation as housemaid, in the family of a Mr. and Mrs. Cripps, who resided in the neighbourhood of Clapham.

Mr. Cripps had formerly been a grocer in the city, and had retired from business with a very considerable fortune, a wife, and three daughters. He lived in a handsome house, with iron gates, and a carriage-drive up to the door in front, and a large garden with graperies and hothouses behind ; and he maintained his establishment and his table on a liberal and hospitable footing.

The day before Susan quitted London to undertake her new service, she paid a visit to her friend Dobbs, who was still living in Parliament Street; and also to Julia, who, by Mr. Simpson's kindness, had been settled in a small neat shop at Knightsbridge, as a haberdasher; where she was doing very well, and making a decent maintenance for herself and her child.

Harry Leeson's disappearance, which they had heard of at the time it occurred, from Jeremy, had been a source of extreme unhappiness, both to Dobbs and to Susan; and though now several years had elapsed since his departure, their anxiety had experienced but little alleviation. Mr. Simpson had made every effort to discover him for some time, by means of advertisements and handbills; but Harry, who knew nothing of the friend he had in his uncle's old clerk, believed that the invitations to return were only lures held out by Gaveston to get him again into his power; and as he soon found himself, through the friendship of Captain Glassford, in a comfortable situation, with a fair prospect of independence in view, his pride and resentment made him resolve never to present himself before his enemy till he had attained an age and station *should have* that should be a check upon his insolence.

To relieve Fanny's anxiety, he had written her a few lines from one of the West India islands, assuring her that he was safe and well provided for, and that in process of time she should see him again, but giving her no clue by which he might be traced. This he had done during his voyage in the *Fire-fly*, soon after his departure from Oakfield; and from that time nothing had been heard of him. The general apprehension amongst his friends, was that he had gone on board some ship as a seaman; and this notion gained strength, when years elapsed without farther intelligence.

On this, the most interesting subject to Susan, Dobbs had no news to give; but she had heard from Oakfield that Mrs. Gaveston was no longer residing there, but had quitted her husband, and was living with a sister of her father at Brighton. He led her such a life, Jeremy said, that Mr. Simpson had advised the step, and had made all the necessary arrangements for her. Jeremy himself had taken a small inn in the neighbourhood; for that retaining his situation after his mistress was gone, was out of the question. Gaveston, he described as insupportable; growing daily more gloomy, arbitrary, and tyrannical, and above all, suspicious; and that

the minister of the parish had been heard to liken him to certain tyrants of old, called Di and Ishus, who had false ears made so large, that they could hear what everybody said of them. "More fools they," as Mr. Jeremy justly observed. He concluded his letter with some affecting remarks on the declining state of Mrs. Jeremy's health, observing, at the same time, in a manner that Dobbs thought rather significant, that deplorable as such a loss would be, it was quite impossible he could live without a wife, and that he should be under the melancholy necessity of immediately looking out for another.

"Bless the man," said Dobbs; "does he think I'd have him?"

"Why not?" answered Susan. "He's a good man, comfortably to do, and much of an age for you."

"That's all true," said Dobbs, with a laugh that Susan fancied did not augur ill for Mr. Jeremy's hopes—"but the world would make such a joke of it if I was to get married at this time of day. But, by-the-bye, Susan, there's a bit of news in the letter about an old friend of yours."

"About William Dean, is it?" asked Susan, with a slight blush.

"'Deed is it," answered Dobbs, "and I scarce know what to say for him. I didn't think William would have done so."

"What has he done?" enquired Susan; "nothing wrong, I hope?"

"It's not what's right," replied Dobbs, "after what passed between him and you. Jeremy says he's keeping company with Grace Lightfoot, Mabel's sister."

"I don't blame him for giving up thoughts of me," answered Susan. "I always told him he would be very silly to keep from marrying for my sake; and it is time William thought of settling; but I almost wonder at his fixing on Grace, though to-be-sure she's very pretty."

"I'm afraid it's not for her beauty, so much as for her riches," answered Dobbs, "at least so Jeremy says; but perhaps that's in anger."

"Her riches!" exclaimed Susan.

"Aye," replied Dobbs, "you may well stare. But it seems that every Christmas, for some time back, Grace has received a present of money as regularly as the Christmas came, without ever being able to make out who sent it till lately; and then there came a letter from Mabel."

“From Mabel!” cried Susan, eagerly; “and is there anything about Andrew?”

“Wait, and I’ll tell you,” answered Dobbs. “The letter begins with hoping she has regularly received the money every Christmas, and that she is well and happy. Then it says that she, that is Mabel, has heard by chance that Mr. Wentworth is dead, and that he was supposed to have been murdered by his footman; and she desires to learn all the particulars—what footman it was, and when it happened—and whether the man was taken. She adds, that she never can believe it could be Andrew, who was so much attached to the family; and was, besides, such a good young man.”

“Then she doesn’t seem to know anything about Andrew,” said Susan.

“Nothing in the world,” answered Dobbs. “But then, as Jeremy says, that goes for nothing; because if she does know, of course she wouldn’t own it.”

“But then she needn’t have written to ask what she knew already,” said Susan.

“But to find out what people thinks about it, perhaps,” said Dobbs. “However, there’s no saying; for my part, I never believed that she went away with Andrew, and I don’t believe it now.”

“But where is she?” enquired Susan. “I’ll go to her, and find out the truth, if I beg my bread along the road.”

“Ah! there’s the thing,” replied Dobbs; “nobody knows; and she doesn’t say a word about herself from beginning of the letter to the end of it; and there’s no hint of where she is, nor who she is, married or single. The only thing that makes them think she’s married is, that she advises Grace to be satisfied with her own station, and not to be looking for a match above herself, as she always had done; for that pride of that sort is sure to meet with a fall, and bring people into trouble. So they think that she has married somebody that treats her ill.”

“And where is Grace’s answer to be sent?” enquired Susan.

“To a banker’s here in Lunnun,” responded Dobbs; “and Grace wrote to the banker to beg he’d tell her where her sister was; but the answer came, that he had received the commission from one of his correspondents, but that he knew nothing further on the subject.”

“And William’s keeping company with Grace, is he?” said Susan.

“He is,” answered Dobbs. “It seems he has had a liking for her for some time; but

people believing her sister went away with Andrew, and was somehow concerned in the murder, made him fearful of making up to her. But now this letter's come, he says it's clear Mabel knows nothing of Andrew, and that he don't see why Grace should suffer for what she'd nothing to do with, anyway."

"I don't see why she should, either," replied Susan; "and I don't blame William at all. He would have taken me when I was in the midst of my troubles, with scarcely a creature to speak to, except Mr. Jeremy; and that's what few men would have done. Grace was always a very nice girl, and I never heard anything against her."

"Nor against Mabel, either, till she went away, except her pride," observed Dobbs.

"Nothing else," answered Susan; "and I wonder people didn't see how improbable it was that her pride would let her go off with a poor lad like Andrew, without even being married to him. She'd refused many better offers than Andrew; that every body knew. And is that all the news from Oakfield?" enquired she.

"Yes," answered Dobbs; "except that Mr. Gaveston's got himself made a magistrate for the

county, and is making himself very busy ; Jeremy says, meddling with every thing. There's talk of a new road being made somewhere, and Jeremy says that Mr. Gaveston wants it one way, and the rest of the magistrates another ; and they are all at sixes and sevens about it ; Gaveston's so tyrannical and obstinate."

After giving Dobbs her address, and requesting her to send her any information she might get either about Mabel or Henry, Susan took her leave, and proceeded to pay her visit to Julia.

Julia had nothing very particular to relate except that she had seen Mr. Dyson. "I happened to be standing at the door," she said, "when he was passing on the outside of one of the Bath coaches, and saw me. He called to the coachman, and got down directly. He said he'd been abroad sometime ; and that ever since his return he'd been looking for me."

"But you won't have any thing more to say to him, sure?" said Susan.

"Oh no !" replied Julia, "never, depend upon that ; neither does he desire it, I fancy. What he wanted, was some deed, or will, or something of that sort, that he says was left in the lodging we were living in, when he went away ; and I do remember his once shewing me such a thing

and desiring me to take care of it; but that was some time before, and what became of it I can't think. When we fell into such distress after he went away, I parted with every thing by degrees, and the parchment may have been amongst some of the things; I could'n't say, Heaven knows! I may have lighted the fire with it some day, when Julia was so ill; for I often didn't know what I was doing, my mind was in such a distracted state. But he says it's of value, and would bring him money; and he wants me to try and find out what became of it; so the first evening I can spare from the shop, I'll go to the lodging, and inquire if such a thing was found; but I don't expect to hear anything of it."

"I wouldn't encourage his acquaintance, if I were you," replied Susan. "If he's seen coming here, it may get you an ill name in the neighbourhood."

"I won't let him come here," answered Julia. "The only reason I was glad to see him, is, that I have no other way of sending a message to Mr. Godfrey. Now, he says, though Mr. Godfrey has been married some years, he has no children, and if he shouldn't happen to have any, perhaps if he were but to see what a nice little girl Julia is grown, he might do something for her, which would be a great relief to my mind."

“ I wouldn’t look to any such thing, if I were you,” replied Susan ; “ but I’d bring Julia up to get her living in some decent way ; and above all, never give her a notion that she has a rich father. From his past conduct I shouldn’t expect any thing from him ; and if it ever comes, it won’t be the less welcome for coming unlooked for.”

CHAPTER IV.

THE READER IS INTRODUCED TO A PERSON OF DISTINCTION.

On the following day, Susan proceeded to Virginia House, the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Cripps, and was installed in her new situation.

Mr. and Mrs. Cripps were in many respects an extremely happy couple. They were rich, good-tempered, and fat; and had three daughters, whom they thought not to be equalled by any daughters that ever were born. The eldest, Miss Caroline, was a beauty; she had very fair hair, that flowed in a profusion of soft ringlets over a very white neck; her person was petite, and her features extremely small and unmeaning. Miss Livia, the second, was less remarkable for her personal charms; but she was of a very enquiring turn of mind, and extremely anxious to be well informed on all subjects. As her papa justly observed, "let Livia alone; she'll never let any thing go by without asking the meaning of it."

As for Miss Jemima, the youngest, she was,

as her mamma assured everybody, a *progidy*. Nothing came amiss to her. She always knew her lessons, although nobody ever saw her looking in a book; she had such an ear for music, that having heard a tune once, she was sure to be humming it the whole day afterwards; her dancing master said she was his best scholar, although she had only, as Mrs. Cripps observed, been at it a quarter; "as for drawing," said the admiring parent, "she has such a turn for doing things after nature, that I won't have her taught, for fear it should cramp her genius. For as dear Mr. Cripps remarked, when she showed him a ship she'd done after nature, when we were at Margate; 'Anybody can draw if they're taught; but the true test of talent is to do it without.'"

With respect to education, beyond reading and writing, two faculties which she very sparingly made use of, Miss Caroline never had any; because, being a beauty, she thought, and her parents were of the same opinion, that learning was quite unnecessary. Added to which, her constitution being delicate, might have been injured by application. A few abortive attempts had been made to educate Miss Livia in her childhood; but they were soon abandoned, not only being found ineffectual, but

superfluous; the young lady's desire for information being sufficiently active to supply all that was required; and her preference for oral instruction as decided as was her aversion to whatever was presented to her in a literary shape. Miss Jemima was yet a child; but it appeared to her parents as unnecessary to educate her as the others, because she was evidently determined to educate herself. As Mr. Cripps observed, "Teach Jemmy her A, B, C, and leave the rest to her." This was accordingly done, and apparently with great success; as at nine years old Jemmy was found to have read a great deal, and to be acquainted with many things that were utterly unknown to the rest of the family.

All this was very gratifying; and Mr. and Mrs. Cripps would have been a very happy couple, but for one drawback; which was, that the people in the neighbourhood of Virginia House, whose dominions were no larger than theirs, and whose fortunes were generally not near so large, did not visit them. Unacquainted with the manners of polite life, they had themselves, on their first settlement there, made some rather indiscreet advances, which had been ill received, and had probably operated against

them, and been sufficient, combined with other slight objections, to obstruct their entrance into society, so that they lived alone in their glory. This was strange, as Mr. and Mrs. Cripps justly thought, where there were three such daughters in a family, each of whom had the prospect of fifty thousand pounds; and it was extremely mortifying to the parents; who, although they would have been content with inferior society themselves, were ambitious for their children, whom they had hoped to see exalted into another sphere by marriage; and who had, with that view, dropped all communication with their former acquaintance when they retired from business. It was a great misfortune to them, that the most fashionable young man of the neighbourhood, he whose example all the rest followed, had declared decidedly against them. He could afford to do it, because he was engaged to be married to a young lady with thirty thousand pounds already, who had reasons of her own for wishing to exclude the Cripps's from society; and the others, who were not equally independent, and to whom the fifty thousand pounds would have been very acceptable, turned their backs on Virginia House, because no one amongst them had courage enough to set up for himself, and follow his own inclinations.

Their isolation formed also a considerable obstruction in the way of Miss Livy's education ; limiting her opportunities of enquiring, and restricting her means of information.

In order to compensate in some degree for these disadvantages, Mr. Cripps took his family every year to the sea-side, where they could attend the public assemblies and breakfasts ; and sometimes succeeded in making an acquaintance who was willing, after their return home, to accept of the hospitalities of Virginia House.

At the period of Susan's location in the family they had just returned from one of these annual excursions ; and it was rumoured amongst the servants, that the expedition had resulted in a very fair prospect of a high alliance for Miss Caroline. The lady's maid, who had accompanied them from home, narrated, that a foreign gentleman of distinction had been struck with Miss Carry at a ball, and was remarked to take up his glass whenever he met her ; that some days afterwards, she had herself been introduced to his servant, a tip-top sort of man, at the races ; and that when his master rode past, and took up his glass to look at Miss Carry, who was in the carriage, he had observed, not the least knowing that she belonged to the family, that that was the young lady his master was in love with.

“Why don't he tell her so then? said I,” continued Mrs. Gimp, the abigail in question. “Who knows but she might take a fancy to him?”

“How do you know but he has told her?” responded George, the Count's servant.

“Because I know he has not,” answered Gimp. “If he had, I should have heard of it, because I belong to the family.”

“Upon that,” observed Gimp, “the man seemed quite struck, for it was evident he'd no idea who I was. ‘Oh!’ said he, then, eyeing me from top to toe; and I had on a pink spencer, and a pea-green bonnet, as good as new, that Miss Carry herself had only just given me; ‘Oh!’ says he, quite surprised, ‘then it is a genteel family, after all.’

“‘A genteel family,’ says I, ‘to be sure it is. Why, that's their own carriage and horses they're riding in.’

“‘Is it?’ says the man; ‘I declare you perfectly astonish me. We heard they were nothing but tradesfolks from London, and that was why my master, the Count, refused an introduction; for, of course, persons of his rank are exceedingly particular who they make acquaintance with at these sort of places.’ ‘No doubt,’ says

I; 'and so are we very particular 'who we make acquaintance with, I assure you. But as for tradesfolks from London, my master is Mr. Cripps, of Virginia House, as handsome a place as you'd wish to see; a gentleman with two hundred thousand pounds, if he's worth a farthing.'

"'God bless me!' exclaimed the valet; 'it's really a pity the Count refused an introduction, on the young lady's account. It might have been a fine thing for her.'

"'And for him too,' says I. 'I suppose he'd have no objection to fifty thousand pounds?'

"'No,' says he; 'I suppose he'd have no objection—nobody has; but it wouldn't be any consideration, with all his estates. Lord bless you! he's one of the richest noblemen in Europe.'

"'You don't say so!' says I.

"'He is,' says he; 'why, don't you know who he is?'

"'Not I,' says I; 'Miss Carry couldn't tell us his name.'

"'Oh then,' says he, looking sly, 'Miss Carry did speak of him?'

"'Did she?' says I, 'to be sure she did. I don't know but what she was as much struck as

he was ; only it's no business of mine to say so, she being a young lady, unless he'd spoke first ; so of course you won't tell him.' .

“ ‘Oh no,’ says he, ‘honor bright!’ laying his hand on his breast.

“I knew he would tell, in course,” continued Gimp ; “he'd ha' been a fool not. ‘But,’ says I, ‘you was going to tell us his name, and who he is.’

“ ‘Why, Lord,’ says he, ‘I thought every body knew that ! Why, he's the famous Count Ruckloony, to be sure ; the greatest proprietor in Europe. In course, Mr. Cripps must have heard of him in his travels.’

“ ‘I dare say he has,’ says I ; ‘and I am sure it's a pity, such a handsome couple as they'd make, that they shouldn't be acquainted. He's so dark, and she's so fair, that they'd make a beautiful match.’

“ ‘It's a pity, certainly,’ answered the man ; ‘but I'm afraid it's too late now, for the Count will only be here one more ball. After that, he must go up to London, to pay his respects to the King, that's expecting him on a visit.’

“Well,” continued Gimp, “you may be sure Miss Carry went to the next ball ; and beautiful she looked, in her blue and silver ; and the

Count was introduced by the Master of the Ceremonies, and danced with her; and they say the whole company stood by to see them, they danced so beautifully. After that, he called several times, and paid great attention to Miss Carry; and he's coming to Virginia House, as soon as the King can spare him away from the palace."

It was probably from sympathy with Miss Carry's feelings, or with the Count's impatience, but the King did spare him sooner than was expected; and one fine morning the Count arrived on horseback, to make a call.

He appeared, as far as it was possible to distinguish his features, a handsome man, of about forty, or thereabouts; but his face was provided with such a plentiful crop of dark hair, which was suffered to grow wherever there was the slightest excuse for it, that it was not easy to discover exactly what sort of terrain it covered. His figure was good, and his dress extremely fashionable; but with some additions of foreign ornament and splendour, not general amongst English gentlemen at that period.

With respect to his manner, it was grave, deliberate, and self-possessed. He was by no means a great talker, rather the contrary; but

Miss Livy found him an invaluable acquisition, as he was prepared to answer all her questions, never being at a loss upon any subject whatever. He spoke English fluently, and with very little accent, sometimes indeed with none at all; a peculiarity of which Miss Livy very naturally enquired the reason; and he informed her, that it arose from his having acquired the language from two different masters. One was himself a foreigner, and taught it him with a foreign accent; the other was an Englishman, and taught him without any; and the result was, that he sometimes spoke like one of his instructors, and sometimes like the other; which, Mr. Cripps observed, was "extremely natural;" recommending him, at the same time, to "stick to the Englishman, and cut the *parlez-vous*." But Miss Carry, on the contrary, preferred the accent; on which account it probably was that he continued to vary his mode of speaking in a manner that alternately satisfied each. Finally, to complete the Count's description, he never laughed, or even smiled; his gravity was imperturbable; a peculiarity which, as may be easily conceived, gave him an air of dignity and superiority to the rest of mankind that was truly imposing.

This distinguished person having alighted from his horse, and followed the footman to the drawing-room, who announced him as Count Ruckalony, presented himself with his usual calm demeanour, which formed a striking contrast to the excitement and empressement with which he was received.

"It's so good of you to remember us so soon," exclaimed Mrs. Cripps. "We were half afraid you'd have forgotten the direction; and dear Mr. Cripps was thinking of enclosing a card to the king's palace, where we supposed you must be staying."

"It's impossible I could forget," answered the Count, with a significant glance at Miss Carry.

"So Livy said," replied Mrs. Cripps. "'For,' says she, 'how could he have so much information on every subject, if he could'nt keep such a trifling thing as a direction in his mind?'"

"Miss Livy's observation was extremely just," returned the Count. "I make it a rule never to forget anything."

"We hardly expected his Majesty could have spared you so soon," observed Mrs. Cripps.

"Why," replied the Count, "to say the truth, my visit has been curtailed by a circum-

stance, that situated as I am, I cannot help exceedingly regretting;" and here he cast another expressive glance towards Miss Carry.

"Nothing unpleasant, I hope?" said Mrs. Cripps.

"Only inasmuch as it will oblige me to quit this country sooner than I had intended," answered the Count. "The fact is, I am summoned to the court of Austria on particular business."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Mrs. Cripps and Miss Livy; "how unfortunate!" Whilst Miss Carry said nothing; but as she walked to the window and took out her pocket-handkerchief, it was presumed that she was considerably affected by the intelligence.

"But you'll come back to us?" said Mrs. Cripps, affectionately.

"Should it be in my power, I shall be too happy to do so," returned the Count. "But these things do not always depend upon ourselves. We are unfortunately not so independent of our sovereign as you are in this country. He sometimes interferes in our family affairs, in a manner that crosses our dearest inclinations."

"Goodness!" cried Miss Livy, "what does he do?"

“Proposes an alliance, for example, which we are not at liberty to decline. Or, perhaps, forbids one that we have set our hearts upon.”

Here Miss Carry, who still kept her place at the window, with her back turned to the company, raised her handkerchief to her face and appeared to be wiping her eyes.

“There is nothing of that sort likely at present, I hope,” said Mrs. Cripps, as she rose and presented her vinaigrette to Miss Carry.

“I trust not,” replied the Count; “but I confess I am not without apprehensions; it is one of the misfortunes attending large possessions that we are not always permitted to bestow them as we would desire. There is a niece of the Emperor’s at present of marriageable years, and they will naturally be looking for a suitable alliance for her.”

Here Mr. Cripps, whom the servants had been sent in search of, made his appearance in the drawing-room, and after exchanging greetings with the Count, was informed of the threatened calamity; while Miss Carry’s emotion became so uncontrollable, that her mamma recommended her quitting the room, which she incontinently did.

“What!” exclaimed Mr. Cripps, “would the Emperor of Hungary, or whatever he is, go to marry a chap at your time of life, whether he will or no! By jingo! that’s a pretty go!”

“It’s shocking tyrannical,” said Mrs. Cripps, “and very affecting;” and she put her hand in her pocket for her handkerchief, but unluckily she had left it up stairs.

“I know what I’d do,” said Miss Jemmy, who had hitherto been a silent listener to the conversation, “if I was as big as the Count, and anybody wanted to marry me against my will.”

“What would you do?” enquired Mrs. Cripps.

“Why I’d marry the person I liked directly, before the Emperor could hinder me; and then he couldn’t make you marry twice, could he?”

“Certainly not,” replied the Count; “if I were so fortunate as to have time to follow your advice, Miss Jemima, I should esteem myself a happy man. But the orders of the Emperor are peremptory. I must depart almost immediately.”

“How soon?” enquired Miss Jemmy.

“In a fortnight at furthest, I fear,” said the Count.

“And can't people be married in a fortnight?” asked Miss Jemmy.

“No doubt, if everything had been previously settled,” replied the Count. “But when one has not procured the lady's consent, or even dared to make known one's wishes, I fear it would be presumption to entertain a hope.”

“Not at all,” said Mrs. Cripps; “if the lady likes you, I don't see why things can't be as well done in two weeks as in twenty.”

“But I am not so happy as to be certain that the lady does like me,” answered the Count, with an air of great modesty.

“Oh yes she does,” said Miss Jemmy.

“Jemmy!” exclaimed Mrs. Cripps, “fie! child; how can you talk so? You don't know what you're saying.”

“Yes, I do, ma,” replied Miss Jemmy. “Is'nt Carry saying she adores the Count all day long? I'm sure she said so this morning to Gimp when she was dressing her hair; and she asked Gimp if he was'nt a sweet fellow.”

“Oh, my goodness!” cried Mrs. Cripps, putting her hands before her face; “get out of the room, Jemmy; you're a very naughty child to talk so. Pray excuse her, Count, and don't attend to what she says. She's such a very

precarious child, that its quite impossible to keep her back—quite a *progidy*, I assure you.”

The Count, however, taking advantage of the young lady’s communication, pressed for further information ; when Mrs. Cripps, with all due reluctance and reserve, admitted that she was afraid he had made a deep impression on poor Carry’s heart.

“ To be sure he has,” added Mr. Cripps. “ What’s the use of mincing the matter ? The girl’s as fond of him as she can stare.”

The Count’s modesty being thus reassured, and such signal encouragement given to his suit, he declared that he had no further hesitation in avowing the most decided passion for Miss Carry ; whose charms, he confessed, had touched his heart from the first moment he beheld her, but that some malignant reports had prevented his seeking an immediate introduction ; now, however, he was too happy in being allowed to lay his title and fortune at her feet.

Nothing could exceed the satisfaction of the family at this consummation of their most ambitious hopes, and the triumph it would afford them over their proud and scornful neighbours. Even the necessity for so early a union as the Count’s peculiar circumstances rendered neces-

sary, appeared to them far from objectionable. From what they had gathered from Gimp, and from the few words the Count had dropt about "malignant reports," and "declining an introduction," they were not without apprehensions that a discovery of the very recent date of their transmiration from the shop in the city to Virginia House, might operate against them in the aristocratic mind of Roccaleoni; and that therefore the shorter the interval before the ceremony, the better. Once married, as the happy couple were to start for the continent immediately, it was not likely that the Count's prejudices would be disturbed by hearing anything of the matter.

The preliminary arrangements were soon satisfactorily arranged; but as much remained to be discussed, the Count was requested to pass the rest of the day at Virginia House, to which he condescendingly acceded.

It would be advisable, he said, to keep their intentions as secret as possible till the ceremony was over, lest any rumour of what was impending should reach the court of Austria. News travelled apace; and of course he had enemies—all great men have—and there were those connected with the Austrian embassy who would not be sorry to do him an injury with the Em-

peror. Mr. and Mrs. Cripps had not the slightest objection to this precaution. They were also afflicted with that inseparable symptom of greatness—they too had enemies, who would be envious of Miss Carry's high fortune ; and who might, in the hope of interrupting the alliance, be disposed to volunteer some communications about the shop and the city.

Thus the views and wishes on both sides perfectly coincided, and nothing could be more harmonious than the negotiations of the contracting parties ; more especially as Mr. Cripps declared that on the wedding-day he should be prepared to transfer fifty thousand pounds consols to the bridegroom's account.

“ On my part,” said the Count, “ our mode is somewhat different—you'll allow me to settle a little estate on the young lady. I wish I knew which of those I possess would be most agreeable to her taste. It's important ; because in the event of her being left a widow, it would be desirable that she should have a residence that suited her ; and it is perfectly immaterial to me which it is.”

Of course Miss Carry put her handkerchief to her eyes, at the word widow ; and Mrs. Cripps murmured an emphatic “ God forbid ! ”

“Roccaleoni,” pursued the Count, “from which I derive my title, is naturally entailed on my eldest son.”

“Ha! ha!” said Mr. Cripps, jogging Miss Carry’s elbow; “we shall be having a young Count soon;” at which Miss Carry said, “Don’t pa—for shame!” and blushed very becomingly.

“And it is there,” added the Count, “that I chiefly reside.”

“Where is it?” asked Miss Livy.

“It’s in Transylvania,” replied the Count.

“Is it a pretty place?” said Miss Livy.

“Rather splendid than pretty,” answered the Count. “The castle is very ancient.”

“How ancient?” enquired Miss Livy, who, elated with the exaltation of her sister, was beginning to be in train.

“It dates from the reign of Nero,” answered the Count.

“Was he the king of Transylvania?” asked Miss Livy.

“He was,” replied he.

“Well,” said Miss Jemmy, “I’ve a large sheet of paper, with the pictures of all the kings upon it; and there it says he was the Emperor of Rome.”

“That was his brother,” said the Count.

“What’s the English of Roccaleoni?” enquired Miss Livy.

“It means the rock of lions,” replied he.

“Are there lions there?” asked Miss Livy.

“We meet with one or two occasionally,” answered the Count. “Formerly they were very numerous, as well as the bears; but we have extirpated them by degrees.”

“My goodness!” exclaimed Miss Carry; “I hope I shan’t meet a lion when I’m out walking in Transylvania.”

“I don’t think it very likely,” answered the Count; “every precaution will be used to prevent it.”

“Well,” said Miss Jemmy, “look here; in my book of animals, it says there are no lions except in Asia or Africa.”

“Well,” said Mr. Cripps, “how do you know but Transylvania’s there too?”

“Is it?” enquired Miss Livy.

“No,” replied the Count, “it’s in Europe.”

“And the book says there are no lions in Europe,” said Miss Jemmy.

“The information in books is not to be depended on,” answered the Count; “on which account, I never read them.”

“Nor I,” said Miss Livy; “they go such a

round-about way to tell one any thing, and make so many words about it, it's quite tiresome."

"It is," observed Mr. Cripps; "and they're so full of lies. What was the name of that book I read, Jemmy?"

"It was Gulliver's Travels," replied Jemmy.

"Ah!" said Mr. Cripps, "he must take us for gulls to believe him. Lord bless you, such a farrago of lies!"

"Entirely false," said the Count. "I've been in those parts myself, and know that his account is not to be depended on."

"If you never read books," said Miss Jemmy, "how do you know so many things?"

"Entirely by observation," answered he; "and by asking questions, as Miss Livy does. As for geography, orthography, and the use of the globes, I learnt them all by travelling, and making use of my eyes."

"And how did you learn history?" enquired Miss Livy.

"By visiting the countries themselves, and talking to the people," replied he. "For example, when I wanted to learn the Roman history, I went to Rome, and questioned the Romans about it. Of course they must know their own history best."

“The devil’s in it if they don’t,” said Mr. Cripps.

And in this sort of improving discourse, the afternoon passed very agreeably ; till in the evening the Count took his leave, with a promise of returning on the following day to dinner.

CHAPTER V.

SUSAN MAKES A DISCOVERY THAT CHANGES HER PLANS.

As there were many purchases and preparations to be made in the short period that inter-*would in-*
vened before the wedding, Mrs. Cripps and the *tervene*
young ladies spent the succeeding morning in London. Amongst other wants, it was discovered that the bride would require a maid to accompany her abroad. The Count had given his opinion, on this subject being mentioned, that it was unnecessary, as English maids were useless on the Continent, and he could easily procure an accomplished foreign one, as soon as they had *should have*
crossed the Channel. But Miss Carry had always been accustomed to the services of Gimp, and was, moreover, a remarkably helpless young lady; and she avowed her utter incapability of dispensing with the attendance of a femme-de-chambre; besides, she said, she could not speak French, nor understand it either, and that it was therefore useless for her to engage a foreign servant till she had acquired that accomplishment. *should have*

Mrs. Gimp was therefore applied to, and a proposal made to her to accompany the bride; but that prudent lady declined to make any change in her situation. She knew when she was well off, and preferred the luxuries and comforts of Virginia House to the prospective accommodations of an ancient castle in Transylvania. Besides, she entertained a decided aversion to old castles, which, she justly observed, were apt to be haunted; and with respect to Transylvania, or any such outlandish place, it might be all very well for them that liked it, but England was good enough for her.

Susan, who had been accustomed to wait on her former mistress, and was a very handy person, was next applied to; but she also declined; because, knowing nothing of the Count, and thinking Miss Carry a fool, she did not choose to embark herself with their fortunes. It therefore became necessary to look out for some one else to fill the situation.

In the mean time, Roccaleoni arrived duly to dinner every day, and continued liberally to satisfy Miss Livy's curiosity, and to store her mind with a variety of agreeable information. But Mr. Cripps's hospitality revolted at seeing his future son-in-law mount his horse of an evening to re-

turn to town, especially if it happened to rain ; and he therefore proposed to the Count to establish himself at Virginia House, and remain there till the wedding.

The Count said he should be exceedingly happy to do so, and that he would send down his servant on the following morning with his portmanteau. Mrs. Cripps enquired if the man could speak English.

“ Oh, yes,” answered he ; “ he is an Englishman. I have no foreign servant with me at present. This is a very valuable fellow, that I have had some time. I engaged him on the continent for the purpose of exercising myself in speaking English before I came here ; and he has been travelling with me through France and Italy, in a tour I’ve been making to look after my estates in those countries. He’s a very superior sort of person for his situation in life—when we were in Rome, the Romans were struck with his resemblance to Julius Cæsar.”

“ Well,” said Miss Jemmy, “ I’ve got a picture of Julius Cæsar amongst my kings, so I shall be able to see if he’s like him.”

“ Julius Cæsar was very bald,” observed the Count, “ and George is very bald.”

“ Wasn’t Julius Cæsar a great warrior ?” enquired Miss Livy.

"He was," replied the Count.

"My book says he conquered Britain," remarked Miss Jemmy.

"Whew!" said Mr. Cripps, "that's a good 'un."

"Absurd!" said the Count.

"Them books of yours is full of lies, Jemmy," said Mr. Cripps; "you should burn them. The man that dares to say any d——d frog-eating Frenchman ever conquered Britain, must be a rascal."

"Julius Cæsar was'nt a Frenchman, pa," answered Jemmy; "he was a Roman."

"It's all one," observed Mr. Cripps. "A Frenchman and a Roman's all the same thing. They neither on 'em ever conquered England, nor ever shall." And Mr. Cripps brandished his knife and fork in a manner that evinced his determination to prevent it.

"Did Julius Cæsar lose his hair in battle?" enquired Miss Livy.

"He did," answered the Count. "It was singed off by a cannon-ball that passed immediately over his head."

On the following morning Susan was preparing the best bed-room for the Count's accommodation, when one of the coaches which passed

the house, drew up, and deposited that great man's servant and portmanteau at the gate.

"Oh!" said Miss Jemmy, running into the room with a large sheet of paper in her hand, "look here, Susan; I've brought my pictures of Kings, that I may see if George is like Julius Cæsar, as the Count says. That's Julius Cæsar, and here's George coming up stairs with the portmanteau;" and accordingly the prototype of the Roman Emperor, conducted by the footman, entered the room.

"Well," cried Miss Jemmy, "I declare he is like him. Turn round, George, and let me see if you are bald. Look, Susan, isn't he like him?" And she took hold of her to invite her to a nearer inspection of the new comer. But Susan stood transfixed, staring at the man with no less astonishment than if Julius Cæsar himself had actually stood before her—for George, the Count's servant, was no other than the man with the crooked nose.

"Who is it I'm like?" said he. "What are you looking at me so for?" apparently more surprised than pleased at the sensation he had created.

"It's to see if you're like Julius Cæsar," replied Miss Jemmy; "and now I see you are,

I shall go down and tell Livy, that she may come and look at you too;" and away she ran.

"Well!" said the man, in an impatient tone, to Susan, who, speechless with amazement, still stood with her eyes fixed on his face; "what the devil are *you* staring at? Is this the Count's room?"

"Yes," answered Susan, endeavouring to rouse herself. "Are you his servant?"

"To be sure I am," replied he. "Did you never see a gentleman's servant before, that you can't take your eyes off me?"

"It's only the likeness I was struck with," answered Susan; "the child had been just showing me the picture."

"It's a joke of my master's," said he, partly recovering his good humour. "You seem to have a comfortable house here."

"Yes," replied Susan, "it's a comfortable house, and every thing comfortable about it. I hope Miss Carry won't change for the worse where she's going."

"Bless you!" cried he; "this is nothing to Roccaleoni. Why, our pigeon-house is well nigh as large as this. She'll be astonished when she gets there, I fancy."

"Comfort and grandeur don't always go together," observed Susan.

“Well,” said George, “if Roccaleoni’s too large for her taste, she may go to one of the other estates; there’s plenty to pick and choose from.”

“I hope she’ll be happy,” said Susan, with a sigh; for her recognition of George had very considerably abated her respect for his master. Indeed, an idea occurred to her that never had presented itself before—she had a notion that the Count was the very man she had seen at the police office, with Nosey, the day she was there with Mrs. Aytoun, and had overheard Jackson’s remarks upon their evidence about the watch and purse.

On that day she had only caught a side view of his face as he went out, and had seen little more than she had yet seen of the Count’s—namely, that it was very much overgrown with dark hair. But that coincidence, coupled with the appearance of the servant, awakened some unpleasant suspicions in her mind.

It is true, she knew nothing in the world against George’s character herself. She had never either seen or heard of him till he rang at the back door of Oakfield two nights before Mr. Wentworth’s death; and she had no rational grounds for putting an ill construction on so

slight a circumstance ; nor did she find that anybody else to whom she had mentioned it, was disposed to do so. Her dream, if-dream it was, could have no weight with anybody but herself ; and therefore all the ill she could have advanced against him, was comprised in the few words Jackson had uttered ; which, after all, did not amount to much more than that his person was familiar in places not over respectable—but direct accusation there was none. Still she could not help auguring ill of the Count, and of Miss Carry's prospects ; and had Mr. and Mrs. Cripps been a different sort of couple, she would have felt inclined to have imparted to them the doubts she could not banish from her mind ; but being what they were, she was quite certain that anything she could allege, had she had ten times as much evidence to adduce, would have no weight in the world against the Count's plausibility.

However, as far as her private interests were concerned, she was by no means sorry to have this opportunity of making the man's acquaintance, and discovering his character. She had always anxiously desired to learn something about him ; and now that the occasion offered, as she feared she could do no good in Miss

Carry's case by interfering, she resolved to use it for her own satisfaction—to be silent and observe.

With respect to George, his displeasure appeared to subside when her inspection ceased ; and he conversed with her and the other servants familiarly enough, answering all their enquiries about his master by magnificent accounts of his wealth and grandeur.

In the meantime, the days flew rapidly by, and it wanted but three to the wedding. Mrs. Cripps and Miss Carry were gone to town on their shopping affairs, and Mr. Cripps to transact some business at the bank ; Miss Livy was embroidering a green cat in the drawing-room, and Miss Jemmy was in the coach-house, drawing the new barouche “after nature ;” whilst the Count, who now seldom left the villa, lest he should be seen by anybody connected with the Austrian embassy, remained behind.

Susan had gone into the garden at the cook's request, to pick some herbs, and was stooping down behind a row of raspberry bushes, when she heard footsteps and voices approaching ; and peeping between the leaves, she perceived they proceeded from the Count and his man George.

They were walking slowly side by side, with their arms thrown behind their backs, the servant apparently quite as much at his ease as the master, and in earnest conversation. She could not resist her curiosity to overhear something of the dialogue, and she therefore preserved her attitude, and remained as quiet as she could.

“But it’s too late,” said the Count. “You should have thought of it before.”

“Not at all too late, if you manage it well,” replied George. “They’ll agree to anything you’ll propose—they’re such fools!”

“I don’t know that,” answered the Count. “Perhaps she won’t consent herself. She’s a damned fool, certainly; but she’s got a will of her own, for all that.”

“Well, try it,” said George. “There’s no harm in trying it—” and here the course of their walk took them out of Susan’s hearing.

Presently, however, they approached again. “Of course,” said George, in answer to some observation of the other’s, which had not reached Susan; “of course, I should give up that claim entirely; and therefore it’s your interest as well as mine.”

“It’s a devilish pity you didn’t think of it be-

fore!" observed the Count, who appeared to be moved by the last suggestion to take a more favourable view of his companion's proposal, whatever it might be. "There's so little time left; only three days to do it in."

"Time enough," answered George. "Propose it to-day at dinner, you can say it's only for a few weeks; depend on it she'll do it, and leave the rest to me."

"I'll go and sound her about it now," said the Count,"—and with that they turned off and left the garden.

The words she had heard amounted to little or nothing: she could not tell what they meant; they might mean evil or they might not; but the familiarity, the strange tone of equality, that seemed to subsist between master and man, struck Susan as most extraordinary. "If I had but sensible people to deal with," she said to herself, "I'd speak, although it does want but three days of the wedding—but they're such fools—by-the-bye, that was what George said, and certainly he was right there."

On the following morning, after breakfast, Susan was summoned to an interview with Mrs. Cripps. "Susan," said the lady, "we haven't been able to find a maid yet, to accompany the

Countess abroad, and now we have but three days before us. All the women we've seen have objected to go because the family is not coming back."

"Indeed, ma'am?" said Susan; "that's a pity."

"It's very inconvenient," answered Mrs. Cripps; "and perhaps if we had decided before on letting Livy and Jemima go with their sister, there would'nt have been so much difficulty; because the woman, whoever she is, could return with them."

"Is Miss Livy going too, ma'am," said Susan; "and Miss Jemima?"

"Yes," answered Mrs. Cripps; "they're both to go; it will be much better and pleasanter for Carry, as the Count says—he's all kindness and consideration, I'm sure; a perfect angel of a man he is, as ever lived. Carry'll be a happy woman, as I'm always telling her. However, as I was saying, Livy's to accompany her sister, just for a few weeks; and by that time the Countess might get a foreign servant; and whoever goes with them might return with Livy and the child. But we've no time now to look about for anybody that would suit."

"Won't Mrs. Gimp go, ma'am?" said Susan.

“No, she won’t,” answered Mrs. Cripps; “I’ve just been asking her. But, perhaps, as it’s for such a short time, Susan, and it would be such a convenience to us, you would?”

Many thoughts flashed through Susan’s mind at this proposal. In the first place, her curiosity about George was yet by no means satisfied. He talked away fluently enough amongst the servants, and gave them many amusing accounts of his travels, the places and people he had seen abroad, and the ways and customs of foreign nations; but nothing ever transpired about himself personally, and he was singularly reserved with respect to all his former experiences in England. No interrogations elicited from him in what families he had lived previous to his taking the Count’s situation, nor what parts of the country he was acquainted with. His very name she was yet ignorant of; in short, she knew no more of him than she did on the day they first met in the Count’s bedchamber, and she was unwilling to lose sight of him till she had made better use of her opportunity.

Then she recalled the conversation she had overheard the day before in the garden. She

now suspected that it regarded Miss Livy; what it meant she could not tell, but she inclined to think it was no good. "If I go," thought she, "I may be of some use to the poor foolish thing if any harm's intended her." "Well, ma'am," answered she to Mrs. Cripps, "as it's only for a few weeks, I've no objection. I'll go with the young ladies."

CHAPTER VI.

SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES.

THE Count having, to Mr. Cripps's infinite satisfaction, announced himself a member of the Protestant church, the happy couple were married, by special license, at Virginia House ; and the mutual desire for secrecy still prevailing, no one was present at the ceremony but the family themselves, and their servants ; and as soon as the ladies had exchanged their white robes for their travelling dresses, the bride and bridegroom, with Miss Livy, started in their new barouche, with George and Susan in the rumble ; the four horses and two postilions decked with white favours, announcing to the envious neighbourhood, and to the admiring world, the auspicious event that had taken place.

They slept the first night at Rochester, the second at Dover, and on the following morning they crossed the channel to Calais ; during which interval Susan remarked nothing very

*here is
emmy ?*

particular in the conduct of her companions, unless it was the peculiar emprovement with which George handed Miss Livy in and out of the carriage, and attended to all her wants ; taking upon himself, also, the duty of occasionally answering her questions, when the Count did not seem disposed to do it himself ; which induced the young lady to observe, that she found George a very well informed person for his situation in life.

When they got over the water, however, the scene in some respects changed. George, who from the beginning had been dressed in plain clothes, and might have passed for one thing as well as another, being a flashy sort of fanfaron-looking man, instead of acting as he had hitherto done, looking after the luggage and doing the duty of an attendant, assumed a different tone, committing the charge to others, and calling about him with an air of authority and independence ; and instead of offering to conduct Susan, to whom he had hitherto been civil enough, up to the hotel, he desired her to follow with the porters, who were bringing the luggage, and walked away himself with the rest of the party. Neither did he assist in unpacking the dresses and articles for the toilet that

were required; but having his portmanteau placed in the bed-room he had selected, he arranged his attire to his own satisfaction, and then, without saying anything to anybody on the subject, he went out.

Susan's curiosity being considerably excited by these unusual proceedings, she took an opportunity of asking Miss Livy, in the evening, what was become of him. "Oh!" said the young lady, "the Count says we shall see him again in Paris, where we're going tomorrow."

"I thought we were going to the Count's castle in Transylvania?" said Susan.

"So we are, afterwards," replied Miss Livy; "but we're going to Paris first, where the Count says we shall meet a particular friend of his, called Colonel Jones, that he is as fond of as if he were his brother."

With a mind by no means at ease, Susan started, with the rest of the party, for Paris, on the succeeding day. The strange conduct and disappearance of George, formed a serious addition to the previous amount of mystery, and she could not but apprehend that "worse remained behind." If the servant had been assuming a false character, the chances were that the master had been doing the same; and she

could not avoid certain misgivings with respect to the estate in Transylvania, and all the other estates ; especially that in the south of France, where, she had one day heard the Count assuring Miss Livy, in answer to her enquiry " whether echoes ever spoke first ? " that a phenomenon of that nature was to be found. The only encouraging circumstance was, that Roccalearoni continued to treat them kindly ; she could perceive no difference in his behaviour, and the young women appeared perfectly satisfied and happy in his company.

On their arrival in Paris, they took up their abode in the best apartments of a handsome hotel ; and the Count lost no time in introducing them to the usual round of spectacles and amusements ; even Susan, for the first week, much as her suspicions were awakened, observed nothing uncommon or unsatisfactory in his proceedings.

One day, however, about the eighth or ninth after their arrival, when she happened to be in the salon, receiving some directions from the ladies, the laquais-de-place entered, and announced Monsieur le Colonel Jones ; and to her infinite astonishment, though apparently creating none in the minds of the rest of the party, George,

the late valet, presented himself, attired in the height of the fashion, and with all the ease and confidence of an old acquaintance.

“ Ah ! mon cher,” said the Count, who now that he was in France occasionally garnished his conversation with a few foreign phrases, “ vous voila, enfin ! Do you know that we have been expecting you these three days, with the utmost impatience ? That is, I and my dear little Countess here—as for Miss Livy, of course she had no desire for your arrival ; none in the world—had you, Livy ?”

“ I am very sorry to hear that,” replied the Colonel, taking a seat beside Miss Livy, who laughed and blushed, and looked extremely conscious ; “ and had I known it sooner, I might have extended my visit to the Duke for another week, as he urged me to do. But my impatience would not permit of a longer stay ; and I ordered my horses to the door this morning before he was up, and left a note excusing my sudden departure.”

“ And how did you find the Duchess, and all the family ?” enquired Roccaleoni.

“ Surprisingly well,” answered the Colonel ; “ with the exception of the young Marquis, who had a fall from his horse the day before I ar-

rived, and had broken the small bone of his arm. However, he's doing very well."

"Was there much company at the château?" asked the Count.

"A great deal," answered the Colonel. "There was the Duc de Rochecouart, the Prince of Tarentum, all the Armagnacs, the Marquis and Marchioness de Beauregard, and several others. But, nevertheless, they are extremely anxious for a visit from you and the ladies; and begged I would urge you to fix an early period."

"That I will," replied the Count, "as soon as we have seen a few more of the sights of Paris; but as the weather is so fine at present, I wish to take advantage of it, to shew my dear little Carry the environs of the city. To-morrow we propose spending the day at Versailles. Perhaps you'll give us the pleasure of your company?"

To this polite invitation the Colonel acceded; and shortly afterwards, a walk to the Thuilleries being proposed, they all four started together, Roccaleoni giving his arm to his wife, and the Colonel his to Miss Livy.

"Well," thought Susan, as she looked out of the window after them, "it may be all right—I hope it is. But why Colonel Jones should pretend to be the Count's servant, I can't for the

life of me make out ; and for all his fine clothes and great talk, I don't feel clear in my mind that he's not the servant yet."

In the mean time, the Colonel and Miss Livy proceeded down the street, for some minutes in a silence which being only interrupted by the sighs which ever and anon proceeded from the o'ercharged breast of the former, was infinitely more moving and expressive than the most eloquent oration could have been ; especially, as each "suspuration of forced breath" was accompanied by a corresponding pressure of the fair arm he supported, every pressure augmenting, by a regular gradation, in tenderness and intensity.

At length, "unable longer to conceal his pain," the enamoured Colonel ventured to murmur, "Can you forgive the follies that my unhappy passion has made me commit?"

"I can't think why you did it !" answered Miss Livy, who by no means approved of "silence in love," and who was extremely glad to have her tongue set free, and her curiosity satisfied.

"Hasn't the Count explained my motives?" said he.

"No," said she, "he told us you'd do it."

"Damn him !" murmured the Colonel, in a

inaudible whisper. "I am sorry for that," he continued aloud; "for it's a delicate subject for me to enter upon, especially when my feelings are so apt to overpower me. I'm sure you must have often perceived my agitation when I approached you."

"But what did you do it for?" reiterated Miss Livy. "Why didn't you come as Colonel Jones at first?"

"Alas!" replied the Colonel, "the smallness of my fortune compared to the Count's, and my not having a title to bestow, like him, made me fear you would scorn my pretensions, and drive me from your presence unheard. And I fancied if I could only introduce myself under your roof, and perhaps, in my disguise, make some impression on your heart, I might have a better chance of success afterwards. It was very absurd, no doubt; but you know love makes men commit all sorts of follies; and mine I believe has almost overpowered my reason;" and here the Colonel's voice faltered, and he appeared exceedingly affected.

"When did it come on?" enquired Miss Livy, whose gratification, great as it was, by no means quelled her curiosity.

"The first time my eyes beheld you," he

replied; "you were walking with your sister, the present Countess, and Roccaleoni and I were together, arm in arm. 'Heavens!' I exclaimed, 'look at that lovely woman!' 'Which?' said he; 'she in blue?' 'No,' I answered; 'the other in green. Observe her countenance; see what mind there is in her face!' However, he persisted in admiring your sister most, whilst I couldn't take my eyes from you. From that moment I was a lost man; and when I found that my friend was about to pay you a visit at Virginia House, I besought him to introduce me under your roof as his servant."

"Well, it's very odd," said Miss Livy; "but papa and mama would have been very glad to see you, if you'd said you were Colonel Jones."

"Perhaps I was wrong," replied the Colonel; "and on that account, if I am so happy as to make an impression on your heart, I should request as a particular favour, that you would not expose the folly that my passion led me to commit. I shouldn't like to be laughed at."

"But they'll know you when we go to England," said Miss Livy, jumping at once to the conclusion.

"But I shall not mind that," answered he,

“if I am only so happy as to secure your hand first. But I fear if they should discover the imposition I practised on them before I have obtained their consent to our union, it may operate against me.”

shall

“It’s very funny,” said Miss Livy; “but papa said I should be sure to get a husband in Transylvania.”

“Then you consent to my wishes?” said the Colonel; “and I may consider myself the happiest of men?”

It had not entered into Miss Livy’s mind to oppose them; she had that sort of weak good nature that would have inclined her to accept anybody that had offered; and a man of the Colonel’s rank and figure, a particular friend of the Count’s, one who visited dukes and marquises, and who had performed such a feat as disguising himself, and appearing in a false character, in order to win her affections, combined every recommendation she could desire.

Miss Livy’s consent, therefore, was soon won; but that was not enough for the Colonel, who declared himself quite incapable of taking her without the approbation of her respected parents; but lest the attachment should appear too sudden, it was arranged that a way should be

paved for his application for her hand, by a few preliminary letters, wherein his name and qualifications might be advantageously introduced. Thus Miss Livy wrote,—

“MY DEAR PAPA,—I told you in my last letter that we were expecting to be joined by the Count’s particular friend, Colonel Jones. He has been with us now some days; and a charming man he is! I’m sure you’d be delighted with him, he’s so full of information; I really don’t know which is the cleverest, he or the Count; and you know I was always naturally fond of clever people. Jemmy likes him exceedingly; and so does Carry. It makes it very convenient for Carry and me, and saves us a deal of trouble, as we don’t understand French, and the men who shew the sights can’t speak English; so the Count and the Colonel tell us what everything is, and who painted it. We went yesterday to see the catacombs where they bury the dead here, not like our churchyards, but large places underground; but it’s not disagreeable, because they’ve no flesh on. The Colonel says they are all boiled first, till the flesh turns into fat, and they make wax candles of it, which is the reason they’re so much

cheaper here. There was a picture of a lady in blue satin, and a Spanish hat, so like mamma, that the Count talks of having it copied; the Colonel says 'It's the mother of the Gracchi, by Sir Christopher Wren;' but he couldn't remember her name. The skulls are all piled up one above another in rows, and you walk through them with a bit of candle in your hand; but sometimes the candle goes out, and then you can't go out, for every one of them's exactly the same. We went to see the Goblins at work; but the Colonel says 'they've worked it all on the wrong side,' which is a pity. There was a very grand piece, large enough to cover one end of the drawing-room at Virginia House. The Colonel told us it was 'a battle between Alexander the Great, and Louis the XIV; but he could not recollect which beat.' But I think one of the most beautiful things we've seen, is the king's palace at Versailles, which is entirely full of water-works, that sprinkle you all over with gold-fish; and such loads of crimson satin I never saw! But at the theatre they don't act in English, which makes it not very amusing to Carry and me; but the Colonel tells us what it's about, and I'm certain you'll be delighted

with him. Carry is, and says I'm a fortunate girl; and believe me, dear Papa,

“Your affectionate daughter,

“LIVY CRIPPS.”

“P.S. We saw a beautiful picture of Queen Cleopatra, committing suicide with a large pearl. The Colonel says ‘it stuck in her throat and choked her.’ But the picture that pleased me most, was a large one that contains all our royal family; there’s King George and Queen Charlotte, and the Prince of Wales, and all the princes and princesses; and beautiful likenesses they are. The Colonel says ‘it was painted by Vandyck.’ I’m certain you’ll be surprised when you see the Colonel. You’d never guess who he is, if you were to guess from now till Christmas.”

After a few epistles of this nature had been forwarded to England, a proposal in form from the Colonel, strongly supported by the recommendations of the Count and Countess, was despatched, with a request for an early answer, as it was desirable the marriage should take place before the party quitted Paris for Roccaleoni, which they intended doing shortly; and as no doubt was entertained by the ladies of Mr.

should quit

Cripps's compliance, every preparation was made for the ceremony.

However, to their surprise, the answer, instead of the expected consent, contained a decided refusal; and an intimation, moreover, that Mr. Cripps was about to start immediately for Paris.

On the morning after this intelligence reached them, the travelling carriage appeared at the door, and the Count, Countess, Colonel, Miss Livy, and Susan, started for the castle in Transylvania.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CHANCES OF ARRIVING AT ROCCALEONI APPEAR RATHER AT A DISCOUNT.

FOR two days the party travelled without adventure; and as the three women were all equally ignorant of the language and of the country, they had no further means of knowing where they were going, than what they learned from the gentlemen who escorted them.

On the third evening, after passing for some hours through a country thinly inhabited and little cultivated, the carriage drew up at a small lone inn, on a barren heath; and the two gentlemen alighting, handed out the ladies, and conducted them into the house.

“Take out the ladies’ travelling bags, and whatever they will want for the night,” said the Count to Susan; “but leave everything else in the carriage.”

“Are we to stay in this lonely place all night?” enquired the Countess.

“It’s inevitable,” returned her husband ;
“there is no other inn within a considerable
distance.”

As they entered the narrow passage that led to the interior of the house, they were met by a tall, dark-complexioned woman, apparently about fifty years of age ; and who, although she had still the remains of much beauty, had also, what Susan thought, a most sinister expression of countenance. She wore a dark-coloured linen bed-gown, which only descended to her knees, below which appeared a red-stuff petticoat ; on her feet she had blue-worsted stockings, and wooden shoes ; and on her head, a yellow handkerchief, in the form of a toque. Her hair, which straggled from beneath it, was perfectly gray, and formed a striking contrast to her black brows and jetty eyes, which were still lighted by the fiery temperament within, and from which glances of distrust and suspicion were darted on all that approached her.

On meeting the party in the passage, she made a sort of salutation to the gentlemen, which seemed to imply a previous acquaintance, but she said nothing ; whilst they addressed a few words to her, in a low voice, in French.

She then silently preceded them into the

kitchen, and drawing a wooden bench towards the chimney, she wiped off the dust with her apron, and by pointing to it invited the ladies to sit down.

“Am I to sit down in the kitchen?” enquired the Countess, with some indignation.

“There is no alternative,” said the Count; “there is no other room in the house except the bed-rooms; and besides, the evening is chilly, and it is the only one with a chimney.”

With some remorse for their elegant silk pelisses, the ladies accommodated themselves to the necessity of the case, and seated themselves, giving Susan a corner beside them. The kitchen, which was paved with red bricks, was scantily furnished; shelves with a few cooking utensils, a deal table, and some wooden seats, forming the whole of its contents, with the exception of a very old, large, arm-chair, covered with what had once been red damask, which stood on the other side of the chimney, and which was occupied by a man who appeared to Susan (the most observing of the party) as well worthy of attention as the woman. Not that he had the same sinister expression of countenance; on the contrary, the expression he bore was that of a deep and fixed melancholy—of a melancholy

that seemed to have imprinted itself there under former circumstances, and in other times, and of which the type still remained, although the griefs were no longer remembered, nor the feelings yet in existence which had engraven the lines. The face was long, and very pale; and the well-formed features testified had once been a very handsome one. His person was on a smaller and slighter scale than that of the woman; and although he looked much older, to an observing eye the marks of age appeared rather the result of trouble than of time. He sat with his body bent forward, his arms resting on the two elbows of the chair, and his face turned almost invariably to the embers which flickered on the hearth, and on which his eyes seemed to fix themselves, as if he traced in the bright sparkles that successively shone their short moment of existence, and then set in darkness, the image of his own transitory pleasures and extinguished hopes. His dress, which consisted of a loose coat of grey flannel, with trousers of the same material, and a black velvet cap, was respectable and very clean, as indeed was that of the woman; and, altogether, he had the air of having been designed for something better than the situation in which he now

appeared. When the party entered the room, he rose slowly from his chair, and made them a profound and respectful salutation ; after which he reseated himself, without saying a word, and resumed his contemplation of the fire, testifying no further consciousness of their presence.

Whilst Susan was making these observations, and the young ladies were mutually expressing their impatience to reach the elegant accommodations of Roccaleoni, the woman and the two gentlemen left the room together, and were absent some minutes. When she returned she brought in some eggs, and immediately set about preparing a repast for the company, in which office she was aided by an odd, rough-looking, red-haired boy, in a blue blouse, perhaps about fourteen years of age, whom she appeared to have summoned from some other occupation to her assistance.

During this process, the gentlemen walked about before the door, in deep conversation, pausing now and then to hold a consultation with the postilion, who still remained there with the carriage. The horses were then taken out, and the vehicle wheeled under a shed ; whilst they reëntered the house, and partook of the refreshment prepared for them. When they

had finished their meal, the woman drew the table into a corner, and spreading the board with humbler fare, she and the postilion and the boy took their evening repast ; but before either herself or the others were served, she appropriated a portion to the occupant of the fauteuil, whose wants she appeared sedulously to attend to.

“ Is that the master of the house ? ” enquired Miss Livy.

“ Yes,” answered the Count ; “ but he’s almost childish, and takes no part in the management of it.”

The remainder of the time that elapsed before the ladies retired, passed dully enough. There was something depressing in the desolate air of the place, and the imperturbable silence of its inhabitants ; for not a sound from any of their lips had yet reached the travellers. The man still sat gazing at the fire, the boy quietly cleared away the supper things, and the woman went and came about her household affairs. The Countess appeared languid and tired ; Miss Livy’s active mind found little subject for enquiry, Miss Jemmy was so sleepy she could not keep her eyes open ; and the two gentlemen appeared very much occupied with their own reflections.

As for Susan, she did not feel in any respect

comfortable or satisfied. She had many reasons for being displeased at their hasty departure from Paris, and suspicious as to its motive. She distrusted all she saw, and all she heard; and she watched the motions of the strange silent people under whose roof they were to pass the night, with an uneasy feeling of curiosity.

“I think,” said the Count, at length, “you had better go to bed. Is the room ready?” he added, addressing the woman, who, bowing her head in token of assent, immediately lighted a candle, and stood ready to conduct the ladies.

“As for us,” said he, “we must pass the night by the fire here; for unluckily there is but one room in the house, besides what the people themselves occupy. However, it’s but a few hours, and we shall do very well.”

The room to which the woman conducted them was up-stairs, and like the rest of the house, poorly furnished, but clean. It contained two beds, each originally designed but for one person; but on this occasion it was arranged that the Countess and Miss Livy should occupy one, and Miss Jemmy and Susan the other. After waiting a moment, as if to ascertain if there were any further commands, the woman bowed her head and departed.

The young ladies, whose minds were neither suspicious nor anxious, undressed and went to bed; where, after a few observations on the coarseness of the sheets, and the inferiority of the accommodation, they soon fell fast asleep. Susan went to bed too, and after a time, to sleep; but her mind being less tranquil than the others her sleep was less sound. She dreamt uneasy dreams about her brother and Gaveston, and the strange, silent woman; then she thought the melancholy-looking man in the arm chair was Andrew, and that the Count and the Colonel were going to murder him, and that she interfered to save his life. This crisis woke her, and she opened her eyes. The room appeared light although there was no candle burning, and she raised her head to look at her companions. They appeared in a calm sleep; and without reflecting whence the light proceeded that enabled her to see them, she turned round and tried to go to sleep again. But before she had sunk into forgetfulness, she was again roused by a sound that seemed to proceed from beneath the window: there were voices and wheels—probably some travellers arrived—then the sound of horses' feet; and at last the smart slam of a carriage door, the smack of a whip, the wheels rolled

away, and the room was dark. Susan almost involuntarily jumped out of bed, and ran to the window; it looked to the front, and there was neither curtain nor blind to impede her view; but all she could discern was two fast-receding lights, evidently the lamps of a carriage. "Travellers stopped to bait their horses," thought she, and once more settling her head on her pillow, she fell into a sound sleep that lasted till morning.

It was near eight o'clock when she awoke, and she arose and dressed herself that she might be ready to assist the ladies. Soon afterwards Miss Jemmy, who was by much the most lively and active of the three, lifted up her head and announced that she was ready to rise and be dressed; and as was her custom, as soon as this ceremony was accomplished, she ran out of the room to see what was going on below; and Susan soon saw her, from the window, amusing herself with some fowls that were pecking about in the front of the house.

When the ladies were nearly dressed, Miss Livy opened the window, and called to Jemima to request the Colonel would give her a certain parcel that he would find in the pocket of the carriage.

"I don't know where he is," replied the child.

“Isn't he in the kitchen?” said Miss Livy.

“No!” answered Jemima; “I've been looking for them, and they're not there. I think they must be gone for a walk.”

“Well, then, try and get it yourself,” said the Countess. “Make somebody open the door for you.”

On this injunction the child disappeared, but presently returned, saying that she could not find the carriage, and that she could not make any one understand what she wanted. The article required was therefore dispensed with; and the ladies, having finished their toilet, descended to the kitchen, where they found everything precisely as on the preceding evening. There was a small wood-fire on the hearth; the man in the arm chair sat gazing at it as if he had never stirred or turned his head since they left him, and the woman was making preparations for their breakfast. The ladies stood before the fire warming themselves—for although it was yet early in the autumn, the mornings were already chilly—and wondering where the gentlemen were; but as they had never yet made any attempt at speaking the language, their two cavaliers having always interpreted for them, and

given them no encouragement to acquire it, they were shy of making the enquiry.

When Susan had closed her travelling bags, and finished her business up stairs, she descended; and on entering the kitchen, the first thing that struck her eye was the breakfast table. On it were three basins of coffee at one end; and at the other, removed from the rest, there was another basin placed for her, as had been done at the supper the night before; but there appeared no breakfast for the gentlemen. However, it was rather late, and they might have breakfasted already.

When everything was prepared, the woman touched Susan's arm, and pointed to the table; and then, without explanation or comment, she quitted the room, and busied herself with her other affairs.

"Shall I call Miss Jemima in to breakfast?" enquired Susan.

"Do," answered the ladies; "but isn't it very odd where the gentlemen can be?"

"I'll see if I can find them," said Susan; and after sending in the child, she hastened with some anxiety to see, not exactly if she could find the gentlemen, but if she could find the carriage—but no such thing was visible; neither

carriage, horses, nor postilion, could she discover a vestige of.

“Then they’re gone!” said she; “and that was the carriage I heard last night! Gone, too, without explanation, or announcing their departure, soon after we left them!” and Susan could not help auguring from this that they had probably no intention of returning.

The carriage, which had been built expressly for the journey, and formed to contain a great deal of luggage, was altogether no despicable prize. There were there, not only the expensive wardrobes of the ladies, but some very valuable jewels, which Mr. Cripps had given his daughter in honour of the high alliance she was contracting; and so low had Susan’s opinion of the Count and his friend fallen, that she had no difficulty in believing them capable of any stratagem to avoid meeting Mr. Cripps, and to appropriate the property.

However, as this was only her own conjecture, and if correct the ill news would be known soon enough, she kept her thoughts to herself.

In the meantime, when the breakfast was dispatched, the ladies became very impatient to depart; and Jemima, who had more notion of

putting a few words together than the others, pulled the woman by the gown, and enquired, as well as she could, where the gentlemen were. The hostess looked surprised at the question, but without answering pointed to the east.

“Ask if they’ll soon be back,” said the Countess. But this was an interrogation beyond Jemima’s capabilities, and they were therefore obliged to be satisfied without further information.

But the day wore on, and nothing was seen of them ; neither did any other travellers arrive to break the mysterious stillness around them. The only voice they heard, besides their own, was that of the boy, who spoke occasionally to the woman, but in a patois that would have been perfectly unintelligible to any stranger. As for the hostess herself, it became pretty evident that she was either dumb, or under a vow of silence, as all her communications were conveyed by signs. Altogether, nothing could be less encouraging than their situation. The man and the boy took no notice of them at all ; the woman none beyond serving them their meals, which she did unasked ; and though they all watched the road as anxiously as ever did Bluebeard’s wife and her sister Ann, they could “not see anybody coming.”

Jemima played with the fowls and the ducks, and kept up her spirits well enough ; but her sisters, overcome by ennui and the weariness of expectation, gave way to their tears. Not that they had any suspicion that they were abandoned. They were too simple, and had been too completely deceived, to entertain any such notion ; Susan alone penetrated the truth, and she saw very clearly that with her alone must rest the remedy for their misfortune.

But the difficulties before her were many. In the first place, she was well aware that beyond a few francs there was no money amongst them. The gentlemen had kept that, as well as everything else, in their own hands, and the simple girls scarcely knew the denominations of the coin of the realm. Then, she had not the slightest idea where they were, and she could not conceive any means of ascertaining. She judged that they must have deviated from the high road, because, before arriving at the lonely inn, they had travelled a vast distance without passing through any but the meanest villages ; the stages had been very long, and the places where they had changed horses merely posting stations where relays were kept.

Nevertheless, as she was satisfied they were

abandoned, and that every chance of escaping from their present disagreeable situation rested with her, she set herself seriously to consider what was to be done, after having allowed a fair interval for the yet possible, but as she considered, very improbable, return of the husband and the lover.

CHAPTER VIII.

SUSAN FINDS HERSELF IN AN UNEXPECTED DILEMMA.

WHEN three days had elapsed, which interval the ladies bestowed in tears, and in watching the road to see if "anybody was coming," Jemima in playing with the ducks and fowls, building towers of stones, and watching the boy in his out-of-door occupations, and Susan in reflections on their situation, and the means of extrication, she ventured for the first time to suggest her suspicions. The Countess and Miss Livy were at first indignant at the idea—especially the former, whose husband had hitherto, for ends of his own, behaved very well to her; but Susan's representations, and the lapse of a couple more days, brought them pretty much to her way of thinking; and utterly unable to act for themselves in such an emergency, they applied to her to decide what was to be done. Too weak to be much affected by the lamentable imposition of which they had been the victims,

they mourned their desertion much less than their danger. The loss of the husband and the lover, and the rank and splendour expected to be derived from them, made but little impression ; all such regrets were merged in fears for the present, and in anxiety to escape from their dilemma, and find themselves once more in the drawing room at Virginia House ; and to the attainment of this desirable object they entreated Susan, with tears and clasped hands, to direct the whole of her energies.

“ My dear young ladies,” said Susan, “ it’s what I am as anxious to do as you can be, and I have been thinking of nothing else all these days we have been here. But as for any particular danger, I see no cause for fear. If the people here meant to harm us, they might have done it before now. But the thing that puzzles me most, is what we’re to do for money ; for if we saw an opportunity of getting away, we haven’t enough, I’m afraid, even to pay what we’ve had here, much less for the expenses of a journey.”

This set them to reckoning the amount of their funds, when it appeared that all they could raise between them was only about thirty livres.

Susan’s first proposal was, that they should

should come prepare a couple of letters, one addressed to Virginia House, and the other to Mr. Cripps, addressed to the hotel they had been lodging at in Paris; as, if he came in search of them, as he had intimated, it was there, of course, he would enquire, and thus the letter might reach him. But the difficulty was how to forward them when written. During the five days they had been in the house of Monsieur le Clerc, for such was the name inscribed over the door, they had seen but one stranger, and that was a man who arrived one evening with a large, shaggy-haired dog, and who had disappeared before they came down stairs in the morning; but whence he came, and whither he went, they had no idea. Susan, in fact, wondered how the people contrived to keep the house upon the profits of such scanty custom; and the more she thought of the dumb woman, the silent man, and the odd, half-witted boy—for he appeared little removed from an idiot—the more mysterious she thought their way of life and their means of supporting it.

The only symptom she had observed that indicated there was an inhabited place at hand, was, that on the morning after the man with the dog had been there, the boy was missing, and

did not appear again until evening, when he brought home a basket on his arm, containing various articles of provision. Thus she concluded there must be a town, or village, or at least a shop, within such a distance as he could walk, and therefore attainable by her, and she saw no hope for them but in her attempting the enterprise. She might thus, at least, find some means of forwarding the letters, if she could do no more ; and even this would be much gained, as she had already explained, as well as she could, to the woman and the boy, that she wanted them conveyed to the post, in the hope that they might direct her which way to find a post town ; but they had only shaken their heads, and given her to understand that they knew no means of sending them. She would also, probably, discover where they were, so that their friends might learn where to seek them ; the only direction for that purpose they were at present able to insert in the letters, being, that they were in an inn, kept by a Mr. le Clerc, three days journey from Paris.

But when Susan proposed setting out on this expedition, the young women were seized with terror at the idea of being left alone, even for a day, and still more at the possibility which sug-

gested itself of her meeting with some danger or accident which might prevent her return. She was their whole stay and reliance; they had just sense enough to perceive that she had more than they had, and on her they cast their cares. In her, they knew, lay their whole chance of release, for they might have remained at Mr. le Clerc's inn to the day of judgment, before their own energies or invention would have effected their restoration to their friends: but like the weak creatures they were, they had not resolution to encounter the inconvenience of losing her for a day, for the sake of the ultimate benefit to be derived from her absence. They imagined themselves surrounded by all manner of perils, from which her presence alone protected them; and "what shall we do, if anything happens while you are gone?" was their constant answer to her proposal of departure. They would even have preferred accompanying her, and encountering the unknown dangers of the expedition, to remaining without her; but that was out of the question, as neither their feet nor their shoes were calculated for walking, and a couple of miles would have entirely exhausted their pedestrian capabilities. The only one that agreed to her proposal was Jemima,

who, though but a child of twelve years old, had a great deal more sense and character than her sisters. She saw the necessity of it, laughed at their notions of danger, and when she found that they would not give their consent, she advised Susan to go without it. "Just set off," she said, "some morning before they're up, and I'll tell them where you're gone." And after duly considering the case, Susan resolved to follow her recommendation.

Accordingly, with a few francs in her pocket, the two letters, and a slice of bread, that she contrived to secure the night before, Susan started one morning from the solitary inn on her adventurous journey. She had nothing to guide her as to the direction she should take; but recollecting that on the road they had travelled over there had been no town for many miles, she resolved to take the opposite one.

It was about six o'clock on a fine autumn morning when she set forth, her departure exciting no observation on the part of the hostess, as she had made a practice of walking out before the ladies were up, in the hope of effecting some discovery in the neighbourhood that might be useful. For several hours she trudged along the road without meeting a single human being; and

she judged that she must have gone over at least ten miles, when feeling tired, and observing a fine clear spring of water gushing from the bank, she sat down to rest, and refreshed herself with a draught of the cool element and her bit of bread.

Whilst she was yet sitting, she observed two figures approaching, not by the road, but across the common, immediately in front of her, where there was no apparent path. At first she thought it was a man and a child, but as they drew nearer she saw it was a man with a large dog; and ere long, she discerned that it was the very man and dog that she had seen at the inn some evenings before.

When he arrived within a few yards he seemed also to recognise her, and advancing straight towards where she was sitting, he said a few words in French, to which, not comprehending them, she could only respond by shaking her head. He then pointed in the direction of the inn, and mentioned the name of Le Clerc, which she interpreted into an enquiry whether she was not living there, and she therefore nodded in sign of assent; upon which he took off one of his shoes, lifted up the inner sole, and taking out a letter, handed it to her, pointing

again towards the inn, and saying something which she construed into a request that she would convey it there ; and perceiving that it was actually addressed to Madame le Clerc, she testified her readiness to undertake the commission.

The man upon this gave her to understand that he was obliged ; offered her a drink from a flask he carried in his pocket, which, on tasting, she found was brandy ; and then, whistling to his dog, he turned round, and retraced his steps across the common ; whilst presently afterwards Susan resumed her journey.

She had walked nearly a couple of hours more, and was beginning to get a good deal alarmed at the space she was placing between herself and the unfortunate girls she had left behind, fearing that if she went much further she should find it impossible to return that night, when she was cheered by the sight of a town at no great distance. A pretty considerable one, too, it appeared ; and she stept forwards with a lightened heart, thinking that if she derived no other advantages from her expedition, there was every probability of her finding the means of forwarding her letters. Some little way in advance, however, between her and the town she *should derive*

was making for, there stood a single small house by the road side, round the door of which she saw lounging several men ; some in uniform, apparently soldiers, and others in plain clothes.

“ Arrêtez ! ” cried one of them, as she was about to pass on—“ Ou allez-vous ? ”

Susan, who was utterly ignorant of custom-houses, and barriers, and passports, and the precautions used at particular times and places on frontier towns on the continent, imagined from the man's insolent tone of voice and evident design of impeding her progress, that he intended to insult her, and instead of stopping, she quickened her pace, and endeavoured to avoid him.

“ Arrêtez ! ” he cried again in a loud voice, as she slipt past him ; “ stop, or I'll make you ; ” whilst a roar of laughter amongst the lookers-on testified their diversion ; when Susan, alarmed at the augmented violence of his manner, and never doubting but some insult was designed, converted her walk into a run, and fairly took to her heels. But her efforts to escape were vain. She soon felt her arm in the rough gripe of the angry soldier ; and then apprehending resistance would only make matters worse, she quietly suffered herself to be led back to the

guard-house ; volleys of oaths and abuse being showered on her on the way, which, however, she had the happiness not to comprehend.

Next followed a series of interrogations, addressed to her in an angry tone, to all of which she could only answer by a silent shake of the head, being utterly ignorant of their purport, and of the nature of her offence.

“ Allons !” cried the man, with increased irritation, and forcing her at the same time into the house, a measure which she thought so suspicious that she opposed it with all her strength, “ allons, nous verrons ce que vous avez.”

Exceedingly alarmed, and her imagination running quite astray as to their intentions, Susan wept and entreated as they conducted her into a back room of the guard-house ; and when with a rudeness approaching to brutality, they proceeded to search her person, she resisted their efforts to lay hands on her with all the strength she could exert.

But her opposition availed nothing, except to augment their violence ; and they speedily extracted the contents of her pockets, to the examination of which they had first directed their attention, and amongst them drew forth the two English letters, and also the one she had undertaken to deliver to Madame le Clerc.

On perceiving the address of the latter there was an evident sensation amongst the men ; they turned it all ways, peeped through it, endeavouring to make out something of its contents, and appeared to hold a consultation whether or not they should open it ; a question, however, which seemed to be ultimately decided in the negative.

Gradually, Susan's first apprehensions subsided. She comprehended that they were searching her person for some purpose or other, and she regretted exceedingly that she was unable to understand or answer the interrogations they continued to put to her ; more especially as she perceived that considerable importance was attached to the letter they had found upon her, and she would have been happy to explain in what manner it had fallen into her hands. But unfortunately this was impossible ; and all she could do was to await the unravelling of the mystery in silence, and with what patience she could. With respect to the last, indeed, it appeared likely enough to be called into exercise ; for when their search was over, instead of restoring the letters and setting her free, they locked her into the room by herself, and carried the papers away with them.

Unconscious of evil, and concluding that ere long she would be released, Susan, as regarded herself, would have felt no great uneasiness, nor perhaps considered her situation much worse than it was before ; but when she thought of the helpless creatures she had left behind her, and the alarm they would feel if she did not return by night, she was seriously distressed at the obstruction thus placed in her way, and the delay it would occasion.

After enduring a confinement of a couple of hours, during which time she heard, by the clatter of knives and forks and plates, that the guards were at dinner, the door was opened ; and being summoned forth, she was given to understand that she was accompany two of them to the town, a proposal to which she was far from objecting ; and they therefore set out immediately at a brisk pace, one walking on each side of her.

After some conversation between her guards and others that were stationed at the gate, she was conducted through the streets to the Palais de Justice, where a great many people were assembled, whose attention appeared to be engaged by some matter of public interest. Making their way through the crowd, the men

that had charge of her led her into an anti-room, where mingled with soldiers and police officers were several persons, some of whom seemed, like herself, to have been brought there not wholly by their own consent. The latter were mostly seated on wooden benches that were placed against the wall; and on one of these she also was invited to rest herself. There was a constant hum and buzz of conversation amongst the officers on the one hand, and amongst the questionable-looking people on the other; and some observations were addressed to her, which, however, finding she only answered by a shake of the head, were soon discontinued. So she sat quietly watching the scene before her, wondering at the singularity of her own situation, and lamenting over the alarm of the poor helpless girls she had left behind her at the inn. Occasionally, the scene was varied by the opening of a pair of large folding doors at one end of the room, and the appearance of some persons from an inner apartment, or by some of those who were in the outer being called in; but Susan's astonishment may be imagined, when on one of these occasions, a sudden rush of several people through the doors having awakened her attention, she lifted up her head, and beheld,

first the Count, and secondly the Colonel, each surrounded by guards, and evidently in custody ; and presently afterwards a second rush, when there came out, attended by several gentlemen, apparently of distinction, a very beautiful and elegant person, attired in deep mourning, and seemingly in great distress, in whom, at the first glance, she recognized *Mabel, the dairy-maid*.

The first party she only followed with her eyes as they were conducted through the room ; but when the second appeared, thrown off her guard by the surprise, and her anxious wish not to lose the opportunity she had so long eagerly desired, she suddenly started to her feet, and made an effort to follow them. But ere she had advanced two steps, a sturdy arm arrested her progress, and she found herself forced back into her seat, with a stern command to be quiet, and not create a disturbance ; whilst the brilliant cortège passed on, and disappeared through the door at the other end.

Her thoughts wholly abstracted from her own situation by this unexpected vision, unconscious of the lapse of time, and indifferent to all that surrounded her, even to her own detention, except inasmuch as it prevented her following Mabel, Susan sat for some time longer, whilst

several of those about her, having been summoned into the inner apartment, got their business settled, and departed, either freely or otherwise, as it might happen.

In the mean time the hours advanced; evening was drawing on; and, at length, the folding doors were again thrown open, and the contents of the inner room, amongst whom appeared magistrates, officers, and other persons in authority, pouring out, announced that the business of the day was over.

A certain number of Susan's companions then departed at their leisure; but others, and amongst them she herself, were led away by the guards that had charge of them, and being conducted to a place of confinement near at hand, were locked up.

CHAPTER IX.

TWO PERSONAGES APPEAR ON THE SCENE WHOM THE READER
WILL RECOGNISE AS OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

ON the following morning Susan was again conducted to the Court House, and in her turn was introduced into the inner apartment and placed before the magistrates, accompanied by the guards who had brought her there.

“Who is this woman?” said the magistrate.

“We believe her to be Julia le Clerc,” replied the serjeant.

“Does she admit that she is that person?” said the magistrate.

“She is dumb, your worship,” answered the serjeant.

“And deaf?” enquired the magistrate.

“No, not deaf,” answered the other. “She is said to have lost her speech from fright many years ago.”

“What is your name?” enquired the magistrate of Susan.

But Susan remained silent, for as the whole dialogue was conducted in French, she comprehended nothing that was going on.

“Can you write?” said the magistrate. Susan shook her head in token that she did not understand the question.

“She can’t write,” said the magistrate. “How are we to interrogate a person who can neither write nor speak? On what charge have you brought her here?”

“Her house, as your worship knows,” replied the serjeant, “is a well known dépôt for smugglers; and we have been long on the look-out to get some proof against them.”

“And have you any?” enquired the magistrate.

“Not exactly,” answered the serjeant. “But yesterday we caught her endeavouring to slip past the barrier, and she made violent resistance when we attempted to search her person.”

“That’s suspicious, certainly,” observed the magistrate. “And what did you find?”

“Here are the contents of her pockets,” replied the man, “consisting of three letters, five francs, a pocket-handkerchief, and a small box, containing an English half-crown, and two shirt studs.”

“ But there’s nothing criminal in that,” said the magistrate.

“ No,” answered the serjeant; “ but her coming into the town at this particular period is of itself suspicious, as she has never been seen here before. It is probable that she wished to find some means of communicating with the prisoners.”

“ Very likely,” answered the magistrate, whose head appeared rather a recipient for other people’s ideas, than a magazine of his own.

“ Perhaps the letters may throw some light on her designs,” said the clerk.

“ I shouldn’t wonder,” replied the magistrate; “ hand them up. ‘ A Monsieur Creeps en Angleterre,’ ” said he, reading the address of the first.—“ ‘ A Monsieur Creeps, à Paris,’ ” turning to the second.—“ ‘ Et puis, à madame le Clerc ;’ ah, c’est ça, voyons ! ” and thereupon, throwing aside the two first, he broke the seal of the third, and read as follows :

“ MADAME,

“ This is to inform you that I have at length discovered the persons you have so long desired to find. I have been on their track for

some time, but circumstances were unfavourable. Your intelligence was in all respects correct. They are free traders on the coast, and will be willing to undertake any business you propose, on satisfactory terms. They are inseparable, and undertake nothing but in concert. They will arrive at your house shortly after the receipt of this, which I send by Jacques Menin.

“Yours to command,

“LOUIS GROS.”

“That’s odd,” said the magistrate. “I don’t very well understand it.”

“One thing in it is evident,” observed the clerk; “these men are wanted to carry on some illicit trafic.”

“That’s clear, certainly,” said the magistrate; “what shall we do with her, Drouet?”

“Detain her, I should recommend,” said Drouet; “at least for the present; and set a trap for the villains she expects. But suppose we see the contents of the other letters.”

“Ah! ça,” said the magistrate, when he had opened them, “they’re in English, Drouet, which I don’t comprehend; but it appears to me they’re of no importance. They’re signed ‘Leevy Creeps,’ and seem to be addressed from a

child to her papa—voyez, there is the word *Papa* legible enough.”

“Letters she has been entrusted to put in the post, probably,” said the clerk, throwing them aside.

“Take her away,” said the magistrate, “and bring up somebody else. We’ll consider what’s to be done with her by and by.” And Susan was accordingly led back to her previous place of confinement, and again locked up.

In the mean time, when the two ladies arose on the preceding day, and learnt from Jemima that Susan had already been gone some hours, they were seized with dismay at the idea of being left at the mercy of the fearful dumb woman, who was to them an object of the greatest terror. Every danger, possible and impossible, presented itself to their imaginations; they proclaimed their conviction that she would never return; or that if she did they should never live to see it, as, doubtless, the hostess would take advantage of the opportunity to rob and murder them: and the day was passed in tears and lamentations, which, as the hours drew on without any signs of her reëpppearance, became more and more violent. Jemima, on the contrary, passed the day in her usual amusements; and

neither participated in their fears nor their distrust. She had as much confidence in Susan as they had ; but young as she was, she was a much more reasonable being. She had no doubt that she would return the moment she had effected the object she went for ; and she entertained no apprehensions of the dumb woman, because she knew that Susan entertained none ; and that if she had, she would not have gone away and left them at her mercy. "Perhaps it's a great way to a post office," said the child to her weeping sisters, when, as the night approached, their terrors became every moment more uncontrollable. "She said she would return this evening, if possible ; but that we were not to be frightened if she didn't, as she couldn't tell how far she might have to go. I'm sure if Susan thought Mrs. le Clerc would hurt us, she wouldn't have gone at all."

"How can Susan tell what Mrs. le Clerc means to do?" said the Countess. "I heard her say herself, when first we came, that she thought the woman had a very bad countenance."

"But if she wanted to hurt us, she might have done it when Susan was here," answered Jemima. "How could she have helped it? She's not a man to fight for us."

“Hold your tongue, Jemmy,” said Miss Livy; “you’re only a child, and don’t know any-thing about it.”

“Oh yes, I do,” said Jemima; “I know what Susan told me, and she said there was no danger, and that she’d come back as soon as she could;” and away she ran to see Rauque, the boy, feed the chickens.

At her usual hour Jemima went to bed; but the other two, having barricadoed their room-door as well as they could, only lay down in their clothes, agreeing that one should sleep whilst the other watched; but terror kept them both awake, and they passed the weary night in fancying they heard stealthy footsteps approaching the door, or low whisperings outside of it, or a hand softly trying the lock; and in short, in imagining all those mysterious and fearful tokens that presage the approach of danger.

However, the morning dawned, and found them alive, but not relieved; they were still confident that Susan would never return; whilst Jemima, who had slept the sound and healthy sleep of childhood, awoke gay and refreshed, and as confident as ever that she would.

The hostess, who from the moment of their arrival had always appeared extremely indiffe-

rent to their presence, and little curious about their proceedings, serving them their meals at stated hours, and performing requisite services unasked, but lavishing on them not a grain of extra civility or attention, nevertheless seemed to feel some surprise at Susan's disappearance. She placed her cover, as usual, at breakfast, dinner, and supper, and was evidently perplexed that she was not forthcoming. She interrogated Rauque on the subject, with whom she was in the habit of communicating by the finger alphabet used by dumb people; but he shook his head, and declared he knew nothing about it. This very curiosity on her part, rational as it was, served only to augment the terror of her lodgers. They observed her eyes fixed on them whenever they happened to look towards her, and fearful eyes they were, certainly—bright, black, fierce and suspicious; and they persuaded themselves that she was watching their movements.

“I'm sure,” said Caroline to her sister, after they had eaten their breakfast, “that we should be safer any where than here; and I wouldn't pass such another night as the last for any thing in the world. Suppose we go out as if we meant to take a walk, and see if we can't find

some house, or somebody that would protect us. Perhaps, if Susan's coming back we may meet her; and if she don't come back, I'm sure I'd rather run any risk than remain in the power of this horrid woman."

Livia willingly acceded to the proposal; all she feared was that the hostess would lay violent hands upon them, and confine them to the house; but Jemima objected; urging that if Susan returned during their absence she would be seriously alarmed. But this argument had no weight with the sisters. Susan's alarm they represented couldn't equal theirs; she had a great deal more courage, and was better able to take care of herself; besides, the woman wouldn't think it worth while to hurt her: in short, they were resolved to go, whether Jemima accompanied them or not.

should return

"Perhaps she'll be less likely to stop us if we leave Jemima," suggested Caroline. "She'd think we're coming back. Besides, she'll never think of hurting such a child as that."

"And she likes her better than she likes us," observed Livy. "She always gives her the best of everything; and the other day when her feet were wet, she would change her shoes and stockings for her."

“And then when we reach any place of safety, or get to Paris, we can easily send for Jemmy,” said Caroline; “and as she’s not frightened it’s no hardship to her to stay behind.”

“And as we’ve got so little money, it will be better not to be too many; it will last longer for two than for three.”

So “laying this flattering unction to their” selfish “souls,” they arrayed themselves in their bonnets and shawls, and with an air of as much indifference as they could assume, walked out; having the satisfaction to find that the hostess made no effort to impede their intentions, nor seemed to entertain any suspicion that they were taking their final departure. As the road they had come in the carriage was the one that led to Paris, they turned their steps in that direction; and having sauntered on in a careless manner as long as they were near the house, lest the hostess should be watching them, as soon as they were out of sight they accelerated their pace, and advanced over the ground with as much speed as their ill-exercised limbs permitted.

In the meantime, as the day advanced the little girl became extremely anxious for the return of Susan; not that she was alarmed for herself, but because she wearied without her, hav-

ing no one to speak to ; and because she feared Susan might have met with some accident.

When the dinner was served, and no one appeared to eat it but the child, the woman seemed extremely surprised, and enquired of her by signs, as well as she could, what had become of the rest of the party. Jemima, who had picked up so much French as to know that *marcher* meant to walk, pronounced that word ; upon which the hostess patted her kindly on the cheek, and invited her to eat, at the same time setting by the dinner of the other two to be kept till their return. But when the evening arrived without anything being seen of them, her astonishment was evidently considerable, and seemed to be accompanied by some uneasiness. She talked a great deal to Rauque with her fingers, and apparently sent him in search of them, as he went out and was absent for some time. He returned, however, shaking his head, and giving her to understand he brought no intelligence. Still her surprise and anxiety did not by any means take the form of displeasure to Jemima. On the contrary, she treated her with a degree of kindness and attention she had never done before ; for, hitherto, whatever sensibility her soul seemed capable of, appeared to be solely re-

served for the helpless being in the arm-chair. His wants and comforts were never neglected ; his meals were regularly prepared and placed before him, ere anybody else was served ; the fire was maintained the greatest part of the day merely with a view to his convenience, and she carefully moved his chair nearer or farther from it as the temperature of the room directed ; and at a certain hour she always lighted a candle, and assisted him out of the room to his bed.

It was this singular devotion that had so far redeemed her in Susan's eyes, as to counter-balance in a great degree the unpromising expression of her countenance, and the mystery that seemed to hang about her. She could not help judging mercifully of a woman who was capable of such a devoted and constant affection to one, who, whatever he might formerly have been, was certainly now only an object of pity ; and Jemima had intelligence and natural tact enough to be inspired with confidence from the same source. Thus she received Madame le Clerc's little advances with cheerfulness and good humour, and although she wished very much for Susan's return, she was under no apprehensions for her own safety. When the child's usual hour for retiring arrived, the hostess

attended her up stairs, saw her comfortably laid in bed, and as she patted her cheek when she left the room, there was a relaxation of the white compressed lips that almost amounted to a smile, where smiles for many a long year had never beamed. The next day passed as this, without events ; nothing was seen of the sisters, nor of Susan. Jemima began really to fear something had happened to her, and she would have been very much relieved if she could have expressed her apprehensions to Madame le Clerc in words ; but that was impossible. All she could do, she did ; she took hold of her hand and looked in her face with an expression of anxiety ; and the dumb woman patted her head encouragingly, made the same feeble approach to a smile she had done the night before ; and on one occasion, went so far as to take her head in her hands and kiss her forehead.

It was on the evening of the day after the sisters' departure that the four inhabitants of the lonely inn, the man, the woman, Rauque, and Jemima, were assembled in the kitchen at rather an earlier hour than usual. The afternoon had been wet and cold ; the child had been driven in from her out-door amusements, and Rauque from his occupations ; the fire was

fed with an additional log, the old man's chair pushed close to the chimney corner, and Madame le Clerc, seeing Jemima was in want of amusement, had given her a large hank of blue worsted, and asked her, by signs, if she would wind it for her.

Altogether, there was an air of comfort in the apartment that might have deceived a stranger into the belief that it was the abode of cheerful contentment; the fire blazed, the invalid watched the flickering flames, Rauque cut out wooden pegs for fastening the linen on the drying lines, Madame le Clerc was employed with her knitting needles, and Jemima in winding the worsted. All at once, a sound of heavy feet was heard at the outer door: all lifted up their heads, except the man, in whom it appeared to excite no attention. Madame le Clerc and Rauque rose, and the latter went out to open the door; whilst Jemima, letting the ball of worsted roll from her lap, anxiously watched to see whether it was Susan, or her sisters, or their perfidious seducers, that had returned.

no one
It was neither of them. Rauque entered the room preceding two men, who would neither of them have been very remarkable alone, but who were remarkable from their singular resem-

blance of air, manner, and dress. They were, as nearly as possible, of the same age, height, and complexion, the latter being extremely dark by nature and become more so by exposure to the weather; the hair of both was for the most part grey, a few black ones here and there remaining to shew what it had been; they wore broad oilskin hats, and were coarsely attired as sailors.

They advanced towards Madame le Clerc with a salutation somewhat more polished than might have been expected from their appearance; and Jemima, who was observing the scene, looked up at her to see how she returned it. But she did not return it—she was standing like a person transfixed, with her face the colour of marble, and her eyes glaring on the men with an expression that inspired even the child with terror. Gradually, this fixed and ghastly expression relaxed, the usually compressed lips parted, and a smile succeeded—an unnatural and fearful smile, which denoted neither pleasure nor benignity, but which, accompanied as it was by the still vengeful glare of the eye, and the malignant extension of the nostrils, rather resembled the grin of an hyena, than a token of satisfaction.

Both expressions, however, were transitory ; a moment or two, and the face of the hostess had resumed its common appearance ; except that it continued, perhaps, paler than before, and that a sterner resolution than usual sat upon the brow. She seemed, too, to feel that she had not received her guests well ; and she endeavoured to make amends for her inhospitality by an extraordinary degree of empressment. She stirred the fire into a brighter blaze, drew a bench close to it, and, with remarkable alacrity, placed a table with refreshments and liquors before them ; whilst the men, who seemed nothing loath, lost no time in availing themselves of the entertainment prepared for them.

A few words, remarking on the state of the weather and the season, formed all the discourse that accompanied the meal ; but when they had done eating, and filled their glasses, the visitors seemed disposed for further communication.

“ Ah ça,” said one of them, “ it’s singular to be dumb and not deaf.”

“ Those things arise from illness occasionally,” answered the other ; “ sometimes from a fever.”

Here Madame le Clerc, who heard what they were saying, looked up from her knitting, which

she had resumed, and appeared by her eyes to take part in the conversation. "Has she been dumb from her birth?" asked the first man of Rauque, who was removing the supper things from the table.

At this question Madame le Clerc touched Rauque on the arm, and drew his attention to herself before he had time to answer; "Tell them," said she, "that I lost my speech in a fright at sea, when I was like to be drowned;" and Rauque did as he was desired.

"That's likely enough," observed one of the men to the other. "You know it was said Julie de Moine lost hers from the fright."

"No doubt she did, for some time," replied the other; "her evidence was given in writing. But I think she recovered it; it was only temporary, I fancy. Somebody cured her in England, where she went to reside with her husband."

"Well," said the first, "I think we'd better proceed to business, and learn what's required of us. Doubtless, madam," continued he, addressing the hostess, who although she appeared to be engaged with her knitting, was lending an attentive ear to their discourse, "doubtless you have been expecting us, and it is needless to say who we are, or what has brought us here?"

“I presume,” answered Madame le Clerc, through Rauque’s interpretation, “that I see before me les braves frères-de-lait—the brave foster-brothers of Nantes, whose deeds are celebrated along the whole coast from Calais to Brest?”

“Precisely,” answered one of them; “we are the two Rodolphes of Nantes, at your service; and are here ready to undertake any enterprise likely to be beneficial to ourselves and our friends.”

“You have been wanted here for some time,” replied Madame le Clerc. “The fact is we want an entire change of tactics, a wholly new organization. Every thing’s known, or at least suspected; and if it wasn’t for the dogs, we shouldn’t pass twenty louis’ worth of lace in a month. You must be doubtless sensible of the difference yourselves. You must get much less to transport than you used?”

“Trade languishes, certainly,” replied one of the men, “and we shall be willing to do our utmost to regenerate it. But we understood it was for some specific purpose you had desired to see us?”

“It was,” replied Madame le Clerc, “one I have long desired to accomplish;” and as Rauque

interpreted her words, she fixed her eyes with a peculiar meaning on the two strangers.

“And what is it?” enquired the men.

“That,” she replied, nodding significantly, “you will learn by and bye; but you must receive the communication from myself. In the mean time, drink, et soyez les bien venus.”

The visitors were by no means slow to accept the invitation; and appearing content to wait her own convenience for the explanation she promised, they turned the conversation into another channel.

“This is an awkward affair,” they observed, “that has just occurred; and had we heard of it before we reached this neighbourhood, we should have deferred our visit; for it sets the country on the *qui vive*, and makes travelling difficult.”

“What is it?” enquired Madame le Clerc.

“Is it possible you are not aware of it?” said they.

“I have heard of nothing,” answered she; “we have had nobody here this week. The last was Jacques Ménin, and I expected him again yesterday, but he didn’t come.”

“Probably prevented by the circumstance we allude to,” replied one of the visitors. “*Ecoutez* :

it appears there have been two men—interlopers—not belonging to us—who have been attempting something on a great scale—un grand coup—with a carriage and four—provided with passports too—passing for foreigners—they are, indeed, proved to be English—they had been to Malines, Brussels, and other places, and were on their return well charged; the whole inside of the carriage, which was English built, and therefore the less suspected, had a false lining—capitally done, they say—never would have been discovered; in short, when they passed through into Flanders about ten days ago, they were taken for persons of the highest distinction, as their passports represented—it is supposed they transported goods to an immense value on that occasion. Well, all went well till they got near Lisle on their return—then, malheur!—about five miles on the other side of the barrier they met three persons on horseback, a gentleman and lady, followed by a groom. The gentleman was the Duke de Rochechouart, who it appears knew them both—one, indeed, had been his own servant; and the other he had become acquainted with in some unpleasant transaction—what it was didn't transpire—however, the parties recognised each other. It appears, that

for some reason or other, the Duke wished to have some communication with them, and he desired his groom to follow them into the town and observe where they put up. Probably they misunderstood the manœuvre, and fancied their enterprize was suspected; however that may be, when they perceived that the man persisted in following them, they shot him dead on the spot. The Duke, on hearing the shot, galloped up to see what was the matter, and a second pistol stretched him on the earth beside his servant. In short they were both killed. The postilions then turned the horses' heads, put them into a gallop, and they fled for their lives. A little more and they had reached the frontier; but the lady was at their heels—just in time they met a troop of cavalry—she cried to them to stop the murderers—they did so—they were turned back again and brought into Lisle, where the lady—the Duchess, I suppose she is, gives evidence against them. The whole town is in commotion—the Duke was there with his regiment, and very much beloved.”

“I know the men perfectly,” replied Madame le Clerc, who had listened to the narration with great interest: “they stopt here on their way, and the child you see there belongs to them;

and, in short, I have goods of value of theirs now in my hands, which we want your aid in transporting across the channel. You shall see them by and bye. You didn't come through Lisle?"

"No, no," replied one of the Rodolphes; "we never pass through gates when we can keep on the outside of them. But who are these men? Have you known them long?"

"They have been here two or three times before," answered the hostess. "The first time I saw them was several years ago; they had then not only passports, but a letter of recommendation to the authorities, from this very Duke of Rochechouart, whom one of them had found means of obliging. They have never attempted anything but under the most favourable circumstances, and have, hitherto, been very successful."

CHAPTER X.

A DOMICILIARY VISIT.

ON the morning after the appearance of the two Rodolphes, as described in the last chapter, the quiet of the inhabitants of the lowly inn was disturbed at an early hour by the arrival of a party of police from Lisle, who, entering the house with considerable bluster and noise, announced that they were come in search of the two men who had arrived there on the preceding evening.

“They are gone,” replied the hostess, through the interpretation of Rauque. “They departed with the dawn of light.”

“That is not true,” replied the chief of the party; “we know that they are still on the premises.”

“You are mistaken,” answered Madame le Clerc; “you will not find them here.”

“We’ll try, however,” returned the officer. “Do you remain here,” continued he to one of

his party, "and let no one leave the room while we search the house. We shall find them concealed somewhere, I have no doubt."

A rigorous search was then instituted; every part of the house was examined; every bed turned down, and looked under; every closet opened; and the outhouses and stables were visited with the same strictness; but the men were not forthcoming. In short, the officers were beginning to be shaken in their convictions, notwithstanding that those who had been employed as spies, and had watched the men into the house, positively affirmed that they had never left it.

They returned to the kitchen, however, without having found the slightest trace of the persons in question. Rauque was interrogated, and an attempt was made to interrogate Jemima and the invalid in the arm-chair. Jemima, they soon found, did not understand them; and as for Monsieur le Clerc, all their efforts were vain to rouse his attention sufficiently to enable them to extract any information from him. Though he was very deaf, his ears were by no means impervious to sound; and although his organs of speech were in a great degree paralysed, and very rarely exercised, they would

have been yet available, if his memory had served him sufficiently to put a sentence together. But it did not; and neither were his powers of attention equal to taking in the scope of a question. He would turn his head to the speaker, and appear to listen to the first word or two, when an effort had been made to rouse him; but before a sentence could be completed, the mind had sunk again into forgetfulness, the eyes were again fixed on the sole object of his attention, the fire on the hearth; and a repetition of the experiment, how often soever made, invariably led but to the same result.

As for Rauque, he declared he knew nothing about the men. He said, "that when he went to bed on the preceding evening, he left them with Madame le Clerc in the kitchen, and that when he rose in the morning they were gone."

"Since this is the case," said the officer, "you must accompany us into the town, to be examined by the magistrates, and the hostess must go with us also. For this poor invalid, it appears useless to disturb him."

"Tell them," said Madame le Clerc to Rauque, "that he cannot be left. Where I go, he must go. Who is to feed him, and give him a fire, and put him to bed? They wouldn't

leave a child in the cradle ; neither must he be left who is as helpless."

"But we have not the means of transporting him," answered the officer. "He can't walk, I suppose?"

"If our going is inevitable," said Madame le Clerc, you can attach one of your horses to the cart that's in the shed ; it will serve to take us that far."

"And this child," said he, "who is she? She must accompany us, too."

"She's an English girl," answered Madame le Clerc, "left here for a few days by some travellers, who will probably return shortly in search of her."

The cart was then drawn from the shed, a horse of one of the officers selected to draw it, and arrangements were made for the departure of the whole party, with the exception of two, who were to stay behind and watch the house.

Whilst this was doing, Madame le Clerc, who saw there was no alternative and that opposition would be vain, busied herself in preparing her husband for the journey, and also gave Jemima to understand that she must accompany them ; and the child, who was getting

heartily weary of her situation, now that Susan and her sisters were gone, rejoiced in the prospect of a change.

When all was ready, and they were about to leave the house, the men asked Rauque for something to drink before starting; upon which he proceeded to a small cupboard, which opened by a sliding pannel in the wainscoat, where the liquors were kept.

“That is a place we overlooked,” observed the officer; “but it is too small to conceal a man.”

“It is,” answered another, who was putting his head into the cupboard, and examining it; “it’s full of bottles—ha, ha! *bonne eau de vie*—no doubt capital; it’s in these places one gets it good. *Mais voyons*—what have we here?” and he drew out two small knapsacks, with straps attached to them, and inscribed with initials; R. B. on one, and R. G. on the other. They each contained a blue checked shirt, a couple of pairs of stockings, and one or two other small articles.

“Those knapsacks belong to the men we’re in search of,” said the officer to Rauque.

“That may be,” answered Rauque.

“May be?” replied the officer; “you know it is so.”

"I don't say to the contrary," returned Rauque.

"But do you admit that they do?" persisted the man.

"It's extremely possible," returned Rauque.

"But I say it's not only possible but true," said the officer.

"Very likely," answered Rauque.

"But you won't admit it?" said the officer.

"I don't deny it," said Rauque; "doubtless you know better than I do."

At this point of the conversation Madame le Clerc, who had been out of the room preparing for her departure, returned, and was asked if the knapsacks didn't belong to the men in question.

"Undoubtedly," she replied; "but they went away this morning without them; probably intending to return shortly."

The officers shook their heads incredulously—they even went over the house again, and examined it, if possible, more closely than before, but with no better success; and finding further delay unavailing, they placed Madame le Clerc, her husband, Jemima, and Rauque, in the cart, and started for Lisle.

When they arrived there, and were produced

before the magistrate, there was some surprise created at the appearance of a second dumb woman ; who was, however, easily identified as the real Madame le Clerc, both by her own admission, and the testimony of others.

“ That other person has been detained under an error, then,” observed the magistrate ; “ she must be released immediately.”

With respect to the men, Madame le Clerc and Rauque, when interrogated, persisted in the same account they had given before. They admitted freely that they were the two Rodolphes of Nantes, the notorious frères de lait, by which name they were known all over the kingdom ; and she admitted, also, that she had employed people to invite them to visit her house. But she affirmed that they had left it early in the morning ; and Rauque declared that he had neither seen nor heard anything of them since he went to bed on the preceding evening ; while the officers who had been employed to watch them, as positively asserted that they had assuredly never left the premises.

Being informed that Jemima was an English child left at the inn by some travellers, who would return and claim her, which was either all Madame le Clerc knew, or all she chose to say, a person was sent for who could speak a

little English, and she also was interrogated about the men ; but her account coincided with Rauque's : she had left them in the kitchen when she went to bed, and had not seen them since.

“ Ask her if its true that she was left at the inn by her friends,” said the magistrate.

“ Yes,” answered Jemima.

“ And do you expect them to return ?”

“ Yes,” replied the child, who, forward as she was, was both abashed and frightened at the ceremonies and appareil of a judicial interrogation ; the more, as not comprehending any of the previous enquiry, she did not know what it all meant.

“ What's your name ?” said the interpreter.

“ Jemima,” answered she, which being a name entirely unfamiliar to French ears, was conceived at once to be a specimen of the barbarous and unpronounceable English surnames.

As nothing further could be elicited with respect to the frères de lait—about whom some information had been received which rendered their capture desirable ; especially just now, when the death of the Duke de Rochechouart, and the discovery of the real character of the travellers in the English barouche, had set the

world on the *qui vive*, and had shaken some of the officials in their seats, who expected nothing less than a sharp reprimand, if no worse, from the higher powers—the *le Clercs* and *Rauque* were remanded for the present, and placed in confinement ; whilst *Jemima*, at the recommendation of the magistrate, was lodged with a respectable person, to be taken care of till her friends claimed her.

should claim

Whilst this scene was acting in the court-house, *Susan*, whose natural philosophy had enabled her to endure her detention with more patience than might have been expected, all at once found herself set free, and turned into the street with as little ceremony as she had been captured, “*Allez, vous êtes libre,*” being all the explanation offered on the subject.

If she had had the means of expressing herself, and had known who to apply to, she would, before she left the town, have sought some information about *Mabel* ; but the difficulties that stood in her way, from her ignorance in both respects, and her impatience to return to the young people at the inn, whom she considered wholly under her protection, and whose terrors at her absence she easily comprehended, induced her to set forth on her way back the moment she

was released. Added to which, there was barely time for her to perform the journey on foot before dark, and she neither liked the thoughts of being benighted on the road, nor of seeking a lodging in the town.

“When once all this trouble is over, and we have got back to Paris or to England,” said she to herself, “I shall easily find the means of learning all I want about Mabel. I’ll go to Mr. Simpson, and tell him who I am, and all about it; and as she must be well known here, no doubt he’ll be able to discover her.” And staying the appetite of her impatience and curiosity by this resolution, she started on her way back to the inn.

CHAPTER XI.

MR. OLLIPHANT RECEIVES AN UNEXPECTED VISIT FROM ISAAC
LECKY, THE JEW.

ONE morning, whilst Mr. Olliphant was engaged in his office, he was informed that a person desired to speak with him on particular business ; and on repairing to his private room, in obedience to the summons, he was surprised to see his old acquaintance Isaac Lecky, the Jew.

“How now, Mr. Lecky?” said he ; “do you want a little christian law to settle the difference betwixt you and some of your tribe? Can’t you get on upon the old rule of an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth?”

“Ah, Mr. Olliphant, sir,” replied Isaac, “we poor Jews are scoffed and scorned; but sometimes we do you christians good service for all that.”

“That’s when there’s more to be got by serving us than cheating us, Isaac,” answered Mr. Olliphant. “But sit down; what’s your business now?” And Isaac seated himself in his old attitude, with his hands tightly packed

between his knees, which were inclined inwards to hold them fast.

“ Well, Mr. Olliphant, sir,” said Isaac ; “ my business regards a bit of parchment, that has somehow or other fallen into the hands of a friend of mine—indeed, I can’t say that he’s much of a friend, either—just an acquaintance—a person I know to speak to, when we meet at the synagogue.”

“ Well, but the parchment ? ” said Mr. Olliphant. “ What about that ? ”

“ Well, sir, as I was observing,” continued Mr. Lecky, “ there’s a bit of parchment fallen into his hands that I take it may contain something of more value than the skin—at least, if the right parties could get hold of it.”

“ What is it ?—a deed ? ” enquired the lawyer.

“ It is a deed,” answered Isaac.

“ What sort of a deed ? a settlement ? a will ? ”

“ It’s a will,” said the Jew.

“ Probably some old copy of a will of no value,” said Mr. Olliphant.

“ It’s attested,” said Isaac ; “ signed and witnessed in due form.”

“ Still it may have been but a duplicate copy,” said Mr. Olliphant. “ What makes you think it’s of value ? ”

“I have my own reasons for thinking that,” answered the Jew.

“I should like to hear them,” said Mr. Olliphant.

“Well, sir,” said Isaac, “the truth is, that a person has been enquiring for it.”

“The right owner?” asked Mr. Olliphant.

“The person that brought it to me—that is to my friend—but not the right owner, I’m certain.”

“How then?—was the will left in pledge?” enquired the lawyer.

“No,” answered Isaac; “it was found in the breast-pocket of a coat, that was pledged some years ago, with several other things which have never been redeemed.”

“And now the will’s enquired for?”

“Exactly,” replied Mr. Lecky.

“And why don’t you give it up?” said the lawyer.

“It’s not me,” answered the Jew; “it’s my friend.”

“Well, why don’t your friend give it up? There can be no difficulty in ascertaining to whom it belongs,” said Mr. Olliphant.

“None in the world,” replied Isaac. “But you know, sir, a thing of that sort, that’s of value, can’t be expected to be let slip for

nothing, particularly, when it turns up in this here sort of way, years afterwards, when every body must naturally have concluded it was lost and gone, past recovery."

"Then you want me to treat with the parties that the deed belongs to," said Mr. Olliphant; "in short, to negotiate between them and you, and get a price for you? Is that it?"

"Something of that sort," answered Isaac.

"Humph!" said Mr. Olliphant. "That's business very much out of my line. At the same time, if this document is really of value to somebody who has been defrauded of it, it should be restored one way or another. But, in the first place, I must see it; I must judge of its value and authenticity; and learn who the parties are to whom restitution is to be made. Have you it with you?"

"You know, sir," said Lecky, "the will is not mine—I'm only acting for another person, and I must either return the parchment or the price of it to my friend."

"Very well," said Mr. Olliphant; "all I can say is, that if the deed proves to be of value, I'll endeavour to obtain a suitable reward for the produce of it. But unless you'll trust it in my hands, it's useless prolonging this interview, as

we're both losing our time;" and Mr. Olliphant rose impatiently from his seat.

"Here it is, sir; here it is," said Isaac, who was a timid man, and began to fear he had exhausted the lawyer's forbearance. "You see, sir," said he, still holding it folded as it was—"there are marks upon it—stains, sir, of blood—of bloody fingers. I remember the business well enough—it was thought to be a put-up affair betwixt the footman and the dairy-maid—you remember it, sir? Wentworth—Mr. Wentworth of Oakfield, the great wine-merchant?"

"Good God!" exclaimed Mr. Olliphant, as he examined the document; "who did you get this from, Mr. Lecky?"

"From a woman," answered Mr. Lecky, who in the excitement of the moment, here dropped his friend out of the transaction. "Most likely the dairy-maid herself—a pretty creature, a very pretty creature indeed she was when she used to come first to my house—that's now perhaps seven or eight years ago. She'd a child, too, as pretty as herself—but I fancy the man, whoever he was—the footman probably—that was concerned with her, left her; for she fell into great distress, and stript herself little by little of

everything. Amongst the rest, there came a box of men's clothes ; I sold them all but one coat, but that I never could get off—it was stained, very much stained and spotted ; it often struck me it was blood, and now I don't doubt it. I don't know how it was I overlooked that pocket, for we always examine the pockets—but it was concealed in the breast, which was padded, and it wasn't easy to feel there was any thing there. However, lately she came back—for I havn't seen any thing of her for some years—but she came back to enquire for the parchment ; but I told her I knew nothing of it, and that the things were all sold—and, indeed I thought they were, for I had clean forgotten the coat, which had been thrown aside as unsaleable. But some time afterwards, a poor creature, one of our own people, came to me for assistance—he was starving, and had no clothes to his back ; and as I was looking about to see if there was any thing I could spare, what should I light on but this here coat. So as I'd had it so long, I thought it wasn't wronging myself nor my daughter, to clothe him in it ; for, indeed, the moths were getting into it, and there was more like to be loss in keeping it than in giving it away. But whilst I was pointing out to him

what a comfortable thing it was, and how warm it would keep him across the breast, all padded as it was, I thought I felt something that made me look a little closer, and what should I find but the pocket, and this here deed in it."

"And has the woman returned to make any further enquiries?" asked Mr. Olliphant.

"No," replied Isaac. "I have never seen her since."

"But doubtless you know where to find her," said Mr. Olliphant.

"Why, no," answered Isaac, after a little consideration; "I don't think I do, and I don't expect to see her again. In short, to say the truth, I wonder at her risking the thing at all; for if I'd found the will before she came, it might have led to her detection. I might have stopt her, you know."

"Distress, I suppose, drove her to it," replied the lawyer. "People will do any thing for bread. But we must find her out, Mr. Lecky; and I think it will be worth your while to help us."

"And the will?" said Isaac, anxiously.

"I will undertake to say that you shall be fairly rewarded," returned Mr. Olliphant; "but in the mean time, you must trust to my word

and leave it with me. Moreover, it is desirable that the thing should be kept as private as possible, till we see our way. Don't mention the circumstance to anybody."

"Except to my friend—my principal," said Isaac, who just then recollected him.

"Oh! your friend, of course, is an exception," said Mr. Olliphant, laughing, as he saw him to the door.

CHAPTER XII.

MR. SIMPSON AND THE LAWYER PAY A VISIT TO OAKFIELD.

WHEN Isaac Lecky said that he did not know where the woman was to be found who had pledged the articles amongst which the will was found, he happened to speak the truth. He neither knew her residence nor her name, and thus the progress of the investigation, which Mr. Olliphant was eager to prosecute, was arrested. Isaac did not doubt that she was the dairy-maid who had eloped with the footman; and Mr. Olliphant and Mr. Simpson, to whom the affair was communicated, entertained the same opinion.

However, the recovery of the will was in itself important. There could be no doubt of its authenticity; it had been drawn up in Mr. Olliphant's office, and sent down, with a duplicate, to Oakfield, to be attested. The signatures of Mr. Wentworth and the witnesses were attached to

it; and from the stains of blood that appeared on it, the probability was, that Mr. Wentworth had had it with him on his last fatal journey, and that it had been taken from the portfolio which was found open and rifled after his death. What had become of the other copy, which the same witnesses affirmed had also been signed and attested, yet remained a mystery.

As Mr. Gaveston's situation in regard to the property was entirely changed by the recovery of this document, by which the bulk of it was vested in trustees for the use of his wife, and as Harry Leeson's right to his legacy was also established by it, as well as the claim of the servants and others to various small sums which Mr. Wentworth had bequeathed to them, it became necessary to communicate the event to that gentleman without delay; and for this purpose Mr. Simpson and Mr. Olliphant resolved to make a visit to Oakfield. "I can be of no use, I believe," said Mr. Simpson; "but it's a good while since I was there, and I should like to see what's going on, and how he receives the intelligence."

"Not very gratefully, you may be assured," returned Mr. Olliphant. "It will diminish his importance a good deal, and he won't like

that, now that he's such a great man in the county."

"It's curious how, in some respects, his character appears to be changed," observed Mr. Simpson. "It's true, he was always eager for money; but formerly it was to squander it at the gaming table, or with a parcel of blackguards on the turf; but now all that sort of thing's given up, and his whole ambition seems to be to acquire influence, and to domineer over every body about him."

"Which he does with a vengeance, I understand," rejoined Mr. Olliphant. "I'm told that his behaviour on the bench, since he has been a magistrate, is quite unbearable; insomuch, that two or three gentlemen who were in the commission, have resigned, because they wouldn't act with him."

"I don't wonder at it, I'm sure," replied Mr. Simpson, "from the account I heard from old Jeremy, who came up to town lately, to settle some affairs on the death of his wife. But the great offence he has given, appears to be about the new road; and it's curious how he seems to have got the better of them all. He actually stood alone in his opinion; everybody but himself were perfectly agreed as to the direction it

was

should take ; and Mr. Franklin, who was anxious to keep it off a little estate he has lying in the line, thought the thing secure ; but whether out of enmity to him, because he had interfered between him and his wife—Franklin says he's sure it's that—but whatever it was, he set to work to oppose them all ; and, faith ! he carried the day, and the road has been cut right through Franklin's property."

"It's singular," said Mr. Olliphant, "that Mrs. Gaveston should have attached herself to a man of such a character. One would think it impossible, seeing so much of him as she did, that she should not have found him out before she married him."

"He spared no pains to deceive her," replied Mr. Simpson. "And although they were cousins, and had known each other from childhood, yet they were never long together at a time. Then, it must be admitted, he had considerable powers of entertaining ; and he excelled in all those sports and exercises which shew a man to advantage and attract the attention of women. He deceived me for a long time ; and Mr. Wentworth for longer. But he, poor man, had begun to dislike him very much before he died ; and I had found him out a good deal earlier."

“Well, this bit of parchment, as my friend Isaac calls it, will take the shine out of him, I fancy,” said Mr. Olliphant, “and will make poor Mrs. Gaveston independent and comfortable. And as for that little fellow, if we could find him—”

“He’ll turn up some day,” answered Mr. Simpson. “You know that Mrs. Gaveston received a letter from him soon after he went, assuring her he was in a fair way of doing well; and it’s extremely possible he may have written others, which being addressed to Oakfield, now she’s no longer there, would naturally fall into Gaveston’s hands, and never be heard of more.”

The two gentlemen, on reaching Oakfield, were informed that Mr. Gaveston was at that moment engaged in the library with a person on business, and were therefore shewn into the breakfast-room adjoining, and requested to wait till he was at leisure.

should be

The rooms were divided by folding doors, which were closed but not latched; and consequently the travellers, who were standing silently contemplating a picture of their old friend that hung over the chimney-piece, found themselves involuntary confidants of the conversation that

was going on in the next apartment. The first words that reached their ears were, "That damned road!" upon which their eyes met, and a significant smile was exchanged between them, for it was the voice of Mr. Gaveston that gave utterance to them.

"But you know, sir, it was your own will," replied the other person. "You insisted the road should take that direction. I always told you from the first that it wasn't the best line; but you wouldn't listen."

"But you never told me you were going to take it through Maningtree," said Mr. Gaveston. "Why didn't you tell me that?"

"It followed of course, sir; there was no other way of doing it, provided we took your line," replied the other. "If you would only have looked at the plans I sketched, you'd have seen it yourself; but you wouldn't, you know, sir; you said you were resolved it should go through Peach Mill, and no other way."

"Damnation!" muttered Mr. Gaveston. "Well, but, Borthwick, can't you turn it a little to the right or the left, and keep clear of that place?"

"What place, sir?" said Borthwick; "Maningtree?"

"No, no, not Maningtree; you say that's impossible."

"Impossible!—to be sure, sir; why we're within a mile of it now."

"Well, but that house—those grounds, I mean; can't you clear them?"

"What, the old manor-house, sir?"

"Aye, aye," said Mr. Gaveston, impatiently; "the old manor-house, or anything else you like to call it."

"Lord, sir," said Borthwick, "what would be the use of sparing that? Why it's just a nuisance to the neighbourhood, and the people are glad enough to get rid of it from before their eyes, particularly the inn; it's just an eye-sore to them and their customers. If it's not taken down, it'll tumble down; for there's never been five shillings laid out in repairs these thirty years, nor ever will again; for since that affair of Mr. Wentworth's, you know, sir, it's never even been used for travellers, as it was before."

"Well, sir, but if I wish it spared," said Mr. Gaveston, fiercely.

"But it's too late, sir," replied Borthwick. "The bargain's made with the agents for the property, and glad enough they were to strike it; and so will the principal, for he never looked

to get six-pence an acre for it; and we've given a pretty round sum—more than it's worth, in my opinion. But that's no business of mine."

"But it is of mine, sir," replied Mr. Gaveston, arrogantly. "It's my business to see that the public money's not thrown away, and improperly squandered; and I won't agree to the bargain. I won't stand to it, sir. As one of the trustees of the roads, and as a magistrate for the county, I've a right to object, and I will object. Pray, sir, why wasn't I consulted, before such a prodigal arrangement was made?"

"Lord, sir, you were present, you know, when the gross sums for the different estates was voted; but you never objected to the amount, nor enquired into the particulars, except about the compensation for Peach Mill, to Mr. Franklyn. Certainly you did object to that, I remember, and said it was too high; and you got a thousand pounds knocked off. And this other business was settled the same day, sir; but I believe you were so much engaged about Peach Mill, that you didn't attend to the rest."

Here a pause of some minutes ensued. Mr. Gaveston was forced into the conviction, that if the thing he objected to had become inevitable,

or nearly so, he had nobody to blame but himself, which formed a very considerable aggravation of his annoyance; and he was engaged in thinking if there were no possible expedient left by which the error he had committed might be remedied.

“There’s nobody in the line that could be brought to object, Borthwick, is there?”

“Not one, sir,” answered Borthwick. “Nobody ever did object; that is, none of the landlords nor proprietors that we proposed to cut through, except Mr. Franklyn. All the rest found their account in it too well; but it was a heavy loss to him, no doubt, and a disappointment, too. But we’ve been through Peach Mill these six months, so it’s too late for him to object now.”

“But suppose the proprietor won’t ratify?” said Mr. Gaveston.

“Well, sir, if he wouldn’t, answered Borthwick, “that might cause a good deal of trouble and delay, certainly; and we might be obliged to turn the road a bit aside; but it would be a pity, a great pity! It would spoil the line altogether; for it cuts as straight as an arrow through them Remorden grounds.”

“Damn the line!” said Mr. Gaveston. “But

if the proprietor objected to ratify, there's time enough yet to turn it, is there not?"

"You must be quick about it, sir," answered Borthwick; "there's not a day to lose. Indeed, if it hadn't been that he's abroad, we should have been at work there now, pulling down the house. For some time the agents couldn't ferret him out; and at last when they did, they found he'd just started for the continent. But they've sent after him, and it's likely the thing won't hang on hand, for the money 'll be welcome enough. They say he'd run through every thing he had at the end of the first two years, and has been living on his wits ever since."

"Who are the agents?" said Mr. Gaveston. "Their names are Wright and Greyling, sir, I believe," replied Borthwick; "but the solicitor that acts for them is called Glassford, and he lives in the Temple. He'd be the proper person to apply to, I should think."

"I believe he would," replied Mr. Gaveston, musingly; "but, perhaps, Borthwick, you could get the address of this Mr. Remorden; you say he's on the continent, but that's a large field. The thing is, to know the spot, the exact spot, or one may lose a great deal of time."

"I'll try and find out, sir, if you wish it," said Borthwick.

“Do, Borthwick, and lose no time,” returned Mr. Gaveston ; “and let me know the moment you hear.”

“I will, sir,” said Borthwick, taking his leave.

“Good morning, Borthwick,” said Mr. Gaveston, in a friendly tone ; “and, Borthwick, you’ll hang back a little—don’t put on too many men ; and you needn’t get the stones brought up so fast, you know. Give us a little time to look about us. There’s no hurry ; none in the world. The longer the road’s making the better for the poor people that are at work on it. It ’ll be a bad day for them when they lay the last stone.”

“It will, sir,” said Borthwick, “no doubt, sir.”

“So, Borthwick, don’t hurry, take it easy. By the bye, that bit of land you wanted—I think it’s about an acre and a half?”

“Just about, sir,” answered Borthwick.

“Well, I think we shall be able to come to an agreement ; I have been considering about it—but we’ll speak of that another time. Good morning, Borthwick.”

CHAPTER XIII.

WHICH CONTAINS THE RESULT OF THE VISIT TO OAKFIELD,
AND THE DEPARTURE THENCE OF MR. SIMPSON AND THE
LAWYER.

MR. Borthwick having made his exit immediately into the hall, without passing through the breakfast-room, Mr. Gaveston arose, and not knowing any one was there, threw open the folding doors, in order to extend the space in which he was about to walk himself down a little; for like many other people, when he was vexed or excited, or wanted to collect his ideas, or calm his mind, he found exercise a great assistant in the operation. But what he saw, when he opened the doors, did by no means tend to arrange his ideas or augment his placidity. He saw the two men, whom, of all others in the world, he most feared and hated; for he knew they despised him, and yet he did not dare to show his resentment. He could not but be aware that there were many who held no better opinion of him than they did; and he was on ill

terms with a great proportion of his neighbours, for his arrogance and irritability were almost unbearable; but then he eased his mind by thwarting their plans, opposing their opinions, and showing them as much contempt and insolence as one gentleman dare shew another without the risk of getting his brains blown out for his impertinence. But somehow or other he never could feel at his ease, nor give way to his natural temper in the presence of these two men. They had been Mr. Wentworth's most intimate and attached friends, they had been mixed up with all his affairs, they were the defenders of his daughter, and ready to be the protectors of his nephew. He knew that they were still as eager as ever to discover the truth, and to penetrate the mystery that hung over the fatal night at the old Manor House; and he was aware that if even a link was found to guide them, they would never let it go till they had followed out the whole chain; and as the lawyer was shrewd, and Mr. Simpson was wealthy, they were extremely likely to succeed. In short, nothing but the disappearance of Andrew and Mabel, which fixed suspicion on them till it had grown into a certainty, had prevented the most active investigations on the part of the

two gentlemen in question. But, beguiled by that circumstance, they had directed all their exertions to the discovery of Andrew and his supposed paramour, instead of to the ascertaining whether they were actually the guilty parties or not. But the moment might come that should start them in a new direction, and who should say what might follow? Then, they had outwitted him; they had taken advantage of his fears, without even knowing the power of the weapon they were wielding, to wrest from him one half of the lucrative business in the city. He had since found out Mr. Simpson's motive, and seen through the manœuvre, which he did not doubt the lawyer was at the bottom of; he was aware it was not for his own profit he had worked; but that, distrusting him, he had done it for the sake of the daughter and nephew of his friend and benefactor; but he did not like him the better for that, but the worse. Such men are to be feared, for they are untractable. Altogether, there were no two men whom he less desired to see at Oakfield, or anywhere else indeed, more especially in a moment of irritation and embarrassment, like the present; and certainly there were none whom he would have less desired to make the confidants of his conversation with

in

Borthwick; and yet the probability was that they had heard a great part of it, if not all; how much, he could not judge, for he did not know how long they might have been there.

Under all these circumstances, it may be conceived that the surprise was not an agreeable one, and that the first involuntary expression which passed over his face, denoted anything but pleasure. But he "called up a look" as quickly as he could, and threw the blame of the first on his astonishment at so unexpected a rencontre in his breakfast-room, and on his not instantly recognizing who his visitors were.

"Have you been long here?" said he.

"Nearly half an hour, I dare say," replied Mr. Olliphant, who felt a particular gratification in annoying him; "but hearing you so earnest in conversation, we wouldn't interrupt you, of course."

"It's that d——d road," replied Mr. Gaveston. "There's always something going wrong with it; and I've more trouble about it than enough. I find, because I didn't happen to be in the way to attend to it, they have been squandering the public money in a shameful way—giving five thousand pounds for an estate not worth two, when by turning the road

only a few hundred yards to the left, they might have cleared it altogether, merely cutting through two or three small farms, where the people must have taken what they could get."

"They must have been fairly compensated," said Mr. Olliphant, "whether their farms were small or large; and probably the two or three small farms would have cost more to buy up than the single estate, because usually each proprietor takes care to ask something more than his property is really worth; and amongst them you might have found some extremely unreasonable. Besides, what's a thousand or two of pounds in making a road of such importance as the one in question. Surely you wouldn't turn it out of its line for such a consideration as that!"

"Why, not if it were detrimental, certainly," replied Mr. Gaveston; "but in my opinion, it wouldn't injure the line a bit to give it a little bend at that particular spot."

"And as for that cursed old place," continued Mr. Olliphant, "nothing in the world would give me greater satisfaction than to have it razed off the face of the earth. I'd have had the house pulled down, and the grounds ploughed up the very next day, if I had had my will."

“Would you?” said Mr. Gaveston, hanging his head a little on one side, and endeavouring to look sentimental; “well, I own I entertain a different feeling. I wouldn’t have the place disturbed, but rather let it stand as a memorial—”

“Of a d——d, coldblooded, rascally murder, of one of the best men that the Almighty ever turned out of his hands!” exclaimed Mr. Olliphant, with vehemence. “God! a man must have a singular taste in memorials, who would wish to spare the place on that account.”

“But come into the library and sit down,” said Gaveston, “whilst I desire Mitchell to bring some refreshments;” and he left the room hastily, in order to get the opportunity of gulping down a little of his vexation, and also that he might vent some of it on the unlucky Mitchell for having shewn the two gentlemen into the breakfast-room, instead of the drawing-room, which would have placed them beyond the hearing of his private conversation with Borthwick.

“When did you leave town?” said he, as he reëntered the room; “you have had charming weather for the journey.”

“We have,” replied Mr. Simpson, “which

induced us not to hurry ; so we drove down quite leisurely, and have been three days on the road. This is Olliphant's idle time, and he wanted a little country air."

"Nothing like it," answered Mr. Gaveston, somewhat relieved by their last speech ; for he had been wondering what could have procured him the honour of this unexpected visit, a curiosity that was not unaccompanied by anxiety ; and he was glad to find that it was nothing but the desire of recreation that had brought the gentlemen from London. But they were only deferring the communication they had to make till Mitchell had cleared away the refreshments ; and therefore, without hinting a word of it, they turned the conversation on general topics, whilst they were discussing the luncheon.

"What do you say to a walk over the grounds ?" said Mr. Gaveston, who affected as much hospitality as he could contrive to throw into a voice and manner which indulgence and irritation had rendered rather indocile ; "it will give you an appetite for your dinner."

"We shall have time for a walk, I dare say," replied Mr. Olliphant ; "but before we move, we've a little business to talk over with you, if you'll give us leave."

“Assuredly,” said Mr. Gaveston, reseating himself, with an uneasy air; “we can discuss the business, and have a walk, too, before dinner.”

“Hem!” said Mr. Olliphant, clearing his throat, as he settled himself in his chair. “You know one of the circumstances connected with our lamented friend’s death, that has always created the greatest surprise and curiosity, was the disappearance of the will.”

“Or rather that no will was found,” said Gaveston.

“Disappearance!” reiterated the lawyer in a decided tone; “disappearance of a thing which was known to have existed—known not only to me, but to others.”

“Well,” said Gaveston, in the tone of a man who gives way without being convinced. “As you please. But go on.”

“And not only one copy, but two,” continued Mr. Olliphant; “which made the circumstance the more remarkable, as it left no room for attributing the loss to accident.”

“Well!” said Mr. Gaveston, with some impatience.

“And therefore,” added the lawyer, “I had the less hope of ever recovering the lost docu-

ments; as I naturally concluded that whatever motive had occasioned the theft, would also occasion their destruction."

"No doubt," answered Gaveston, whose countenance was every moment getting more and more beyond his control.

"However, strange to say," pursued Mr. Olliphant, "that does not appear to be the case; for at this present moment I've got the will in my pocket;" and he clapped his hand to his side with a decision that denoted not only his satisfaction at finding it, but his assurance of its validity.

Mr. Gaveston attempted a smile of incredulity, but it was a failure; the lips trembled, and his features, drawn from their natural position by the struggle between their own will and the power he was endeavouring to exert over them, gave a hideous expression to the face.

"Nothing was ever more true, I assure you," replied Mr. Olliphant, in answer to the doubt he perceived Mr. Gaveston wished to insinuate. "And alas!" he added, as he drew it from his pocket, and presented it to the horror-struck eyes of the wretched man before him; "alas! it bears but too melancholy marks of its authen-

ticity—the bloody fingers of the murderer bear witness for it!”

Mr. Gaveston, apparently too much amazed and bewildered to know what he was doing, involuntarily held out his hand to take it; but Mr. Olliphant, feigning not to observe the movement, still grasped it tightly. It might be an excess of caution; but there was a fire in the room, and there is no accounting for the impulses of a desperate man.

“The provisions of the will,” pursued the lawyer, “I have before acquainted you with. They correspond exactly with the rough draught I showed you after Mr. Wentworth’s death; and, in short, were framed upon it—for after I had taken his instructions, I threw them upon paper, and submitted the sketch to him, before I filled it up with all the requisite formalities.”

“Gentlemen,” said Mr. Gaveston, making a strong effort to recall his scattered spirits, and as he spoke, he rose hastily, and walked across the room, in order to escape from the close inspection he felt himself under as he sat: “this is a very extraordinary communication—very extraordinary indeed—and you cannot be surprised at my being rather shaken by it—it’s a thing no man could hear without some degree

of agitation, however strong his nerves might be—and it's not a trifle that shakes mine, I assure you. But are you really satisfied—are you really certain of what you affirm?"

"So certain," replied Mr. Olliphant, "that I'll give you leave to try the authenticity of this deed,"—and he clapt his hand upon it with the most determined air of conviction—"in every court of judicature in the three kingdoms; and more than that, I'll stake my whole fortune on the result."

"And so would I," added Mr. Simpson, quietly, but firmly.

"Oh!" said Mr. Gaveston, and there was an evident faltering of the voice; "I—I dont mean to dispute—I have no desire to—to question—if you are convinced—I certainly shall submit—there's no necessity for trying the thing before any court whatsoever, but the court of our own consciences, gentlemen."

"Any other appeal would be useless, certainly," replied Mr. Olliphant, who as well as Mr. Simpson, was perfectly amazed at this submissive acquiescence, for they had both come prepared to encounter a storm of passion, a resolute denial of all belief in the authenticity of the will, and, in short, a regular declaration of war.

It was singular that the question that would naturally have first presented itself, and which, either to a person interested or uninterested in the result, would have most excited curiosity, Mr. Gaveston forebore to ask. He did not say, "How was it recovered?" but Mr. Olliphant volunteered the information.

"You must be naturally curious to know," said he, "by what accident the thing has turned up, after so many years, and when, despairing of success, we had long ceased all enquiry, But it's singular how documents of this sort do survive, and come to light when they're least looked for. Old Time's a great redresser of wrongs, and works out many a good cause and establishes many a right, in his own quiet way, where our most strenuous endeavours have failed. The way we got this is odd enough. There's a certain Jew, a pawnbroker, that lives in the neighbourhood of St. Martin's Lane, by name Isaac Lecky. A woman with whom he formerly had dealings, went to him lately to enquire if, amongst certain articles pledged some years since, and never redeemed, he had found a will. Isaac said he had not, and that the things had all been sold long since. However, not long afterwards, in looking over his stores,

what should he stumble upon but a coat, which he remembered to have got from her, and which, being much stained—with blood, he thinks—had been found unsaleable, and thrown aside. The worthy Jew, of course, according to the maxims of his tribe, began to reckon what might be made of the accident; and as I had had occasion to see him formerly about some little matters, who should he fix on but me to bring the will to, with the view of engaging me to make a bargain for him with the persons to be benefitted by his discovery.”

During this communication, Mr. Gaveston stood at the window with his back to the gentlemen, and more than once, as it proceeded, he wiped the perspiration from his brow.

“And the woman?” he gasped out; “what became of her?”

“Oh! the woman,” replied Mr. Olliphant, “he could give no account of. He neither knew her name nor her address; but for my own part, I have little doubt of its being Mabel, the dairy-maid. He describes her as young and pretty, and says that she had with her a little girl, as pretty as herself. However, I have set him to ferret her out, and promised to reward him well if he succeeds; so that in all proba-

bility, we shall soon come at the truth of the whole affair. In the mean time, with respect to the will—”

“Oh, with respect to the will,” interrupted Mr. Gaveston, “there need be no trouble, no dispute—none in the world. I shall not oppose anything that is right, you may rely on it.”

The two friends looked at each other with amazement. The man so violent, so obstinate, so selfish, and, as they believed, so unprincipled, seemed all at once subdued, complying, disinterested and just. They could scarcely credit their ears or their understandings. Mr. Simpson, naturally benevolent and forgiving, began to feel his heart softening towards the being he had long despised and detested. But the lawyer, a man of sterner stuff and shrewder discernment, and whom much intercourse with the world had made intimately acquainted with human nature, saw something in this apparently sudden change of character that perplexed him. He had looked for the most pertinacious incredulity, the most vigorous opposition; and even if the thorough conviction of their inefficacy could be supposed to induce their forbearance, at the best, a submission to inevitable necessity, deformed by an exhibition of the worst passions, was the most favourable result he expected.

Strange thoughts crept into his mind—a chilling of the heart he had never felt before, made him shudder to the very marrow in his bones. He sat gazing at the profile of the man that stood at the window, as he might have gazed if a being of another world had suddenly presented itself before him. There was a dead silence: Mr. Gaveston *felt* the eye that was upon him, and was transfixed to the spot. Mr. Simpson cleared his throat, and tried to speak; but he was awed by the bearing of his companions, and could find nothing to say.

This sort of paralyzation of the party lasted some minutes, and might have lasted longer; for Mr. Gaveston could not move, and Mr. Olliphant had sunk into such a state of abstraction, that he was unconscious of the lapse of time. At length Mr. Simpson made a desperate effort to shake off the petrification that he felt was beginning to be infectious; he pushed back his chair, and rising, said, “Well, gentlemen, shall we walk?”

Mr. Gaveston turned round; his cheeks and lips were of an ashy whiteness; his mouth was contracted; the whole face drawn, as if he had actually suffered from a stroke of paralysis: he walked forward with an infirm step, and ap-

peared to be looking about for his hat. Mr. Olliphant rose too, but he moved like a man in a dream.

“Our hats are in the other room, I believe,” said Mr. Simpson; and he walked forwards to fetch them, followed by Mr. Olliphant.

When they had passed through the doors, Mr. Gaveston stopped short in the centre of the room, clapped his hand to his forehead, and held it there for a moment with a forcible pressure, whilst he divided his pallid lips, and clenched his teeth, till his face assumed an expression perfectly demoniacal. Then, as if the boiling agony within was somewhat relieved by the energy he had wasted, he made a strong effort to recal himself; and as the gentlemen were returning into the room with their hats in their hands, he threw open the door, and preceded them into the hall, where his own was lying, and from thence stepped out on the lawn. They followed; and seldom perhaps have three people commenced a walk, avowedly of recreation, under more singular circumstances.

It may easily be conceived that, with all the efforts Mr. Gaveston could make—and he made most vigorous ones—the conversation was not very lively. As they walked through the

gardens, he tried horticulture ; and as they walked through the fields, he tried agriculture ; and when they got into the road, as roads were not exactly in the present state of affairs desirable subjects, he fell upon politics and the state of the country. But besides that Mr. Simpson was profoundly ignorant of the two first, and not very well versed in the last, he was so struck by the singular bearing of Mr. Olliphant, so unlike the cheerful, loquacious, but at the same time firm and decided manner of the free-hearted, honest, and prosperous lawyer, that he could not collect his ideas, nor direct his attention to what the other was saying ; whilst Mr. Olliphant himself had the air of a person who had been exceedingly frightened by some very extraordinary or supernatural event, and whose whole faculties were benumbed by the shock.

So they walked on from field to field, and from garden to garden, till the hour of dinner drew nigh ; when Mr. Gaveston, who piloted the way, directed their steps homewards, and they withdrew to their separate rooms to arrange their toilets.

“Olliphant, my dear fellow,” said Mr. Simpson, entering the lawyer’s room when he was

himself dressed, "what is all this?—what in the name of wonder has come over you? Why, you're not dressed, man, and there's the dinner bell!—why you've not even unstrapped your portmanteau! Are you ill?"

"I am not well," replied Mr. Olliphant; "indeed I feel extremely unwell. I'll thank you to say so to Mr. Gaveston. I couldn't eat any dinner if I were to sit down to table. Excuse me as well as you can. I shall go out and take a stroll; and if I am not better, perhaps you'll not see me in the drawing-room to-night. Tomorrow morning, my dear Simpson, if you've no objection, we'll start for London at sun-rise. Our business is concluded, and we have no object in delaying here. We can then talk over this affair at our leisure."

Mr. Olliphant appeared no more that evening. Before he lay down in his bed, he carefully fastened the door, and placed the will under his pillow; and on the following morning, the two gentlemen started for London.

CHAPTER XV.

MR. GAVESTON LEAVES OAKFIELD FOR LONDON, AND PAYS
TWO VISITS THAT ARE LITTLE EXPECTED.

No sleep blest Mr. Gaveston's eyes during the night that lodged the two friends under his roof, and with the first dawn of light he arose and dressed himself; but he did not quit his room till he heard the wheels, that were bearing away his inauspicious visitors, rolling from the door. Then he descended, ordering his breakfast to be instantly served, and his horse to be saddled; whilst he despatched one of the servants forward to Borthwick's house, to desire he would be in the way, as he intended calling on him, as he passed, on his way to town.

The lawyer and Mr. Simpson had scarcely been gone half an hour, when Mr. Gaveston was mounted, and galloping down the lawn and along the road at such a rate that, old Jeremy, who, roused by the clattering of the hoofs through the paved street of Mapleton,

thrust his be-night-capped head out of the window of the Green Dragon, to see who was frightening the town from its propriety at that early hour, swore, that in the cloud of dust he kicked up, he saw the devil at his heels, urging him forwards. "He's riding to h—l," said he, "as sure as my name's John Jeremy, and there goes Old Nick after him!"

Old Nick, however, on this occasion happened to be personated by Mr. Borthwick, who, having started early about some road business, had been met by the servant, and was now in chace of Gaveston.

The preoccupation of his mind, and the noise his own horse was making, prevented his at first hearing the clatter of his pursuer; but the bay mare did; and accordingly the faster Borthwick followed, the faster she fled, till at length her augmenting speed and excitement drew the rider's attention, and turning his head, he perceived him of the roads urging on his steed to overtake him; upon which he drew in his rein, and waited till the other came up.

"I was just starting for Maningtree, sir," said he, "to see how things were going on, when I met your servant; so I turned my horse's head this way, and rode after you."

“Quite right, Borthwick,” said Gaveston. “The fact is, I am called away suddenly on particular business, and it was necessary I should see you before I go. In the first place, with respect to that man’s address—Remorden’s, I mean.”

“I’ve written for it, sir,” answered Borthwick; “the letter went last night; but, at the same time, I don’t feel altogether sure of getting it. He’s most times in hiding from his creditors, as far as I can learn, and is not over fond of letting people know where he is. And I have heard that he’s done more than a thing or two, that makes it awkward for him to answer to his name; so that he claps on an alias here, and another there, insomuch, that if you don’t happen to know his person, you haven’t much chance of lighting on him.”

“But that attorney you spoke of—what’s his name? He that’s agent for the property?”

“Glassford, sir—Glassford of the Temple,” replied Borthwick.

“He knows where he is, of course, because you say they had written, or were going to write to him, to ratify the agreement.”

“Yes, I fancy they know, sir,” answered Borthwick; “at least they have some way of

getting at him, because he had long ago desired the estate should be sold if a purchaser could be found; and therefore he took care they should have some means of communicating with him on the subject, in case they got an offer. But should go it's not so certain they'll give the address. Very likely he may have forbidden them to do it; and they'll probably propose to convey any letter or message themselves."

"That's not impossible, certainly," answered Gaveston. "However, the moment you get an answer, of whatever nature it may be, forward it to me at Laval's, and I'll leave directions where it's to be sent, in the event of my being gone. And now, Borthwick, remember what I said yesterday—don't push forward too fast. Take off some of the men from that spot, and put them on somewhere else. Hang back as much as you can, till you hear from me on the subject."

"I will, sir," said the obsequious Borthwick, "you may depend on it, sir. We shall have no difficulty in stopping a bit for want of stones, and that sort of thing. Besides, two of the quarrymen were killed by an explosion yesterday, and another had his leg broke, which will make us rather short of hands for the present."

"That's fortunate," observed Gaveston.

“Well then, now Borthwick, I must get forward a little, for my business is urgent.”

“You haven’t thought any more of that little field,” said Borthwick, “have you, sir?”

“Oh, the field!—to-be-sure I have,” said Mr. Gaveston. “What could make me forget to mention it! It was exactly one of the things I wanted to see you about. You shall have it, certainly, Borthwick, on the terms you propose. You may pull down the cottage that’s on it to-morrow, if you please, and go to work your own way. If you like to draw up a bit of an agreement, do so, and send it after me. I’ll sign it and return it immediately. It may be more satisfactory to you, perhaps.”

“Thank you, sir,” said Borthwick, agreeably surprised at this unexpected compliance, and little dreaming that Mr. Gaveston was giving what was no longer at his own disposal. “I will, sir, since you’re so good. It’s safer to clap things on a bit of paper, in case of accidents to either party.”

“Well, then, Borthwick, good bye,” said Mr. Gaveston, as he put his horse into a trot. “You shall hear from me as soon as I can make out this man. Till then—you understand?”

“Oh, perfectly, sir,” said Borthwick. “Good

morning, sir ; pleasant journey to you !” And the well-pleased surveyor turned his horse’s head in the direction of his newly acquired field, where he forthwith gave orders for the immediate destruction of the cottage, the repairing of the hedge, and sundry other little matters of personal interest ; after which he trotted briskly homewards, put his horse in the stable, and set himself to work to draw up the deed that was to bind Mr. Gaveston to his word ; muttering to himself, as he did it, “ Fast bind, fast find ; he’s in a devilish good humour just now, certainly ; but the wind may blow from another quarter when he comes back ; and as for his word, I wouldn’t give that for it !” and he squirted the ink out of his pen on the floor. “ No, no ; fast bind, fast find, I say ; so here goes. I don’t see very well, for my part, what his object can be in clearing them Remorden grounds. As for the price, that’s all my eye ! He care for the public money !” And Mr. Borthwick chuckled inwardly at the extravagance of the notion. “ However, it’s no business of mine ; I’ve got the field by it, and that’s enough for me. It’s an ill wind that blows nobody any good—fast bind, fast find ;” and so, alternately soliloquising and writing on a subject,

in itself so agreeable, the worthy surveyor pleasantly passed the hours till dinner time, at which repast he indulged himself with a few extra glasses, in honour of his new acquisition ; and then, after a comfortable nap, he finished the evening with a game of double dummy with Mrs. Borthwick; wisely leaving the roads to take care of themselves.

In the mean time, Mr. Gaveston hastened on his way to London with all the speed he could ; and if the devil was not urging him on from behind, as Mr. Jeremy had asserted, he was urged on by something in his own breast, not a whit less complacent and agreeable. As he did not wish to fall in with the travellers that had left his house that morning, he made a little *détour* through some bye-lanes, and then cut into the high road a couple of miles in advance of them, making up the extra distance by the speed of his mare ; and when her limbs began to tire, and her pace to slacken, he left her in the care of a trustworthy ostler, where he was in the habit of baiting on less urgent journeys, and mounting the outside of one of the coaches, proceeded by that conveyance to London.

Although it was late when he arrived, he had no sooner dismounted, than he proceeded to a

certain ready-made linen warehouse, near Temple Bar ; and knocking at the private door, for the shop was already closed, he enquired if he could see Mrs. Walker, and being answered in the affirmative, he entered, and was shown into a back parlour, where he found that lady refreshing herself with a dozen of oysters and a pint of porter after her day's fatigue.

"Mrs. Walker," said he, "your obedient servant. How are you?"

"Lord, Mr. Godfrey!" exclaimed the lady, shading her eyes with her hand, that she might get a clearer view of his features ; "who in the world would have thought of seeing you?"

"It's some time since we've met, certainly," replied he. "How have you been doing since?"

"Tol lol, Mr. Godfrey," replied the lady ; "no great things, nor not much amiss either. But lauk, sir, you've grown a deal fatter than you used to be."

"An idle life, Mrs. Walker, I believe ; I don't take so much exercise as I used to do. But I called to ask you if you can tell me anything of a person that I am ashamed to say I have not heard of for some time ; but, really, circumstances of one sort or another have prevented my doing exactly what I wished in that quarter. You know who I mean, of course?"

m

“ Julia Clark ?” answered Mrs. Walker.

“ Exactly,” said he. “ I’m afraid she must have been badly off. Have you heard anything of her lately ?”

“ Why, yes, I have,” replied Mrs. Walker. “ At least about twelvemonths ago, or so, it was that I chanced to light on her, for she has left off calling here for these three or four years back. For some time she used to look in to enquire if you had left any thing for her ; but as we heard nothing of you, she gradually ceased coming ; and I was wondering what had become of her, when one day, last summer, as I was walking down to Brompton to see a sister of mine that had taken a lodging there for the sake of a little country air, after an illness she’d had, who should I see standing at the door of a shop at Knightsbridge, but Julia Clark.”

“ What was she doing there ?” said Mr. Gaveston. “ Does she live there ?”

“ Aye, does she,” replied Mrs. Walker, “ and has got as tidy a shop of haberdashery, and such like, as you’d wish to see on a summer’s day ; and very well she’s doing, she told me. And as for the child—”

“ But who the devil put her into the shop ?”

interrupted Mr. Gaveston. "She couldn't have any money herself."

"Oh, none in the world," replied Mrs. Walker. "Things went very bad with her, and she was reduced to the utmost distress, I know, before she got settled there; for she used to come here and beg me to give her a little needle-work to do, such as she could take home with her, for she couldn't come out on account of leaving the child. In short, it was as much as they could do to keep body and soul together; but, as people say, when things get to the worst, they must mend; and so it was with her. For, at last, being actually driven to desperation, what should she do but go to one of the bridges, and attempt to jump into the water, with her child in her arms. But it was not to be. Some gentleman or another caught her just in time, and saved them both from a watery grave."

"And took her to live with him for his pains, I suppose," said Mr. Gaveston.

"No, no," replied Mrs. Walker; "nothing of that sort, I fancy; but she told him her story, and he took compassion upon her, and set her up in the shop; where, as I said before, she's doing very comfortably for herself and the child."

"Humph!" said Mr. Gaveston, folding in his lips, for he would rather have heard a less favourable account of Julia's circumstances. "And there she is still, then?" said he.

"There she was the last time I passed that way, and I have no doubt you'll find her there now," replied Mrs. Walker. "She seemed very happy and contented; and said that her friend Mr. Simpson was going to send the little girl to school for her."

"Mr. Simpson?" reiterated Gaveston; "who's Mr. Simpson?"

"That's the gentleman that saved her life, and set her up in the shop," answered Mrs. Walker.

"Simpson!" again repeated Mr. Gaveston. "What Simpson is it?"

"I don't exactly know who he is," replied Mrs. Walker. "She said he was an elderly man, and a merchant. I'm not sure, but I've a notion she said he was a wine-merchant somewhere in the city."

Mr. Gaveston pushed back his chair, and hastily rising, took up his hat.

"Lord sir! what hurry?" exclaimed Mrs. Walker, who enjoyed a bit of gossip over her supper exceedingly. "Sit down, and perhaps you'll take a glass of something warm."

“Not to-night, thank ye,” replied Mr. Gaveston, in a hurried manner. “It’s late, and I’ve business to do. Good night, Mrs. Walker. On the right hand side, you said?”

“Yes, sir, on the right; just about half way between the turnpike and the barracks. Nearer the barracks I’m thinking, than the toll, though.—Lord, sir! wait ’till I light you—don’t be in such a hurry; you’ll be tumbling over the cat in the passage!” A prediction which a loud scream from the cat immediately afterwards announced to have been fulfilled ere it was well delivered.

“Bobby! Bobby! poor Bobby!” cried Mrs. Walker, rushing with the candle after Mr. Gaveston; who, utterly unmindful of her and Bobby both, darted out of the house, and slammed the door behind him, before she was well out of the parlour.

“Bless the man!” cried Mrs. Walker, “one ou’d think he’d a bogle behind him! Poor Bobby!—did he tread on Bobby’s tail?” and lifting up the cat in her arms she carried him into the parlour, where she solaced him with soft caresses and some chopped liver, and herself with a comfortable glass of hot gin and water.

It was less than half an hour after his precipitate exit from the linen warehouse, that Mr.

Gaveston might have been seen striding through the turnpike at the west end of Piccadilly, at a pace that would have seemed to justify the hypothesis of either Mr. Jeremy or Mrs. Walker; and the expression of his countenance, had there been light sufficient to peruse it, would indubitably have tended to its confirmation. As it was, the few passengers that passed him turned their heads with wonder, to see what strange vision it was that had darted past them with such extraordinary velocity; and if a gleam of a lamp happened to fall upon the face, something very like fear was superadded to amazement. His coat and waistcoat, which he had unbuttoned to relieve himself from the heat his agitation of mind and violent exercise occasioned, flew back, as he advanced against the air, displaying the broad breast of his shirt; whilst in one hand he carried his hat, and in the other a white pocket-handkerchief, with which he every minute or two wiped the perspiration that was dropping in showers from his forehead.

“It’s a maniac escaped from some madhouse,” said the people as they passed. “It would be a charity to send some of the watchmen after him; for he’ll most like do himself, or somebody else, a mischief.”

When he had proceeded beyond the dead wall, and had reached the spot where a row of small shops bordered the road, he slackened his pace, and began to examine the names over the doors, in order to decipher, by the imperfect light, which was the one he wanted; and he was not long in making out the words, Julia Clark, Haberdasher, inscribed over a shop front, where he had also the satisfaction of perceiving a light shining from the window of an upper apartment. It was a low, small house, consisting only of the shop, with a parlour behind it, and two small apartments above. The shutters of the shop were closed, as were those of the door, the upper half of which was of glass; to the windows above, where the light was seen, there were no shutters, but a low muslin curtain served somewhat to shade the interior from the intrusive eyes without.

“ I wonder if she lives alone,” thought Gaveston; and for a moment he paused to survey the exterior of the house, and then he lifted the knocker, and gave a single loud summons. Presently the light disappeared from the window above, and immediately afterwards a voice within was heard enquiring who was there.

“Open the door, Julia, and you’ll see,” replied Mr. Gaveston.

“Mr. Simpson!” she exclaimed, on hearing a man’s voice addressing her by her christian name—for her neighbours were accustomed to call her Mrs. Clark—“La! Sir, is it you at this time of night?” and so saying she drew back the bolts and unlocked the door.

Mr. Gaveston stepped in, and pushing back the door behind him, stood before her.

“Good Heavens! Mr. Godfrey!” she exclaimed.

“Yes, Julia,” replied he; “you may well look surprised—it’s me indeed;” and he took her hand affectionately between his as he spoke.

“It’s so unexpected,” said she, leaning against the wall, “that I’m—I’m quite overcome;” and she placed her hand before her eyes, whilst the involuntary tears that sprang from them testified to her emotion.

“Come,” said he, supporting her with his arm, “come in and sit down. We’ve a great deal to talk over;” and thus saying he led her into the parlour behind the shop, and placing her in a chair, sat down beside her.

“You must have thought me very unfeeling,” said he, “for a long time past; and, indeed, al-

though I have more excuse for my apparent neglect than you are aware of, I cannot altogether exonerate myself from blame. But the world, Julia, the world, has so many claims on men in my situation; we are so drawn this way and that way, and every way but the one that our inclinations lead us, that we often appear to women who don't, and indeed can't, allow for this sort of thing, much worse than we are. But there comes a time, I believe, to every man, when either from age and reflection, or from disappointment and weariness, he is awakened to a sense of the hollowness of worldly friendships and worldly people; and feels inclined to fall back upon his early attachments as the best and truest solace for his declining years."

At the words "declining years," Julia lifted her eyes to his face, for Mr. Gaveston was yet in the prime of life.

"You look surprised, my dear Julia," said he, "to hear me talk in that strain; but the truth is, that though I am not old, I have seen a great deal of life, and have met with many vexations and crosses in my progress through it, which has exactly the same mellowing effect on a man's character as the lapse of years. However it be," he added, and he threw his arm around

her waist, and drew her towards him—"whatever be the cause, and we need not waste our time in searching for it, the effect you see—it has brought me back to you."

To this eloquent oration Julia could only answer by her tears. All he said might be very true; she knew too little of the world to decide whether it was or not, but at all events it was extremely affecting. He was her first and only love (for she had been thrown into Mr. Dyson's arms by necessity and the manœuvres of Gaveston, and by no means by her own inclination), and he was the father of the child she adored, who had been the blessing and comfort of her past years of poverty and desertion, and who now, in her more prosperous days, was the pride and delight of her heart.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "how I wish Julia was at home!"

"She's not at home, then," said Mr. Gaveston, looking about him.

"No, she's at school," answered the mother; "at a very nice school at Putney, where a good friend of mine has placed her."

"A friend, Julia!" said Mr. Gaveston, with an air of surprise, tinged with a shade of jealousy. "I hope it's not a lover?"

“ Oh no,” she replied ; “ he’s quite an elderly steady man, quite different to that ; but he’s one of the best of human beings. He put me in this shop, and has been as kind as a father to me ; and he has promised that if anything happens to me he’ll take care of Julia, which is such a comfort ; for I often used to think what was to become of the poor child if I died, without a friend in the world to help her.”

“ Don’t say that,” answered Mr. Gaveston, reproachfully. “ She has a father to help her, and shall never need the assistance of this Mr. Si——, what did you say his name was ?”

“ I didn’t mention his name,” said Julia.

“ Didn’t you ?” said he. “ I thought you did. “ What is it ?”

“ He’s called Simpson,” answered she ; “ John Simpson—he’s a wine merchant in the city.”

“ Have you seen him lately ?” enquired he.

“ Not for some time,” she replied ; “ and it was partly that made me think it was him when you spoke ; though I never knew him come so late. But I shouldn’t wonder if he’s here to-morrow. When he does call it’s generally on a Sunday ; and I should like so much to introduce you to him.”

“ To-morrow, Julia, I shall be many miles

from here," replied Mr. Gaveston, "and that brings me to the object of my visit. I am going abroad, perhaps for some time, and I came to ask you to accompany me."

"Me!" exclaimed Julia, astonished.

"Yes," he replied. "You. Surely you won't refuse me?"

"But your wife?" said she. "Mr. Dyson told me you were married."

"Mr. Dyson!" exclaimed Mr. Gaveston; "when did you see Mr. Dyson?"

"Not many months ago," she replied. "He saw me as he was passing on the outside of a coach, and got off to speak to me. He said he'd been abroad ever since he went away that time with Miss Jones; and it was he told me you were married."

"And is that all?" enquired Mr. Gaveston. "Tell me everything he said to you."

"I asked him about Miss Jones," continued Julia.

"Well?" said Mr. Gaveston, anxiously. "What did he say?"

"Oh, that he'd got her off capitally; married her to some great man—a duke, I think he said, in Paris."

"A duke in Paris!" reiterated Mr. Gaveston.

“Yes,” replied Julia. “Didn’t you know it?”

“No,” answered Mr. Gaveston; “I never could make out what was become of her. I never heard either of her or Dyson from the hour they started; and I believed them to be still together somewhere. And what else did he say?”

“The principal thing he wanted,” answered Julia, “was a will that he said was left by mistake amongst some of his old clothes; and he desired me to try and find it. But I can’t; the man I’d pledged the things to had sold them, and could give no account of it.”

“And do you know where Dyson is now?” enquired Mr. Gaveston.

“He’s abroad again,” she said. “He called here one day just before he went, to know if I’d found the will; and said he was just starting for Paris, and that if I heard anything about it I was to write to him, addressed to Colonel Jones at the post-office there; and he desired me to tell the pawnbroker that if he could find it he should be handsomely rewarded.”

“And have you?” eagerly enquired Gaveston.

“Not yet,” said she. “It’s so seldom I can

leave the shop. But I mean to go the first time I can get away."

"And you can't tell me the name of the duke that he said Ma— Miss Jones, I mean; was married to?"

"No," replied Julia. "I don't think he mentioned it."

Here there was a pause in the conversation, which interval was occupied on Gaveston's part in reviewing his situation, and in making as close calculations as the time would admit, of the advantages and disadvantages of the different lines of conduct that were open to him.

One thing was quite evident—which was, that by some means or other, Julia herself must be put out of the way. The links that connected her with the concern by himself, Mr. Dyson, Mabel, Mr. Simpson and the Jew, were all too many not to render her existence perilous in the extreme to his own. With respect to attempting to secure her silence, it was a risk not to be ventured. In the first place, he could not purchase it, even were he quite assured of her acquiescence, without explaining the interest he had in the bargain, a confidence too dangerous to be thought of. A surer way would be, by attaching her to himself through

kindness to her and the child ; but he could not rely on his own temper and perseverance in a line of conduct so alien to his nature. Besides, in either case, she might by some evil chance or another be identified by Isaac Lecky, and her evidence be extracted from her in a court of justice, however unwillingly given. Had he been aware of her intimacy with Susan, he would have perceived yet stronger reasons for putting an effectual seal upon her lips ; but of this he yet knew nothing.

“What !” said he, after a time ; “do you live alone here ?”

“Yes,” she replied, “quite alone, now that Julia’s gone to school. I miss her sadly.”

“Then there’s nobody in the house with you now at all ? Nobody here but our two selves ?” said he, casting his eyes round the room.

“Not a creature,” said she. “Why do you ask ? Do you want anything ?”

“No,” he replied ; “only our conversation might be overheard.”

“That’s impossible,” answered she.

Mr. Gaveston arose, and walked about the room ; and as he did so, he shut the door that led from the parlour to the shop. The decision he felt himself called upon to make, was diffi-

cult. There was no time to be lost—not an hour; he could neither afford to linger in town himself, nor could he venture to leave Julia behind him. For his own part, he had to set out instantly in search of the owner of the manor-house, and endeavour to prevent his ratifying a bargain which he had the greatest interest in annulling; and if he allowed her to remain where she was, the next day, for anything he knew, might produce some accidental concurrence of circumstances that might be fatal.

Two expedients remained; either to avail himself of the present moment, or to induce her to depart with him at once for the continent, and afterwards be guided in his disposal of her by circumstances.

In favour of the first, there were many arguments. There were but two persons in the world that were at the same time aware of his connection with Julia and of his real name and situation, and they were Mabel and Mr. Dyson; either, he imagined, little to be feared. Mabel, if what he had heard were true, was never likely to return to England; or if she did, there was little probability of her penetrating the fate of so obscure a person, and so slight an acquaintance as Julia; and with respect to Mr.

Dyson, there were motives of sufficient force to keep him quiet. The hour, the loneliness, all favoured him ; no one could have traced him to the house ; and, indeed, no one knew of his being in town, except the people at the hotel, and Mrs. Walker. But then, Mrs. Walker did know it, and knew moreover that he was seeking Julia's address. It's true she only knew him as Mr. Godfrey ; but she was well acquainted with his person, and there was no telling what accident might enlighten her further ; and therefore this impediment had to be weighed against the other facilities.

With regard to the second expedient—the carrying Julia instantly abroad with him, there were many difficulties to be got over ;—the necessity for immediate departure, the inducing her to leave the child behind her, the natural aversion she would feel to going away without explaining the circumstances to Mr. Simpson, her acquaintance with his marriage ; and finally, the obstacles that might be in the way of disposing of her abroad, more especially after he had been seen, as he inevitably must be, in her company. And all these important considerations had to be weighed, and his decision made, in so short a time.

Whilst he was thus pacing the room, Julia too had fallen into a fit of abstraction. She was thinking of his proposal to accompany him, wondering what he meant by it, if he would repeat it, and what she should say; and she was balancing in her own mind the very arguments against the plan that he was foreseeing.

She sat with her face towards the fire-place, where a few red ashes, not yet quite extinct, were lying in the grate; the only light there was in the room, besides, was the candle she had brought from above, when she came down to open the door, and which now, with a flaring wick, that was eating a channel down one side of it, stood upon the table, on which also rested the arm that supported her head. Young, and still very pretty, and in spite of all the wrongs she met with yet most unsuspecting and confiding, it was a savage heart that could think of taking the poor life that had long been at odds with so many sorrows, and at last found a little haven of peace to rest in—that could think of pouring out her blood on her own hearth, and leaving the yet warm body stretched in death, that he had so lately pressed to his own bosom.

But time urged; at each turn he took his eye fell on her—he put his hand in his pocket,

and drew out a razor and his pocket-handkerchief—he took the handkerchief in his left hand, and the razor in his right, and at every turn he imperceptibly approached nearer to her chair.

She never stirred, for she was still deep in thought, weighing the effect her consent or refusal might have on little Julia's future fate.

“The next turn,” thought he, and he drew still nearer. At that moment a hand was heard on the latch of the outer door, which after Mr. Gaveston's entrance had not been bolted. Julia started from her chair—Mr. Gaveston hastily replaced the handkerchief and the razor in his pocket. “Who's there?” cried she, opening the parlour door.

“It's I, Mrs. Clark,” said the watchman, stepping in with his lanthorn in his hand. “Since that ere robbery I tries all the doors every night when it strikes twelve. Your's arn't locked. But I beg pardon,” he added, perceiving Mr. Gaveston; “I didn't know you had company.”

The ensuing day, being Sunday, the shutters of Mrs. Clarke's shop remained closed, as a matter of course; but when Monday and Tuesday came, and they were not taken down, the neighbours began to wonder; and at length the

house was entered, and her absence being ascertained, an investigation was instituted as to what had become of her.

Nobody could throw any light on the affair but the watchman ; and all he knew was, that he had seen a gentleman with her on the previous Saturday night at twelve o'clock ; and that between that and two, he had met a man and woman walking at a rapid pace in the direction of Hyde Park Gate, whom he was inclined to think were Mrs. Clark herself and the gentleman in question.

Further enquiry elicited nothing more satisfactory on the subject ; and the disappearance of Julia Clark served for a nine days' wonder, and a perpetual mystery to the worthy inhabitants of Knightsbridge.

CHAPTER XV.

**MR. CRIPPS MAKES AN UNPLEASANT DISCOVERY, AND STARTS
FOR PARIS.**

WHEN Mr. Cripps found that his second daughter, Miss Livy, was about to follow her sister's example, and ennoble his family by another distinguished alliance, he reflected that such honours are not to be had for nothing, and that there would be another fifty thousand pounds to be paid for the distinction.

A hundred thousand pounds subtracted from his property in so short a period, would make a serious reduction in his income, and must lead to some arrangements about which it was necessary he should consult with his solicitor; and happening to be in town on the day he had received his daughter's letter, requesting his consent to her union with the Colonel, he took the opportunity of calling at the Temple to discuss the subject.

“Another wedding in the family!” exclaimed Mr. Glassford; “and so soon! Why, you’re a fortunate man, Mr. Cripps. I’ve got three daughters to dispose of, but I don’t find they go off at that rate.”

“It never rains but it pours, you know,” observed Mr. Cripps. “It’s a pity Jemmy arn’t old enough for a husband. I dare say the Count would be able to find one for her amongst his great acquaintance.”

“Oh! the gentleman whom Miss Livy is about to make happy is a friend of the Count’s, is he?” said Mr. Glassford.

“Partikler,” answered Mr. Cripps; “they’re just like brothers, Livy tells me.”

“That will be extremely pleasant for all parties,” observed the lawyer.

“Very,” said Mr. Cripps; “as soon as the wedding’s over they are all to go together to the Count’s castle in Transylvania.”

“Where?” said Mr. Glassford.

“In Transylvania,” replied Mr. Cripps.

“Bless me! that’s a long way off indeed!” said Mr. Glassford.

“Somewhere about Italy, arn’t it?” said Mr. Cripps.

“Not exactly,” answered Mr. Glassford.

“It’s on the borders of Hungary;” a piece of information which did not by any means tend to enlighten Mr. Cripps with respect to the locality of his son-in-law’s castle. “May I ask what is the Count’s title, for I did not happen to see the marriage announced in the paper?”

“It was in the papers,” said Mr. Cripps; “but not till after it had taken place; for the Count was afraid the Emperor of Austria would have interfered to prevent it, because he wanted him to marry one of his own relations.”

“Indeed!” said Mr. Glassford; “and his name?”

“He’s called Count Ruckalooney,” replied Mr. Cripps.

“Of course—you’d settlements?” hinted Mr. Glassford.

“Oh! yes, in course,” replied Mr. Cripps; “the Count settled a beautiful estate upon her—somewhere or another—I don’t exactly know where.”

“I should think that was probably of little consequence,” observed the lawyer. “And may I ask who drew up the deed?”

“A friend of the Count’s,” answered Mr. Cripps. “We were obliged to keep the thing so quiet for fear of the Emperor of Austria, that

he wouldn't allow anybody else to be let into the secret."

"And your daughter's fortune, I dare say, you paid down?"

"On the nail!" answered Mr. Cripps, triumphantly. "No shilly-shally, but forked out at once."

"Hem!" said Mr. Glassford; "and this other gentleman is a friend of the Count's, and perhaps a subject of the Emperor of Austria, also?"

"No no," answered Mr. Cripps, "he's an Englishman, I take it, by his name; or likely, a Welshman. I never thought to ask Livy. He's called Colonel Jones."

"Colonel Jones?" reiterated Mr. Glassford. "Of what service?"

"I never heard," replied Mr. Cripps. "The reg'lars, I suppose."

"The name's so common," observed Mr. Glassford, "that it's no guide at all. What sort of man is he?"

"Bless you, I don't know," replied Mr. Cripps. "I never set eyes on him. Livy's met with him in Paris."

"In Paris!" said Mr. Glassford. "Colonel Jones! Excuse me, but I really should like to

learn a little more of this person before you give your consent to the match. The fact is, there is a man of that name, or rather who chooses to assume that name, that we've had the misfortune to have had much dealings with. Now I happen to know that he is at present in Paris, and I confess I cannot help wishing you would allow us to make a few enquiries before this affair is carried any further."

"But the Count's friend," observed Mr. Cripps. "He must know him, you know."

"Hem!" replied Mr. Glassford. "But it is possible the Count himself might be deceived."

"That's true," answered Mr. Cripps. "He might, certainly."

"You can give me no further indication by which we might ascertain whether or not it is our Colonel Jones?" said Mr. Glassford. "Miss Livy hasn't sent you his miniature to see how far you may approve the physiognomy of your new son-in-law?"

"No," said Mr. Cripps. "She says I shall be surprised when I see him, and that I little think who he is, and seems to hint that I *have* seen him; but she don't say where. Perhaps he used to come to the shop."

"The person I allude to," observed the law-

yer, "is sufficiently remarkable to be identified easily. His name won't assist us much, but his person will. He's a man that was known for some time about town by the name of Nosey, owing to a peculiar formed nose he has, from a blow he got in a brawl some years ago. By means of that, and his bald head, we can easily describe him to one of our correspondents in Paris."

"Nosey!" reiterated Mr. Cripps. "Nosey! He warn't like Julius Cæsar, was he?"

"I don't know that he was," answered Mr. Glassford, laughing. "But he's very bald—that's the principal resemblance I know of."

"Bald!" again reiterated Mr. Cripps. "A stoutish man? Fair complexion?"

"Exactly," replied the lawyer.

"The Lord look down upon us!" cried Mr. Cripps. "Is he a rogue?"

"I fear a greater doesn't exist," answered Mr. Glassford. "But you know him, then?"

"Know him!" exclaimed the astonished grocer,— "why he's the Count's servant!"

"As much as he is Colonel Jones," replied Mr. Glassford. "Rely on it he is neither one nor the other."

“And who the devil is he?” enquired Mr. Cripps.

“His real name is Remorden,” answered Mr. Glassford, “and he’s a gentleman by birth. But what little property he had, he ran through within a year or two after he came to it; and since that time he has been living by his wits. Latterly he has been very much abroad, where, I suppose, he found it easier to carry on his schemes than here.”

“But the Count,” said Mr. Cripps, with a faltering voice; “how could he be so deceived?”

“We must hope he was deceived,” replied Mr. Glassford. “But I cannot conceal from you that the account you have given me does occasion some misgivings. However, we must hope for the best. But with regard to the other fellow, there can be no doubt in the world of his being as consummate a rascal as ever breathed.”

“What shall I do?” enquired Mr. Cripps, with a bewildered air.

“Set off for Paris instantly, and fetch back your two unmarried daughters. They’ll be getting a husband for Jemima else, rely on it, young as she is. As for the eldest, you must be guided by circumstances when you are there; but if the man’s an impostor, as I suspect, a con-

federate of Remorden's, bring her away by all means."

"And my money! My fifty thousand pounds!" cried Mr. Cripps.

"Forget that you ever had it," replied Mr. Glassford; "and be thankful another hundred thousand isn't gone after it."

Here was a fall! "Oh, heavy declension!" After the pride and glory of having outwitted the Emperor of Austria himself! And as for going to Paris, it was a thing Mr. Cripps contemplated with absolute horror; it was worse than the loss of the fifty thousand pounds; and he returned to Virginia House to consult his wife, in a state bordering on distraction.

"To go to France to be fed on frogs and soupe maigre, and live amongst a set of fellows that wore wooden shoes, and talked an outlandish jargon that nobody could understand!"

The poor man hadn't resolution to set about it, so he wrote to Livia to say he was coming, and to forbid the banns; and then resolved to allow himself a little while to make up his mind to the enterprize.

A few days after this, Mr. Glassford, who never doubted his having instantly departed, drove down to Virginia House, and enquired for

Mrs. Cripps; whom, on being introduced into the drawing-room, he found in tears.

“I hope no new misfortune has occurred?” said he. “Nothing worse than I learnt from Mr. Cripps last week, is there?”

“We’ve heard nothing since,” replied the lady, sobbing; “but dear, dear, Mr. Cripps is going to set off to-night for Paris; and I’m afraid I shall never see him again. I’m sure he’ll never come back alive!” And a fresh burst of tears testified the violence of her affliction and the extent of her fears.

“Bless me! What, isn’t he gone yet?” exclaimed the lawyer.

“We couldn’t bring our minds to it,” sobbed Mrs. Cripps. “His things have been packed up these three days, all ready; and we even had the sandwiches cut, and every thing—but when it came to the point, he couldn’t do it. Think what it is, at his time of life, Mr. Glassford, with a full habit of body, to go and encounter the dangers of a stormy ocean, full of sharks and whales and porpuses—we used to see them floundering about at Margate, ready to devour anybody they could get hold of; and he that wouldn’t be able to understand a word they said

to him!—what chance would he have amongst them?"

"Not much, if his safety depended on his eloquence, I'm afraid," replied Mr. Glassford, smiling.

"There was one of them we used to meet walking on the pier at Margate," added Mrs. Cripps; "and sometimes he'd try to get into conversation with my husband; but Lord! they could make nothing of it."

"I should imagine not," said Mr. Glassford. "But really I cannot help feeling some uneasiness about your daughters from this delay."

"Oh! Mr. Cripps has written," said the lady, "to forbid the marriage; so a few days can't make any difference, you know."

"We can't be so sure of that," answered the lawyer. "But, however, would you have any objection to Mr. Cripps going, if he had a companion?—one who speaks French well, and will be able to take care of him?"

"That would be a great comfort, certainly," replied she.

"Well," said he, "a young man from my office, my head clerk indeed, starts for Paris to-morrow upon some business we have in hand; and the object of my visit to-day, was to learn

if he could carry any message, or be of any use in your affairs. Now, since Mr. Cripps is not yet off, what do you say to their travelling together?"

This proposition was gladly acceded to; and on the following morning Mr. Cripps and the young gentleman in question started on their adventurous journey; and having escaped the monsters of the deep, and the perils of the road, arrived in due time at Paris; where, after changing their dress, and taking some refreshment, they lost no time in seeking the Hotel Dangeau, in the Rue de Richelieu, whence Miss Livy's letters had been dated.

But, alas! they were too late. Count, Countess, Livy, Jemima, and Colonel Jones, had all departed together a week before, on their way, as the mistress of the Hotel understood, to the Count's château, which was situated a long way off—where, she never rightly understood; only she was sure it was a place she'd never heard of in France.

Here was a sad blow; and if Mr. Cripps had been alone, as a journey to the unknown regions of Transylvania was quite out of the question, he would have stepped into the next diligence he met with, and returned straightways

to England. But the young clerk took a different view of the case.

“We must find out which road they’ve taken,” said he, “and whither they’re bound. Betwixt the police, and the passport office, there’s little doubt but that we shall arrive at the truth on those points, and then we must consider what’s next to be done.”

Accordingly, after some enquiry, it was ascertained that the party had started with passports for Brussels; and the authorities at Brussels were written to, to ascertain if such persons had been seen there. The answer was, that two gentlemen, whose names and description corresponded with those sought for, had been at Brussels for a day or two, but were unaccompanied by ladies; and had themselves left the city, on their way back to France.

“No ladies!” said the young clerk; “then they must have left them somewhere on the road;” and although he was unwilling to communicate his own apprehensions to poor Mr. Cripps, he could not avoid feeling considerable uneasiness as to the fate of the unfortunate girls; and he proposed that with as little delay as possible, they should both set out

on the road to Brussels, and endeavour to trace the fugitives as they went along. A *should go* suggestion to which Mr. Cripps, who found himself well taken care of by his young companion, and in little danger either from sharks or Frenchmen, and who had also discovered that there was something better to eat in France, than frogs and soupe maigre, made no objection.

CHAPTER XVI.

MYSTERIES UNVEILED.

IT was on the second day after his return from Oakfield, that Mr. Simpson received a note dated from an hotel in Brooke-street, requesting him to call on a person there who had something of importance to communicate, and directing him to enquire for Monsieur Courtois.

Conceiving the communication was about something relating to his foreign trade, the worthy wine-merchant lost no time in obeying the summons ; and on asking at the door for Mr. Courtois, a Frenchman immediately came forward, and in tolerable English begged to know if his name was Simpson ; and being answered in the affirmative, requested the honour of conducting him up stairs.

Monsieur Courtois was an elderly, respectable-looking man, with his thickly-powdered hair dressed *à l'aile de pigeon*, and attired in deep mourning ; and he preceded Mr. Simpson

up stairs with much deference and politeness, but at the same time with a slow and dignified step, that well became the gravity of his appearance.

On reaching the first floor, he threw open a door, and announced "Monsieur Simpson," advancing at the same time to place that gentleman a chair before he retired.

The apartment to which Mr. Simpson found himself introduced, was a handsome and well-furnished drawing-room, evidently the best in the hotel; and on a sofa, at one end of it, sat a lady, who, as he approached, arose with the utmost grace to receive him. She, also, was attired in deep mourning; and the extraordinary beauty of her face and figure almost dazzled the eyes of the staid visitor, who came all unprepared for such a vision of loveliness; whilst her attractions were rather augmented than diminished by the air of exceeding languor, and deep melancholy, that pervaded her countenance and manner.

"I have the pleasure," she said, "of seeing Mr. Simpson of Mark Lane?"

Mr. Simpson bowed assent.

"The intimate friend," she continued, "of the late Mr. Wentworth?"

“I had the honour to be so, madam,” replied Mr. Simpson, with a sigh.

The lady sighed too ; and drawing forth a delicate cambric handkerchief, she held it for a moment to her eyes.

“Come nearer,” she said, pointing to a seat on the sofa beside her ; “will you have the goodness,” she continued, when Mr. Simpson had obeyed the invitation, “will you have the goodness to relate to me all the circumstances of Mr. Wentworth’s death—as far, at least, as they ever came to light ?”

“Certainly, madam,” replied Mr. Simpson ; and wondering intensely who his fair friend could be, and what the interview was to lead to, he proceeded to narrate all the particulars that were known regarding the tragedy in question.

The lady listened to his tale with undeviating attention, occasionally interrupting the progress of the narrative to ask questions which evinced her intimate knowledge of the persons and localities connected with the drama. When he had concluded, she again held her handkerchief to her eyes, appearing deeply affected ; and a silence of some moments ensued.

“And from that time to this, sir,” she said, at length, “no further light has been thrown

on the mystery? Andrew has never reappeared, and he and Mabel, the dairy-maid, are still supposed to have eloped together?"

"That, madam," answered Mr. Simpson, "is still the general conviction;" for he did not think it advisable to communicate the events of the last few days, and the suspicions they had awakened in Mr. Olliphant's breast, and consequently in his own, till he was better acquainted with the person he was speaking to. He wished to hear her story first; and for this she did not seem disposed to keep him long in suspense.

"Well, sir," she said, "it is in my power to prove its fallacy; and you will now perhaps have the goodness to listen to my history: the which, in order to render it more comprehensible, I will commence by avowing, that I myself am Mabel, the dairy-maid—by name, Mabel Lightfoot."

Mr. Simpson could only look his surprise—he had too much delicacy and good breeding, the good breeding that springs from generosity and benevolence, to make any comments on the confession.

"You may well look astonished," she continued, "but such is the fact. With respect to my own history, previous to my going to live

at Oakfield, I have little to tell. My parents were poor, but respectable, each springing from families that in former times had belonged to the gentry of the county; and this circumstance, slight and unimportant as it may seem, has been the origin of my errors, and the foundation of my fortunes, good and ill; for my mother could not forget it; and when she saw that I was likely to be endowed with some charms of person, she neglected no opportunity of instilling into my mind the hope and the desire of improving my situation by a prudent marriage. With this view, she carefully guarded me from any intimacy with the young people of my own sphere, especially the men; and I grew up without a friend or a confidant but herself. But at the age of fifteen, I lost her; my father had died before; and both I and my sister Grace were thrown upon the world, and obliged to go to service.

“For my own part, I selected the situation of dairy-maid, because I thought it less menial than household service, and because it entailed the necessity of less communication with the other servants; for my mother’s precepts had been sown in a fruitful soil. I was by nature as ambitious as she could desire me, and at

the same time as ignorant of the world, and its ways, as if I had been born in another planet. I had been taught reading and writing, and had a tolerable notion of grammar; acquirements which my mother had taken some pains to procure me, as being important elements in my future establishment. But I had no access to books; indeed I was scarcely acquainted with any but the Bible; and as I avoided the conversation of my equals, and had no opportunity of enjoying that of my superiors, my mind was little more enlightened than that of an infant.

“Nevertheless, in spite of my ignorance and my pride, I had innumerable lovers, for I was considered the beauty of the village; but I treated them all with the utmost disdain and indifference. The only one I ever felt the slightest disposition to favour, was Andrew Hopley, who was in many respects very superior to the other young men of his class; but his station and livery were an effectual bar to the indulgence of my inclination, and I carefully repressed it .

“Now, sir, comes the period of my story in which you will find yourself interested.

“I had not been long at Oakfield, before Mr.

Gaveston found me out, and seemed disposed to pay me particular attention. At first he accosted me with the freedom and familiarity with which gentlemen permit themselves to address young women in my situation; but soon finding that I was only offended and repelled, he changed his tactics, and affected to entertain a violent passion for me; and ignorant as I was, it is extremely possible that I might have fallen into his snares, had I not known that he was engaged to be married to Miss Wentworth—but that circumstance preserved me; and therefore, although he lamented the vows that fettered him, and swore that he loved me a thousand times better than he did her, yet, as I was aware that he could not promote the objects of my ambition, I turned a deaf ear to all his protestations.

“At length, one day—it was not long before Mr. Wentworth set out on his excursion to the coast, from which you tell me he never returned—Mr. Gaveston took an opportunity of joining me early when I was going to milk my cows, before the rest of the family were about.”

“‘Mabel,’ he said, ‘I find that my unfortunate engagement to Miss Wentworth, which it is impossible for me to break, must for ever pre-

clude my obtaining from you a return of the passion you have inspired me with ; but my disappointment, great as it is, cannot diminish the interest I must ever feel in your happiness ; and since it is not in my power to promote it myself, by making you my wife, I feel the greatest desire to do it by some other means. In short, I can't bear to see you here milking cows, and performing menial offices so far beneath the station for which nature designed you ; and I have been casting about in my mind what I can do to raise you into the sphere that you would adorn.

“ ‘ Now, you must know that I have an acquaintance in the neighbourhood of Bordeaux, which is in France, who is the greatest admirer of beauty in the world, and who is exceedingly anxious to obtain a handsome English wife ; but as there are few Englishwomen there, and none that happen to be very lovely, he has hitherto found it impossible to satisfy his taste. When I took leave of him the last time I came away, he asked me if I would choose a wife for him, and send her out ; and without thinking seriously at the moment of what I was saying, I promised I would. Now what do you say, Mabel, to marrying my friend, and becoming a marchioness ? ’

“ ‘A marchioness !’ I exclaimed. ‘Is he a marquis ?’

“ ‘Yes,’ said he ; ‘he is, I assure you, a marquis of a very ancient and noble Spanish family ; and he has, besides, a handsome estate, and a good fortune. It’s true, he’s not very young ; but if you can overlook that one defect, I promise you, he’ll make you an excellent husband. He’ll fall desperately in love the moment he looks at you ; and you may manage him completely, and have everything your own way. What do you say to my proposal ?’

“ I answered, that I didn’t care the least whether he was young or old if he would make me a marchioness, and let me live like a lady.

“ ‘Oh !’ he said, ‘you’ll have carriages and servants at your command, and live like a princess.’

“ ‘Then,’ I said, ‘I should like it very much. But how am I to go to him ?’

“ ‘Leave that to me,’ he answered. ‘But one thing, remember, you must keep the whole business a profound secret from everybody ; for if it were to reach Mr. Wentworth’s ears, he’d be writing off to the marquis to tell him you were only a dairy-maid, which there’s no necessity in the world for his ever knowing. I shall

tell him you are the daughter of a particular friend of my own. All you have to do is to keep the thing to yourself, and be ready to start at a moment's notice.'

"Soon after this conversation, Mr. Gaveston was suddenly summoned abroad by particular business, and the marriage, which was to have taken place immediately, was consequently delayed; and Mr. Wentworth, his daughter, and Andrew, went down to the seaside to await his return.

"Well, sir, two nights before the family were expected back, as I was in my room, about eleven o'clock, preparing to go to bed, I heard a slight tap at the window. I must observe that my room was on the ground-floor, adjoining the dairy, and that there was a door which led from it into the other parts of the house. At first I took no notice of the signal; but when it was repeated, I went to the window and enquired who was there.

"'Open the door,' said a man's voice, speaking close to the glass; 'I've a letter for you, if you are Mabel the dairy-maid.'

"'I am Mabel,' I said; 'but I'm not going to open the door unless I know who you are.'

"'I come from a good friend of yours,' re-

turned the man ; ‘and the letter’s about a certain marquis at Bordeaux. But open the door, and I’ll explain every thing.’

“On hearing this, I thought there could be no danger in opening the door, as, whoever the man was, he must be a messenger from Mr. Gaveston ; so, after fastening the other door that led into the house, lest we should be interrupted, I let him in.

“He was a stoutish man, dressed in a drab coat, with a red handkerchief round his throat, and over his chin ; and he’d a face that once seen, was not easily forgotten. He appeared to have been formerly extremely good-looking ; but a strange twist of the nose, and a remarkable rise across the bridge, gave his features a peculiar expression.

“‘Here,’ said he, handing me a letter, ‘are a few lines from Mr. Gaveston, which he has sent that you may be satisfied I am acting by his authority ; but as I have no time to lose, I’ll deliver my message, and leave you to read them after I am gone.

“‘What he desired me to say is, that on the third night from this you are to hold yourself ready to start for London, on your way to the continent. He and I will be here to fetch you

away; and to prevent any disappointment, the thing must be managed so quietly that you shall not be missed till the following morning. You are to take care to admit nobody into this part of the house; and we shall let you know we are here by the same signal I gave just now. Will you be ready, and are you willing to go?"

" "Yes, I am," I replied.

" "Very well," said he; "that's a brave girl; I admire your spirit. And that much being settled, there is no necessity for my lingering here. Remember, you are to take no clothes, nor anything with you, of any description whatever. Mr. Gaveston will supply you with all that is necessary."

"Having said this, he went away, and I opened the letter; which, however, contained nothing more than a request from Mr. Gaveston that I would be guided by the directions I should receive from the bearer, who he assured me was his particular friend.

"Well, sir, the intervening time past without any unusual occurrence, and the night appointed for my departure arrived. No hour had been mentioned, and I was therefore uncertain how soon I might expect to be summoned; so I retired early to my room, which, as I was little in

the habit of associating with the other servants, excited no observation ; and having bolted the door of communication, I sat down with my bonnet and shawl on, to await the arrival of Mr. Gaveston.

“ I had no watch, but I think it must have been about two hours after midnight that I was aroused by a noise at the window ; for being quite unused to sitting up so late, I had fallen asleep in my chair ; and I started up hastily and opened the door.

“ ‘ Why, Mabel,’ said Mr. Gaveston, who entered, followed by the man who had brought me the letter three nights before, ‘ we thought you had forgotten the appointment ; we have been trying to make you hear this quarter of an hour. However, make haste now, for we have no time to lose. You must disguise yourself in this dress,’ he said, opening a bundle which the other man held in his hand, and which contained a suit of boy’s clothes. Put them on quickly, whilst we step into the house for a minute or two. I want some papers I left in my room when I was here last ;’ and so saying, they passed through the door of communication with the house, and left me to change my dress.

“ They were not gone many minutes, and I

was but just ready when they returned. 'Now come,' said Mr. Gaveston, taking me under his arm, and we stepped out; but just as I was closing the dairy-door, he said, "By-the bye, I don't think we fastened the door of communication. We'd better do so, or somebody may get in and rob the house.' So he reëntered my room for that purpose, and when he came out he called me back.

"'Here, Mabel,' said he, pointing to the bonnet and shawl, and other clothes I had just taken off, and which, in my haste, I had left lying on the floor; 'pick up those, and tie them in a bundle; they must not be left there.'

"I did so, and he carried them out, and handed them to his companion. He then gave me his arm, and we walked away across the park, whilst the other man went round to the front of the house, where he said they had left their horses, which they would not bring to the back, because the servant's bed-rooms were all on that side, and there might be some danger of being heard.

"The horses met us at the park gate, of which Mr. Gaveston had a private key, to enable him to enter if he came home late at night when he was staying at Oakfield; and

where, the gentlemen having mounted, I being placed on the saddle behind Mr. Gaveston, after stopping to re-lock the gate, we took the high road to London, for about ten miles. We then turned off, and had ridden for about five miles further across the country, through bye-lanes and fields, when Mr. Gaveston suddenly stopped, at a spot where two roads met.

“ ‘Now,’ said he, ‘Mabel, here we must part for the present, and you must continue your journey to London with my friend, who will take every care of you ; and in less than a week I shall join you there. You are now within a couple of miles of a town, where you will find a conveyance; and so far you must walk, as I must take the horses away with me.’

“ Upon this, they lifted me down ; and Mr. Gaveston, taking the bundle containing my clothes, which he said he knew how to dispose of, we parted, he riding one way, and we walking the other.

“ As he had predicted, we soon came in sight of a pretty considerable town, which we entered, after my companion had warned me that I was not to speak, but to hold my handkerchief to my eyes, as if I were in great distress. Walking briskly through the streets, which were nearly

empty, for it was yet but early morning, we reached an inn, where the ostler and a few of the servants were already stirring.

“ ‘ We want a chaise and pair of horses, as quickly as possible,’ said my companion to a waiter, who was yawning at the door.’

“ ‘ First turn out, directly,’ cried the man, and away ran the ostler to obey the orders. ‘ Please to walk in and take some breakfast, sir,’ added he, ‘ whilst they put to.’

“ ‘ We’ll just step into a room for a moment,’ answered my friend; ‘ but we must not stop for breakfast. We are on an errand of life and death. This young gentleman’s father has been seized with a fit; and we’re afraid, if we don’t make the greatest speed, all will be over before we get there.’

“ Upon this, according to my instructions, I pretended to cry very much, and the good-natured waiter ran out to hasten the post-boy’s preparations. ‘ They’ll be round directly, sir,’ said he, as he returned; and in a couple of minutes more, the chaise was at the door, my companion handed me into it, and we were galloping along the road.

“ For three stages we got on as fast as we could, my friend always urging the same motive for speed, and then we stopped to breakfast;

after which we started again, and stopped no more till we reached London; having taken nothing but a biscuit and a glass of wine on the road.

“It was the middle of the night when we arrived; and just before we entered the town, my companion called to the driver to stop, and having asked him his fare, he paid him, and dismissed him, saying he needed him no further; and then giving me his arm, we entered the town, and walked at a rapid pace through a great many streets—I remember we crossed a bridge, and that is all I know of the course we took.

“At length, having arrived at what appeared to me a shabby part of the town, my friend stopped at a house that looked rather better than the others, and rang the bell; and almost immediately, which made me conclude we were expected, an elderly, decently dressed woman opened the door.

“‘Here we are, Mrs. Davis,’ said my companion. And then turning to me, he said, ‘This is your home for the present; you’ll find yourself very comfortable under Mrs. Davis’s care, till your friend arrives. Good night!’ and shaking me by the hand, he turned off, and walked away.

CHAPTER XVII.

MABEL CONTINUES HER STORY.

“WHEN the companion of my journey departed,” continued Mabel, “Mrs. Davis, taking me by the hand, led me into a parlour, where I found a comfortable fire with a kettle of boiling water on the hob, and the tea-things ready upon the table.

“‘I thought,’ said she, ‘you would prefer a cup of tea to any thing else after your journey; there’s nothing so refreshing; and you can eat a bit of cold meat with it if you are inclined.’

“I thanked her and accepted her offer. She was extremely civil; but asked me no questions, speaking only of the weather, the fatigues of travelling, the comforts of tea, and so forth. I however knew that she was aware of my sex; as my companion, whose name I afterwards learnt was Dyson, had informed me that I was to be

conducted to the house of a friend of Mr. Gaveston's, who had been told I was a young lady on my way to the continent with the intention of uniting myself to a gentleman to whom I had been some time attached, but whose alliance was not approved by my friends. I had also been instructed that I was to call myself Miss Jones; and that Mr. Gaveston was only known to Mrs. Davis as Mr. Godfrey.

“‘Now,’ said Mrs. Davis, when tea was over, ‘I dare say you’ll be glad to go to bed; and I recommend your lying till I bring you your breakfast in the morning. You should take a good rest after such a journey.’

“‘But what am I to do,’ I said, ‘for clothes, when I do rise? I haven’t a single article with me.’

“‘Oh!’ said she, ‘leave that to me. I’ll supply you with clothes. If they don’t exactly fit, never mind that. You’ll see nobody here, and they’ll do very well till Mr. Godfrey arrives.’

“Accordingly, the next morning, after I had taken my breakfast, she brought me a dark silk dress, and other indispensable articles, which seemed to have been made for a person about my size, and which she said belonged to her daughter; and when I was ready to leave my

room, instead of taking me down to the parlour I had been in the night before, she led me into a room adjoining my bedchamber, which looked only on a back yard, and which she said it was necessary I should inhabit for the present; as if I went below, I might be seen by people coming to the house, and discovered.

“The first day I was so tired that I did not care much about this confinement; but when I had recovered my fatigue, I began to pine for air and exercise, and I begged Mrs. Davis to take me out. But this she positively refused, alleging that it was absolutely contrary to Mr. Godfrey’s orders. In every other respect she was very obliging, giving me books to read, and doing what she could to amuse me. But still I found my time dreadfully tedious; and when at the end of a week Mr. Gaveston came, I earnestly entreated that I might commence my journey immediately. ‘That,’ however, he said, ‘was impossible, for that there had been many enquiries made about me; and that I should be infallibly traced and taken back to Oakfield, if I shewed myself out of doors yet;’ and so simple was I, that I gave credit to all he said. ‘Depend on it,’ he added, ‘the moment it’s safe for you to move, you shall. In the meantime, I must

return to Oakfield, lest I should be suspected of having any hand in taking you off.'

"It was fully a month before he appeared again, by which time, between weariness, and a confinement to which I was so unaccustomed, I was getting extremely unwell. Still he urged it was too soon to move; and the only relief I got, was, that two or three times he took me out to walk of an evening, after it was dark. But I could not help observing, that the more impatient I became, the more closely I was watched; and I began to see that I was little better than a prisoner.

"All these causes together, combined, I believe, with the effects of a cold I had caught on my journey, at length overthrew my health and spirits completely, and I fell extremely ill. Mrs. Davis and a maid servant that was in the house, attended me assiduously enough; but no medical advice being called in, I continued to get worse and worse, till I was at death's door; and I believe I should actually have died, (which I have since believed would have been exactly what Mr. Gaveston desired,) had not the servant taken fright one day when Mrs. Davis was out. I happened to faint whilst she was standing by my bedside, and finding it impossible to recover

me by any means she had recourse to, she ran out of the house and fetched in an apothecary that lived in the neighbourhood.

“After this the man was suffered to attend me; and Mr. Godfrey, as he was called, also brought a young person of his acquaintance, to see me, called Julia Clark—”

“Who?” said Mr. Simpson, hastily interrupting the discourse. “Did you say Julia Clark?”

“Yes,” replied Mabel, “Julia Clark was the name of the lady. A very pretty young person she was, and very kind to me. Do you know her?”

“I rather think I do,” answered Mr. Simpson. “But excuse my interruption. Pray go on.”

“Well,” continued Mabel, “I gradually got better; and Julia’s visits helped me to bear my confinement; and when I was sufficiently recovered to travel, Mr. Gaveston announced that everything was ready for my departure; and that as he could not go with me himself, Mr. Dyson had undertaken to conduct me safe to Bordeaux.

“Accordingly, early one morning, to my infinite joy, I bade adieu to Mrs. Davis and her

dreary apartments, and we proceeded to Portsmouth, and from thence to Harfleur ; where only stopping one night, we took places in a diligence, which I imagined was to convey us to Bourdeaux.

“ But my companion, Mr. Dyson, or rather Colonel Jones, for that was the name he assumed on the journey, had other views ; and, instead of conducting me to the Marquis de la Rosa, my intended husband, as Mr. Gaveston had charged him to do, he took me to Paris, where, after engaging apartments in a handsome hotel, and providing himself and me with fashionable habiliments, he introduced me into public as his niece.

“ It is easy for a young Englishwoman there, who is tolerably good-looking, to attract notice ; and I was soon surrounded by a crowd of admirers ; amongst whom, the most urgent and persevering was the Duc de Rochecouart, who was at that time considered the most dissipated and profligate man about the court—at least, where women were concerned. In other respects, his character was never arraigned.

“ Well, sir,” pursued Mabel, “ not to detain you with a detail of the arts that were used to deceive me, it is sufficient to inform you that I

was led to believe the Duke was addressing me with honourable views ; and after a few weeks, having been conducted to one of his châteaux, at some distance from Paris, I was imposed upon by a false marriage—in short, sold. The ceremony was performed by a servant of the Duke's, an Englishman called Dillon, who pretended to be a clergyman, and read the marriage service from the prayer book ; and Colonel Jones, my pretended uncle, having received a considerable sum of money for his treachery, afterwards took his leave, and left me to discover the deception at my leisure.

“ For some months I believed myself the wife of the Duke, and every pains was taken to keep up the delusion ; but, at length, an accident disclosed to me the truth. At the period of my supposed marriage, I was utterly ignorant of the French language ; and as the Duke could speak English tolerably, having once been ambassador here, I found little inconvenience from my want of knowledge. But believing myself the Duchess of Rochecouart, and anticipating the time when I should be introduced at court and into society, I thought it right to acquire the language of the people I was to live amongst. I therefore privately engaged a master, and

applied myself assiduously to the study, with the intention of some day surprising Rochecouart with my unexpected accomplishment; and urged by this motive, and perhaps rather a natural facility, I made considerable progress in a short time. But this newly acquired talent was the accidental means of opening my eyes to my real situation.

“One day that I was sitting alone in my boudoir, with a door ajar that opened into the drawing-room, I overheard a conversation between the Duke and one of his friends, which, although I was not a sufficient adept in the language to understand thoroughly, undeceived me completely with respect to my own position.

“The subject of the conversation was an alliance which had been offered to the Duke, and which he had declined; and the visit was for the purpose of urging him to reconsider a proposal that was, on many accounts, esteemed highly desirable. But the Duke was firm in his refusal; and I comprehended enough to learn that he mentioned me as the motive. The gentleman urged, ‘that there would be no necessity for parting with me;’ but the Duke confessed, ‘that he feared whenever I discovered the deception he had practised, I should leave

him; and assuredly she will,' he said, 'if I marry.' In which conviction he was perfectly correct; for I certainly should.

"You may conceive, sir, what a blow this was to me. However, I commanded my feelings sufficiently to remain quite quiet till the visitor was gone; but when Rochechouart returned from seeing him through the anti-chamber, and I attempted to rise from my chair to speak to him, intending to express my indignation, and then immediately quit the house, I had only time to clasp my hands, and give him one look of reproach, before I sank to the ground in a state of insensibility. But that one look was enough. It told him that I was undeceived; and as soon as I recovered, and was able to listen to him, he entered on his exculpation; explaining to me the difficulties that lay in the way of an alliance between a person in his situation and one in mine—the opposition he should have experienced from his connexions, and the court more especially, as it was easily perceived that the pretended Colonel Jones was a mere sharper, who had brought me there to make money of, and that I was not his niece as he had asserted; and finally, he made known to me how I had been actually sold; and that

it had been merely a contest between the young noblemen I was introduced to, which should have me; Colonel Jones standing out for the highest price.

“‘Thus, Amabel,’ said he, ‘you would not have escaped, rely on it; and if you had not fallen to me, you would to Armagnac, or de l’Orme, or some of the others, who probably would not have loved you half so much as I do. The conversation you have just overheard, must, at least, have convinced you of my attachment.’

“It certainly had; and that was the only thing that supported me under my disappointment and mortification. When I first encouraged the Duke’s attentions, and accepted the offer of his hand, I confess that I was actuated solely by ambition; and it would have been perfectly indifferent to me whether I attained my object through him, or through any of the other gentlemen who were contesting the prize. But my feelings were now wholly changed. Without affecting to undervalue the luxury, and indeed magnificence, in which I lived, or pretending to assert that it would not have required an extraordinary effort of resolution to have resigned them and fallen back into

my original situation, yet, I can truly say, that the affection Rochechouart had inspired me with formed a much stronger obstacle to my leaving him, than his splendid châteaux, and gorgeous liveries; or than my own sumptuous attire, gilded chariot, and elegant boudoir.

“I really loved him; and the deception he had practised on me aside, I had certainly every reason to do so. His kindness and indulgence to me were unvarying; and as for his own qualities, he was universally admitted to be the handsomest and the most agreeable man about the court.

“You may imagine the result, sir; I consented to remain; and the Duke immediately made a handsome settlement on me, which secured me in affluence for the rest of my life, whether I left him or not; and I must do him the justice to say, that never, till the hour of his death,”—and here she burst into a passion of tears, that almost choked her utterance—“never to the hour of his death, did he give me reason to repent my acquiescence!

“Indeed, I am sure that if I had urged it much, he would have privately legalized our connexion; but I never did: because I felt that I was not worthy to become his wife, and that,

in many respects, I should have been doing him a great injury. It is true I was deceived, and so far innocent; but on the other hand, I could not forget that I was not blameless. I had sought to deceive him also. I had acquiesced in Colonel Jones's imposition, and attempted to pass for what I was not; besides, my own motives were base and unworthy. I saw they were so, as my mind improved by education; and I felt that I deserved the degradation I suffered.

"I therefore made up my mind to the penalty I had incurred. I knew I must look to pass my life without any society but the Duke's; and that when we returned to Paris, his numerous engagements would not leave him much time to bestow on me; and I also felt, that however unwilling he was to part with me then, I might not always retain the same power over his affections.

"Under these circumstances I could not look for much happiness; but I saw that one means of improving my situation, both present and future, was within my reach. I perceived that by repairing the deficiencies of my early education, I should not only render myself more agreeable to Rochechouart, but that I should be supplying myself with a resource during the life of solitude

and abandonment that lay before me. To this object I therefore devoted myself, and as I was yet young, and could command all the advantages that money could purchase, I made considerable progress in the studies I undertook ; and soon learned to find in my books and my music, the best consolation for my lonely hours and degraded condition.

“ In this manner my life passed, without any particular occurrence to interrupt its even tenor, till about six months since, when I received an unexpected visit from the Marquis de la Rosa, the gentleman for whom I had been designed by Mr. Gaveston. How he discovered me I do not know, but he wrote to me to say he was in Paris, and to desire an interview ; and I believe it was more curiosity than anything else that made me grant his request. But his visit led to disclosures I little expected.

“ From him I first learned that Mr. Wentworth was dead ; and although his information was imperfect, I gathered enough to ascertain that my removal from Oakfield had been somehow or other mysteriously connected with the catastrophe ; and I was the more confirmed in this persuasion, by his showing me a letter of Mr. Gaveston’s, wherein he proposed to the

Marquis to practise upon me exactly the sort of deception to which I had fallen a victim through the villainy of his friend ; namely, to deceive me by a false marriage.

“ I must observe that the Marquis had no idea that I was the dairy-maid ; he only had heard of me as Miss Jones, neither had I ever confessed to Rochechouart that I had once filled so humble a situation ; nor had I courage to do it yet. But for that remnant of silly pride, I should have immediately written to you on the subject of what I had learnt, for I obtained your address from Bordeaux ; and perhaps the calamity which I have now to deplore, might not have occurred.

“ I fear my sad history must weary you, sir,” continued Mabel ; “ but the regard you bore Mr. Wentworth will give you an interest in it ; and I shall not detain you much longer.

“ About two months ago the Duke’s regiment, which had been for some time on a foreign station, having returned to France, and being quartered at Lisle, he thought it right to join it for a few weeks ; and he proposed to me to accompany him. Of course I consented ; and thither we immediately proceeded, attended by our horses, servants, and equipages.

“One of my favourite recreations was riding on horseback; and as I had but few pleasures, Rochechouart did all he could to make this agreeable, by supplying me with beautiful animals, and accompanying me himself whenever he could.

“Well, sir, one day, about ten days since, we were taking our usual exercise, accompanied only by a groom, when we perceived a handsome English carriage approaching at a rapid rate; and we slackened our pace in order to get a better view of the travellers within. But you may imagine our surprise, when as the vehicle drew nigh, we distinguished, reclining in the opposite corners, the soi-disant Colonel Jones, and Dillon, the Duke’s cidevant valet!

“The moment I recognized Colonel Jones, I felt a vehement desire to obtain from him some information regarding the mysterious affairs at Oakfield; and I intimated to the Duke that I had a particular reason for desiring to speak to him.

“‘Go,’ said he to the groom, ‘ride after that carriage, and observe where they put up; we’ll follow more leisurely, and meet you at the entrance of the town.’

The man immediately set spurs to his horse,

and had nearly overtaken the travellers, when to our horror and astonishment, we heard a shot, and saw him fall to the ground.

“Incensed at this unprovoked attack, without a moment’s deliberation, and deaf to my cries, the Duke threw his horse into a gallop, and pursued the murderers. Whether they knew him, or whether, being in uniform, they mistook his intentions, I cannot tell—for we found afterwards that the carriage was loaded with contraband goods—but when they found he was gaining upon them they fired another, pistol, and shot him dead on the spot. They then immediately turned their horses’ heads, and instead of pursuing the road to Lisle, they endeavoured to make the best of their way back across the frontier.

“But their escape, I, at least, had the consolation of preventing. Mounted on a very fleet horse, and in a state of too much excitement to think of danger, I pursued them at my utmost speed; and, fortunately, just at the moment they were beginning to fancy themselves secure, being met by a troop of the Duke’s regiment who had been out on a foraging expedition, I succeeded in having them arrested, and brought back to Lisle. Why they did not shoot me also, I can-

not tell—perhaps they had no more ammunition—for I scarcely think they would have spared me from better motives.

“I will not detain you, sir,” said Mabel, who, when she reached this part of her story, was almost unable to proceed, from the bitterness of her grief; “I will not detain you with an account of my feelings; those I leave to your imagination. I will only trouble you with such further particulars as you are likely to be interested in.

“The two criminals were of course placed in confinement; and as soon as I was able to appear in court, they were brought before a magistrate, and my evidence was given against them.

“For their own parts, they neither confessed nor admitted anything; but the contents of the carriage were quite enough to explain the motives of their expedition, and the origin of their fears.

“It was, as I said, lined with contraband goods of the most valuable description; and there was every reason to believe, that on their previous passage through Lisle, shortly before, they had taken as much out of France as they were now bringing into it.

“Finding, when I had given my evidence, that my presence would not be again re-

quired for a few weeks, and that I was in the meantime at liberty to depart where I pleased, I resolved to employ the interval in an endeavour to penetrate the mystery of Mr. Wentworth's death, and to clear myself from the suspicion that my absence had drawn upon me; and I felt the greater necessity for doing this without delay, because there can be no doubt that these men will be condemned to expiate their crimes on the scaffold, and with Colonel Jones will probably expire all chance of discovering the secret.

“With this view I started for Paris without delay; but I was destined before I reached it to be made acquainted with another instance of their villainy. On the morning I quitted Lisle, as we were passing through a small village, I observed a number of country-people assembled round the door of a hut; and as we drew nearer, I perceived two ladies, apparently in a very exhausted condition, seated on chairs at the door, to whom the by-standers were administering such simple refreshments as they had to give. The singularity of the circumstance awakened my curiosity; and, besides, there was something in the appearance of the young women that led me to believe they were English.

“I therefore stopt the carriage, and desired

Courtois, who was with me, to enquire if any thing had happened in which my assistance could be useful ; and he presently learnt from the peasants, that the two ladies I saw there had crawled into the village shortly before, apparently quite exhausted and worn out by fatigue and want of food—that they were foreigners, who could speak no French—and that whence they came or whither they were going could not be discovered.

“ Upon this, I alighted ; and making my way through the crowd, I addressed them in English, saying I was afraid they had met with some unpleasant accident, and offering my services.

“ Poor things ! if a voice from heaven had reached them they could scarcely have seemed more relieved. All I gathered from them, however, at that moment was, that they had fled from some place where they considered themselves in danger, and that they hoped to find their father in Paris, where they besought me to take them.

“ To this request I of course assented ; and they were immediately assisted into the carriage. They were so exhausted that I found it necessary to give up travelling on the following day ; and we therefore rested at Abbeville, where I first learnt the circumstances that had brought them

into the strange predicament in which I found them.

“ I will not detain you now with the details of their melancholy story. It is sufficient to say that the two men, Colonel Jones and Dillon, had contrived to impose upon their parents and themselves—one of them indeed was married to Dillon, who had received with her a large sum of money—and having brought them to France, had, for some reason or other which they were unable to comprehend, conveyed them to a lonely inn some miles from where I found them, and there abandoned them.

“ On reaching Paris I made immediate search for their friends at the hotel they had lodged at ; but although it appeared that two gentlemen had enquired for them, we could not ascertain who they were, or where they were to be found.

“ Under these circumstances, urged also by my desire to assist in exposing the crimes of these villains, I resolved, instead of writing to you as I had proposed, to accompany the young ladies to England ; and at the same time restore them to their friends, and seek a personal explanation with yourself.

“ On reaching Clapham, where my protégées reside, I learnt that their father had set out for Paris in search of them about ten days before.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

MORE LIGHT.

It may be supposed that Mr. Simpson lost no time in communicating the substance of Mabel's story to Mr. Oliphant, who immediately requested an interview with her, in the course of which he perfectly satisfied himself that the suspicions Mr. Gaveston's strange deportment at Oakfield had first awakened, were but too well founded.

In the mean time, Mr. Simpson hastened to Knightsbridge, to assure himself of what there was scarcely room to doubt—that the Julia Clark whose life he had saved, and she who had been introduced to Mabel, were the same person.

But to his amazement, he found the shop shut, and the house uninhabited; and was informed by the neighbours, that two nights before, Mrs. Clark had departed, as was believed, in the company of a gentleman, and had not been heard of since.

This was "confirmation strong" of previous suspicions. There could be little doubt that the gentleman was Mr. Gaveston, and Mr. Olliphant at once detected his motives. He saw that not only were Gaveston and Godfrey the same person, but that Julia Clark was the woman that had pledged the clothes to Isaac Lecky, and had since been employed by Dyson or Jones, whichever his name might really be, to endeavour to recover it; and that Gaveston, having recognized her from their account of the circumstances, had sought her out for the express purpose of placing her evidence beyond their reach.

"But if human exertions can defeat his plans," said Mr. Olliphant, "he shall be disappointed. But in order to make assurance doubly sure, let us pay a visit to that Mrs. Wetherall, to whom you say Julia Clark related her history in detail, of which you only heard the outlines. From her we may learn whether the name of her seducer was Godfrey."

It is needless to say that Mrs. Wetherall's testimony fully corroborated their suspicions; and there could be no doubt left of the identity of the parties.

"Now," said the lawyer, "there is one thing

more I should like to be certain of; which is, whether Gaveston followed us to London. To ascertain that we must write to Jeremy, I suppose; unless you know where he's in the habit of putting up?"

"At Laval's, in Bedford Street, generally, I fancy," replied Mr. Simpson. "I know he preferred it, because it was a French house. It will be worth calling there, at all events."

"Yes, sir," answered the waiter, to their enquiry. "Mr. Gaveston was here on Saturday night for a few minutes. I fancy it might be between ten and eleven o'clock. He seemed in a great hurry, and only called to say that he expected a letter to be sent here for him, and that we were to forward it immediately to the post office at Paris."

"It is exactly that letter we have called to enquire for," said Mr. Olliphant. "Mr. Gaveston requested us to procure it, and send it after him, as he changed his route after he was here."

"Here it is, sir," said the waiter; "it only came this morning."

Mr. Olliphant paid the postage and walked away with the letter. "Now," said he, "we at least know where we shall hear of him; for he'll either go to Paris, or he'll direct them

where to forward the letter ; for no doubt," observed he, peeping into it, "it contains something of importance, or he would not have taken so much trouble to get it. I should like vastly to know what is inside of it."

"And you mean to know, I suppose," said Mr. Simpson, smiling ; "for else why did you bring it away?"

"It was the impulse of the moment," replied the lawyer ; "but there are various reasons why this letter may be important ; and I think there are sufficient to justify me in opening it. We are, in the first place, in pursuit of a criminal—for of Gaveston's guilt I now entertain no more doubt than I do of my own existence—and we must avail ourselves of whatever means may promote his detection. In the next place, to confess a truth, I do not feel quite easy with respect to the fate of that unfortunate woman he has carried off ; and I'm inclined to lose no time in rescuing her from his gripe, and securing her evidence. Ha !" exclaimed he, as, compressing the sides of the letter, he again put it to his eye ; "by Jove, here goes !" and he proceeded to break the seal.

"What is it?" enquired Mr. Simpson.

"I see a name," answered Mr. Olliphant,

that would make me break through a stone wall, with as little ceremony as I break this wax—there's something about that other fellow Jones in it. And see, it's from Borthwick, I declare; what can he have to do with the business?"

"Let us hear," said Mr. Simpson; and Mr. Olliphant proceeded to read as follows.

"SIR,—In obedience to your commands, I write to inform you that I got an answer from the agents by return. They believe Mr. Remorden to be at present in Paris, and have orders to enclose to him, under cover to Colonel Jones, poste restante, there.

"With respect to the little lease you were kind enough to mention, I have prepared it, and submitted it to lawyer Brice. To-morrow I shall forward it, per coach, to be favoured with your signature.

"And I have the honor to remain

"Your humble servant,

"GREGORY BORTHWICK."

"A thousand thanks, Mr. Gregory Borthwick," said Mr. Olliphant; "your letter is invaluable; though there is something about this

house and road business that I cannot understand. But thus much I remember perfectly; that at the time of Mr. Wentworth's death, Franklin told me that that cursed old Manor House formed part of an estate that had been many years in the Remorden family, who were formerly amongst the most affluent and influential people in the county; but that a series of misfortunes, that almost seemed like a fatality, had fallen upon them, till the property was greatly reduced, and the family nearly extinct. The last possessor had died abroad, where he had gone in pursuit of some woman; and the remnant had then fallen to a nephew, who was the only surviving scion of the family. I well recollect Franklin's adding, 'he was a profligate, good-for-nothing fellow, who soon ran through the little he had; and not being disposed to live at the Manor House himself, nor able to let it, because it had fallen so completely out of repair during the absence of the last tenant, the place was shut up, till the innkeeper offered to pay a trifle for the use of the lower rooms during the full season. As for Remorden himself,' he added, 'he hasn't been seen in the county for years. It was said he'd taken to the turf, and was spending his life between

the knowing ones at Newmarket and the hells in London.' Now, what will you bet me that Remorden, Dyson, and Colonel Jones are not all one and the same person?"

"Upon my word, it does not seem very improbable," answered Mr. Simpson.

"And what do you say to a journey to Paris? I can spare a week or two now in such a cause; and thus much I'm sure, that till I have come to some understanding of this business, I shall not be fit for any other. If that fellow, Colonel Jones, is going to have his head taken off, he'll very likely be disposed to make a clean breast of it before he mounts the scaffold. Besides, he'll have a natural desire to take his friend Gaveston with him for company in the other world, and thus we shall get at the truth. Added to which, and as I said before I don't think it a thing to be neglected, we may find out what is become of Julia Clark."

Mr. Simpson needed no urging to accede to the proposal; but he begged leave to make one amendment; which was, that if it were agreeable to her, they should travel in company with Mabel, for whom he admitted himself to be not a little interested.

"There were all the elements of virtue in

her," he said, "alloyed by ignorance and ill-directed ambition. Born in another station, and rationally educated, she would have been a noble creature ; and she is a noble creature now, in spite of her errors."

"And you've only to look in her face, and you'll forget them all," said the lawyer, slyly.

"She's a beautiful creature," answered Mr. Simpson, warmly ; "and it must be a heart of adamant that wouldn't pity and forgive her !"

"It is not mine, I assure you," said Mr. Olliphant, more gravely. "I do both ; and I shall be most happy to travel with her, and serve her too, if any means of doing so lie in my power."

Very willingly Mabel accepted the proposed escort. Like most other people that sat an hour in Mr. Simpson's company, she was disposed to feel an affection for him ; and she was so glad to make friends ! Life is so heavy without them ! It must be one of the most grievous penalties incurred by women who stray from the paths of virtue, that they can rarely have a friend. Few men are generous enough to be to them disinterested ones ; the virtuous of their own sex cannot and dare not ; and amongst the vicious there can exist no true friendship.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DEVICES OF THE WICKED MAN SHALL FAIL.

ALTHOUGH Mr. Gaveston could not venture to delay his departure from London long enough to receive the information he had employed Borthwick to obtain for him, he yet resolved to make straight for Paris, on many accounts. One was, that he looked to find the disposal of his unfortunate companion a matter of more easy accomplishment there than in a smaller place ; and the other, that according to the address Remorden had given Julia, he hoped either to find him there, or at least learn his address at the post office.

He therefore travelled night and day till he reached the capital ; and when there, after stopping one night at an inn in the neighbourhood of the Bureau des Diligences, he located his companion on the following day in a mean lodging in the Fauxbourg Montmartre, whilst he took

up his own residence in a more cheerful and fashionable part of the city.

As one of the most urgent motives of his journey was to obtain an interview with the owner of the Manor House, he lost no time in enquiring at the post office for Borthwick's letter, and for the address of Colonel Jones; but he could obtain no intelligence of either. Borthwick's letter, for reasons the reader will have no difficulty in divining, had not arrived; and with respect to Colonel Jones, letters had been lying there for him for some days, but they had not been enquired for. This was a serious disappointment; and as it might occasion considerable delay, a source of much annoyance. There was no telling how to interpret it, or whither to direct his researches. The man might not have reached Paris, or he might have left it, or he might actually be there, having only neglected to ask for his letters. He was aware that at the passport office he might probably learn what he desired to know; that is, if Remorden was actually travelling under the name of Jones; but in the present state of affairs, and with the projects he had in hand, he did not wish to make himself conspicuous in that quarter, or to draw attention to himself, which he might do were he by his

enquiries to afficher his connexion with a man who was probably marked as a person of suspicious character, or worse, for any thing he knew ; for how he had been living, or what he might have done to draw the eyes of the police on him since his residence abroad, was much more than he could guess.

He therefore employed the interval of inevitable delay in visiting the gambling houses about the Palais Royal, and such other resorts, where he thought there was a probability of meeting with Remorden if he were in Paris ; and in forming projects, and in balancing the difficulties attending the getting rid of Julia in some way that should remove her effectually from his path, and render her evidence inaccessible. But it was not easy to discover any way but one ; and that one, setting remorse, pity, and all such feelings out of the question (of which Mr. Gaveston, like other bad human beings, try what he would, could not wholly divest himself), was one of very difficult accomplishment.

In order to induce her to accompany him, after the interruption of the watchman had rendered the atrocious act he was on the point of perpetrating dangerous to himself, he had persuaded her that his wife was dead, and that he

had been for some time seeking her with the view of repairing her early wrongs by marriage ; and there was no difficulty in adducing many reasons, plausible enough to satisfy her simple mind, for performing the ceremony privately abroad ; nor any in persuading her, on their arrival in Paris, that propriety and prudence required, till he could introduce her as his wife, that she should reside apart from him, and in as obscure a situation as possible.

So far all was easy ; and she, as ever, humble, obedient, and unsuspecting, quietly submitted to the restraints he imposed, and awaited in patience the fulfilment of his promise. But now came the difficulty. He thought sometimes of actually marrying her, (she was already a Catholic, and he had no objection to a pro tempore conversion,) in the names of Mr. Godfrey and Mrs. Dyson, under which they had travelled, and afterwards confining her in a mad-house, a thing at that time easily effected ; but then she might escape, or get a letter conveyed to England. Then there was the river—convenient and inviting—and there was poison.

There was a fourth way, which being less extreme and more secure than any other, death excepted, he would have preferred ; which was,

to put her in the hands of some fanatical or unprincipled priest, and either by persuasion, terror, or force, get her shut up in a convent. But there were two impediments in the way of this project; one was, the existence of the child, which would be an effectual bar to her taking such a step with her own consent; and the other was, that it would require time, and Mr. Gaveston had none to spare.

He had been some days in Paris, and was yet in this state of anxious uncertainty, when happening to drop into a café on the Boulevards, and chancing to take up a newspaper that was lying on the table beside him, his eye was attracted by the name of Colonel Jones; and on perusing the paragraph, he found it contained an allusion to the approaching trial of that worthy and his colleague, at Lisle, for the murder of the Duc de Rochecouart and his servant.

Mr. Gaveston's heart bounded at the news. Of the two persons he most dreaded, the life of one was in his power, and that of the other was about to be sacrificed to the laws; and if he could only successfully dispose of the first, and obtain an interview with the other before his execution, he fancied he might defy the fates and dismiss his fears. True, Mabel probably

yet lived; but if, as Julia had heard, she had made a prosperous marriage in France, it was not very likely that she would ever hear of the Oakfield tragedy at all; or, if she did, that she would risk exposing herself for the sake of penetrating the mystery.

But the necessity for reaching Lisle with as little delay as possible became urgent; and he was called upon to decide at once upon his line of action. He laid down the paper, placed his two elbows on the table, and resting his face on his hands, he sat for some minutes in deep meditation. He then arose, buttoned up his coat, and taking his hat in his hand, moved towards the door.

“Give me a glass of eau de vie,” said he to the waiter, pausing on the threshold; and having tossed off the dram, he stepped out, and at a rapid pace took the way to the Rue du Fauxbourg Montmartre.

“Yes,” said he to himself, as he went along, “no one can ever trace her, if ever, which is not likely, anybody should take the trouble of trying to do it; and the people of the house neither know where she came from, nor who she is; nor, provided they are paid their money, will they ever concern themselves to learn what is

become of her. 'To-morrow morning I'll start for Lisle; and if I can get an interview with Remorden, I think I shall be able to persuade him. What the devil difference will it make to him when he's dead? and I can be back to Oakfield almost before I'm missed.'" And comforting himself with these cheering reflections, he walked briskly forward.

In the house where Julia lodged, and on the same floor, there happened to dwell a young artist, a dawning genius, struggling through poverty and obscurity to fame. The door of his apartment was immediately opposite hers, and he had thus frequent opportunities of seeing her; and he had also several times met Gaveston on the stairs, and had chanced to be present when he bargained with the proprietor for the rooms she occupied. The countenances of both had very particularly struck him; and seizing on the idea they suggested, he had transferred them to paper, with the intention of introducing them into a picture he was designing, of a man killing an innocent wife in a fit of unfounded jealousy.

Previous to the Duc de Rochechouart's unfortunate expedition to Lisle, this young man had obtained a recommendation to his notice, and earnestly solicited his patronage; and at Mabel's

persuasion, the Duke had consented to his taking his portrait. The work was begun but not completed when their departure interrupted its progress ; and when after the Duke's death Mabel returned to Paris, she sent for the artist to enquire if he thought he could finish it from memory. He said he thought he could ; and promised to make the attempt.

As she possessed no likeness of Rochechouart, this was an affair that went very near Mabel's heart ; and on the very day she arrived in Paris with her two friends, Simpson and Olliphant, she sent Courtois to the young man to desire he would bring her the portrait, that she might judge of his success, and have an opportunity of pointing out any misconceptions she might observe.

The artist lost no time in obeying the order ; and collecting a few sketches that were lying on his table that he thought might give a favourable notion of his talent, he put them in his pocket ; and with the picture, proceeded to the hotel that had been indicated to him.

The resemblance gave great satisfaction, and drew many tears from Mabel ; whilst the two Englishmen warmly expressed their admiration of the remarkable beauty of the original.

After a visit of some length, the young man, elated with the commendations he had received, and the permission he had obtained to exhibit the picture in the Louvre, which he hoped might prove a stepping-stone to better fortune, took his departure; leaving behind him his bundle of sketches, which he had thrown on the table when he entered, but had forgotten to exhibit.

He had been gone some hours before they were observed; but when they were, divining the intention with which they had been brought, they were unrolled and examined.

“Look here,” said Mr. Olliphant, holding out one of them to Mr. Simpson; “wouldn’t you really imagine that Gaveston had sat for that head? The likeness is really extraordinary.”

“So it is,” said Mr. Simpson, “wonderful! But, good heavens! the head of the woman is assuredly meant for Julia Clark—the very way she dresses her hair, too. This is most singular. One might have been accidental; but surely both cannot!”

Mr. Olliphant had never seen Julia, and could not therefore judge of the resemblance; but Mabel saw it distinctly, and was as much convinced as Mr. Simpson that the heads were actually portraits. What made it more

remarkable, too, was the design ; the heads were finished with some care ; but the remainder, though only roughly sketched, plainly shewed that the man was armed with a knife and was about to kill the woman.

“I’ll send Courtois instantly, to fetch him back,” said Mabel, ringing the bell.

“Do,” said Mr. Simpson. “I shall not rest till I get an explanation of the mystery.”

“Rather let us go ourselves, with Courtois to show us the way,” said Mr. Olliphant. “We may otherwise wait here the whole evening for him.”

“With all my heart,” replied Mr. Simpson ; and Courtois having received his orders, they all three started for the Rue du Fauxbourg Montmartre.

It was about eight o’clock when they set out ; and as they had to traverse the city from one end to the other, and as both being nearly strangers they made many stoppages from curiosity, the clocks were striking ten when they reached the artist’s dwelling.

They found him at home busy with the Duke’s picture, availing himself, whilst they were yet fresh in his memory, of Mabel’s suggestions ; and after apologising for their intru-

sion, the visitors, unfolding the sketch, requested to know if those particular heads were not portraits.

“They are,” replied the young man. “The lady lodges in this house—she is my opposite neighbour. The gentleman is her *ami*, I suppose; he is not her husband, and does not reside with her. I was so struck with the singular contrast of the two countenances, that I could not forbear appropriating them for a design I have in my head for a large picture.”

“How long has she lived here?” enquired Mr. Olliphant.

“But a few days,” answered the painter. “I happened to be in the saloon of the proprietor when they first called. The gentleman took the lodging for a week, and paid the *loyer* in advance; saying that they expected to be called away suddenly by business, and it would prevent delay if the proprietor were absent.”

“And have you seen much of them since?” enquired the lawyer.

“I frequently meet her on the stairs,” replied the artist, “as she goes backwards and forwards from the porter’s lodge, to whom she applies for what she wants; and I see him here sometimes, chiefly of an evening.”

“Does she go out?” said Mr. Olliphant.

“I believe, never,” replied the young man. “She told the proprietor, I understand, that she was to be married shortly to the gentleman that visits her; and that he did not wish her to be seen till after the ceremony.”

“Gracious Heavens!” exclaimed Mr. Simpson. “Poor thing! Do you know if she’s at home now? Do you think we could see her?”

“I’ll show you her door,” answered the painter. “That’s it, just vis-à-vis, and there’s a bell that you can ring.”

The bell was rung, but no notice was taken of the summons; nor when it was repeated, did any sound from within testify that the apartment was inhabited.

“She must be out,” said the lawyer.

“Or gone to bed,” observed the artist. “She sleeps in an inner room, and it is possible may not hear.”

After ringing for some time with no better result, the artist proposed applying to the porter, who would be able to inform them if she was out.

“Oui,” replied the last named functionary. “She is gone out. There is her key, which she left as she passed.”

“Was she alone?” enquired Mr. Olliphant.

“No; she had her friend with her,” answered the porter. “It is just about half an hour ago.”

“It’s useless to wait, then,” said Mr. Olliphant. “Probably, too, he may return with her; and it would be much better we saw her alone first.”

“We might leave a line to put her on her guard,” said Mr. Simpson. “And this gentleman would perhaps have the goodness to deliver it to her the first thing in the morning.”

This was accordingly done; and having recommended Julia to be cautious, and promised her a visit on the following day, the two gentlemen set out with Courtois on their return home.

In order to reach the rue de Vaugirard, where they had taken up their abode, they had to cross the river; but as the night was fine, and Courtois had something interesting to tell them of the different localities as they passed, instead of doing so, they continued their way along the Quai des Thuilleries, and the Quai de la Conference, intending to cross lower down and return by the Quai d’Orsay.

“You have a vast number of suicides in this river, have you not?” said Mr. Simpson.

“A great many,” answered Courtois. “Especially at particular seasons. It seems either to be a fashion or an epidemic. I have seen six bodies lying together at the Morgue.”

As they made these observations, they had drawn up preparatory to crossing the bridge, and were standing looking over the parapet.

“Gentlemen,” cried a little beggar boy, approaching them hastily from the direction of the Quai Debilly, “there is a woman in the water a little lower down, and I can’t pull her out. Aidez, au nom de Dieu !”

“Where ?” cried they, eagerly setting off in pursuit of the child, who flew along before them the way he had come.

“There ! there !” cried he ; “look, don’t you see ? She is keeping herself up still with my faggots.” And as they approached the spot they distinguished a woman near the bank, endeavouring to sustain herself by holding on to a large bundle of sticks.

“Save me !” she cried ; “Oh, save me ! I can’t hold any longer.”

What was to be done ? The bank was steep, and none of the party could swim.

“Ecoutez !” said the beggar boy. “You have handkerchiefs, and you have a stick. Tie

them together, and fasten the stick to the end, and throw it towards her. Perhaps she'll reach it."

Almost as soon as spoken this was done. The stick fell across the faggot. The woman seized it, and as they steadily drew in the handkerchiefs, the faggot floated to the bank, she still grasping both that and the sticks. As soon as her hands were within reach they easily succeeded in drawing her out.

"Oh, my faggot! my faggot's floating away!" cried the boy, as soon as he saw the woman was safe.

"Stay," said Mr. Simpson; "we'll try and save it," and he once more threw the stick across it and drew it back.

"Merci, monsieur," said the boy, picking it up and throwing it across his shoulder. "Je vous salue!" And, with a nod, he was about to take his departure.

"Stay, my lad," said Mr. Simpson. "I'm not going to part with you yet. Tell me first of all, how came your faggot in the water?"

"When I heard the woman cry for help," said the boy, "I ran forward and tried to reach her with my arms, but I could not. Luckily, I was coming in from the country, where I had

been all day gathering sticks; and I thought perhaps they would help to keep her up till I got help, so I threw them to her."

"You're a fine fellow," said Mr. Simpson, with great satisfaction, as he patted the boy's head. "How do you get your living?"

"As I can," answered the boy. "I could get my own easy enough, for I don't want much: but I've my mother's to get too, which is more difficult. But God helps us."

"You deserve that he should," said Mr. Simpson, "since you help yourself, and others too: here is a louis d'or for you, and if you will come to-morrow to the Hotel Vaugirard, and ask for Mr. Simpson, I may do something else for you."

"Monsieur quoi?" said the boy. "I fear I shall not remember the name."

"Well then, ask for the English gentleman," said Mr. Simpson; "that will do as well."

"Ha! vous êtes Anglais!" said the boy. For Mr. Simpson had passed much of his youth at Bourdeaux, and spoke French well. "She is your countrywoman, I think," added he, pointing to the woman, who was walking on before, supported by Mr. Olliphant and Courtois.

"Is she?" said Mr. Simpson, who, in the ex-

citement of the moment had not remarked that the woman had cried for help in English.

“ Au moins, elle n'est pas Française,” said the boy.

“ Did you see her fall in ?” enquired Mr. Simpson.

“ No,” replied the boy. “ As I said, I had been picking sticks in the country all day, and I had just come in by the Barrière des Reservoirs ; and I was cutting along the quai as fast as I could, for I've got to go as far as the quai de la Grève, where my mother lodges, when I heard a cry. I thought it came from the water, and I ran forwards. Just then a man rushed past me. I cried ‘ Stop ! stop ! there is an accident !’ But he only went the faster. Then I saw the woman, and threw her the faggot, as I told you. Adieu, Monsieur ; mille graces ! Ma mère m'attend. A demain !” And the bare-footed urchin was out of sight in a moment.

Mr. Simpson's heart felt exceedingly warm and comfortable ; and there was a certain moisture about his eyes that he brushed away with the back of his hand. Then he rubbed his two hands briskly together—took out his handkerchief and blew his nose—smiled, and gave himself two hearty thumps on the breast—and

then he walked quickly forwards to overtake the rest of the party.

“What are you going to do with her?” said he to Mr. Olliphant, when he came up to him.

“Courtois is going to find some place to put her in,” replied the lawyer. “She is too feeble to give any explanations; but she says she lives a great way off. I wish we could meet with a fiacre; for I’m in momentary fear she’ll faint.”

“We shall presently,” said Courtois. “It’s curious she can’t tell the name of the street she inhabits.”

“The boy says she is English,” said Mr. Simpson.

“Yes,” replied Mr. Olliphant, “by her speech, she is.”

At this crisis the woman sank to the ground, unable to move a foot further. They looked in all directions, but they saw no house at hand that promised assistance; for it was now past midnight, and few, except in the upper stories, still shewed light from their windows.

“Wait here!” said Courtois. “I’ll be back with a coach in five minutes;” and away he ran.

The woman in the meanwhile lay extended on

the ground, and the two gentlemen stood beside her.

“I believe we’d better take her home with us,” said Mrs. Simpson, “especially as she’s English: we may be looking all night for a proper place to put her in.”

“I think so too,” replied the lawyer. And when the coach arrived she was lifted into it, and they drove to the Hotel Vaugirard.

“Allons, madame!” said Courtois to the lady of the house as they carried in the still insensible woman, “voici notre première pêche—here is our first day’s fishing.”

“Dieu! c’est considerable,” said the lady. “what, is she drowned? You should have taken her to the Morgue.”

“She must be immediately undressed, and put into a warm bed,” said Mr. Simpson, approaching to unloose a straw bonnet she wore, and which had all this time been flapping over her face. “And pray, Courtois, run for a doctor instantly. Great Heavens!” cried he, as he threw off her bonnet and discovered her features—“It’s Julia herself! It’s poor Julia Clark!”

CHAPTER XX.

A MIDNIGHT ADVENTURE.

As it was late in the afternoon when Susan set out from Lisle on her way back to the lone inn, the night had already set in when she came in sight of the sign-post, which stood on the opposite side of the road, and on which hung a rude daub of a woman with her finger on her lip, intended as a representation of the dumb hostess.

Relieved to find herself so near her resting-place, for she was both tired, and rather alarmed at the lateness of the hour, in a country with whose morals and manners she was so little acquainted, and eager to ascertain the safety of her protégées, and to set their minds at ease with respect to her own, she quickened her pace, and stepped out with renewed energy, as her eye caught the harbinger of shelter swinging in the wind.

Whether from the honesty of the inhabitants of that part of the country, or from the fearlessness of the inmates of the inn, there were no shutters to the house, and the door usually stood

open till the family retired to bed. The parlour or kitchen, which was the common resort of all, and indeed the only sitting room in the inn, and the only one that had a fire-place, happened to be on the right side of the door—that is, towards Lisle; and Susan had to pass the window of that room before she could enter.

A light gleaming across the road showed her that the family had not yet retired, and she naturally approached the window to take a survey of what was going on within before she presented herself. But her surprise may be imagined, when, instead of Monsieur and Madame le Clerc, Rauque, and her protégées, she saw the room was occupied by three men—two in uniform, and one in plain clothes. Of the two in uniform, one was sitting in M. le Clerc's fauteuil, and she recognised him at once as one of those who had treated her so roughly at the station-house, on her way to Lisle; the second was seated with his back to her, and she could not get a view of his face; and of the third, the one in plain clothes, as he sat with his face to the fire, she could only discern the profile.

It was that of a youth, apparently not much more than twenty, or at the most two or three and twenty, of exceedingly beautiful features; and,

as far as it was possible to judge, of a very pleasing expression. The forehead was high, the nose finely formed, the upper lip short and impressed with a lofty character, the corners of the mouth sweetly curved, the complexion of a clear brown, with a roseate hue in the cheeks; the hair dark, and the shadows that fell from under the long dark lashes betokened that the eyes were of the same colour. The figure appeared light, graceful, and active; and he was attired in a blue coat, leathers, and top boots. He sat with his legs stretched out upon the hearth; and indeed the whole three seemed very much at their ease. There was a bottle with jugs and glasses upon the table, with some remnants of a supper; and an animated conversation appeared to be maintained between the parties.

There was something in this change of occupation that perplexed Susan extremely. She looked up at the upper windows, but no light appeared from them. Then she remembered that Rauque slept in a sort of out-house in the back yard, and she crept round the house in order to ascertain if he were there. There was no light, and after listening a little while at the door, she ventured to lift the latch; the place was deserted. What interpretation to put on all

this she could not tell. She felt pretty well assured that not one of those she had left there were still inmates of the inn. What could have taken them away? Whither were they gone? From seeing the two soldiers there, she was disposed to think they had been removed by authority, or arrested for some crime; and it occurred to her that possibly some search had been instituted by the family of the young ladies, and that suspicion had fallen on Monsieur and Madame le Clerc, as accessories to their detention.

“If that is the case,” thought she, “they would probably be taken to the town I have just left; or, who knows, perhaps to Paris! And what in the world am I to do?—or how shall I find out?”

She felt more at a loss how to proceed than she had ever done in her life. But besides her perplexity on these points, there was another, for the moment more urgent, that troubled her much; and this was, whether or not to enter the inn, and present herself to the persons she had seen through the window.

From the manners of the soldiers at the station-house, and the treatment she had experienced in the course of her expedition, she

had not formed a very favourable opinion of their habits and characters ; and helpless and unprotected as she was, she felt a considerable aversion to placing herself, in this lonely place, and at this late hour, so entirely at their mercy. Certainly, she was disposed to place more confidence in the handsome young stranger ; but still, looks were not an unerring guide ; and if the others were disposed to ill-treat her, he might not be able, even were he willing, to protect her. They were not only much stouter and older men than he, but they were armed and he was not. Then the disadvantage of not being able to explain who she was, nor why she had come, was discouraging ; and the more she considered it, the more she shrunk from the encounter. Still, weary and fatigued as she was, it was very disagreeable to pass the night without a resting-place ; and she was neither able, nor had she courage to attempt to retrace her steps to Lisle.

Weighing these matters, and reflecting on what she should do, she crept back softly to the front of the house again, in order to take another survey of the kitchen. In passing the stable door, she thought she heard a sound, as of a horse's foot, and after listening, she was sure of it. She tried to open the door and

look in, but it was locked. However, she concluded they were the horses belonging to the soldiers, and she pursued her way.

Just as she turned the corner of the house, she heard the front door, which had been open when she arrived, banged to and locked; and when she reached the window, she saw that the three men had risen from their seats, and appeared to be preparing to go to bed. One of the soldiers opened a closet, and deposited in it the bottle she had seen on the table, whilst the other raked the ashes over the wood fire to keep it smouldering till the morning. The young stranger, in the meantime, lighted a candle, and making a salutation to the others, quitted the room; and in a moment or two more, she saw a light in the room above, which had been occupied by herself and the young ladies, and could distinguish his shadow, as he moved backwards and forwards, undressing himself.

It thus became perfectly clear that her protégées were no longer there; and when, presently afterwards, the two soldiers having quitted the kitchen, she discerned them in the apartment that had been occupied by the *le Clercs*, all doubts of the departure of the inn's former inmates was removed.

But next she had to consider how she was to dispose of herself for the night; for as she had not ventured to present herself to the men before, she gave up all idea of doing it now; and the only shelter that seemed at her disposal was Rauque's den. It did not appear very probable that she would be disturbed there, for some hours at least; and besides, there was the accommodation of a rude bed, consisting of a mattress and coverlet on the ground, which, in her present state of fatigue, was not to be despised.

So back she crept, and having examined the place as well as she could by the pale moonlight, and seeing nothing to excite distrust, she drew the wooden bolt that formed the fastening of the door; and then, resolving to retrace her steps to Lisle with the early dawn, she stretched herself on the coarse bed, and soon fell into a sound sleep.

She had slept some time, but was yet so heavy from her previous fatigue that she could not rouse herself, when she became aware of a noise near her. She turned on the other side, and "addressed herself again to sleep;" but the sound became louder, and apparently nearer. Still slumber sat heavy upon her; and though

she heard it, she was not awake enough to heed it, nor to reflect on what it might be. Presently, however, there came the sound as of a heavy blow; and its suddenness, as well as its loudness, caused her to open her eyes. But she could discern nothing particular; everything appeared, as far as she could see, to be as it was when she lay down; and she was about to close her eyes again, when the blow was so distinctly repeated, that she started up in her bed, and looked towards the door, expecting to see it open. Whilst she was yet looking, the sound was again repeated; and now, being more awake, she perceived that it did not proceed from the door, but, as it appeared to her, from under the ground. It was much too loud, and altogether unlike a noise produced by rats, or any subterraneous inhabitants of that description; and she sat aghast with terror as it continued, evidently at each concussion becoming more distinct.

Suddenly she fancied her bed moved under her, and seized with horror, she sprung into the middle of the room. The faint moonlight, which only penetrated through a small window, was too feeble to permit her to distinguish any motion in the mattress; but she fancied she heard it stir; and being determined to satisfy

herself whether it was her imagination had got the better of her, or whether her apprehensions were really founded, she softly approached, and stooping down, laid her hand upon it. At that instant, a heave from beneath, that almost lifted it from the ground, left no further room for doubt, and springing to the door, she quickly undrew the bolt and rushed out.

There, for a moment or two, she stood breathless, listening to the still increasing noise within, and lost in wonder as to the cause of so strange a phenomenon. That the sounds were produced by human agency she felt assured; but how should any living being be buried there? And who could it be? Suddenly it occurred to her, "Can it be the inhabitants of the inn that have disappeared?" The thing certainly was to the last degree improbable; but the circumstance of any body being there at all, was so inexplicable that it left room for all manner of conjecture. They might have concealed themselves to escape some danger, or to avoid the police, or they might have been confined by force.

In fine, Susan ended by making up her mind that it was certainly them; and impelled by anxiety and curiosity, she ventured softly to approach the still open door, and peep in.

they

Precisely at that moment, the mattress gave a great heave, and turning over, disclosed underneath a part of the stone floor, that appeared to be lifted up by the agency of some one beneath. Slowly it moved, and great efforts seemed to be required to raise it ; and Susan felt so strong a suspicion that it was her friends, and was so deeply interested in the result, that she felt disposed to advance and lend her assistance ; but she forbore a moment ; and as she stood, hesitating what to do, she distinctly heard a man's voice proceed from the vault, and an answer returned by another.

Neither, she felt certain, was the voice of Rauque, and both were much too vigorous to have proceeded from Monsieur le Clerc ; they could not, therefore, be those she expected. Still anxious to see the explanation of so extraordinary an adventure, she did not quit the door ; but placing herself at the side, where she could not be seen by those who were about to emerge, she awaited the result.

She was not kept much longer in suspense—the stone was presently turned over, and a head protruded. Then there was a pause, and some conversation passed with a person lower down ; next, the first stepped out, and after looking about

him a little, stooped down, and assisted the other to emerge. Susan could discern that both were men, but more than that she could not distinguish. One thing, however, was clear : they were not those she had imagined. Almost overcome by fear and wonder, when the second was about to step out, she retired from the door, and hiding herself behind a water-butt that was at hand, she watched what was to come next.

The two men soon appeared at the door ; and she had now an opportunity of observing that they were both attired as sailors. They stood for some minutes in conversation, as if consulting what they should do next. They pointed to the stars, and seemed to be calculating how far the night was advanced ; and they pointed to the house, apparently speaking of that or its inhabitants. Presently, they put their hands in their pockets, and Susan descried something glittering in their hands—they were armed. Could they be thieves ? assassins ? midnight murderers ?

After some brief colloquy, they step from the door, and proceeded towards the front of the house. When they had turned the corner, Susan moved after them ; and as she drew nearer could distinctly hear them trying the

latch of the door. It was fast, and as she ventured to peep round, she saw them make an attempt to open the window. That was fast too ; but it was in the lattice fashion, and composed of very small panes of glass. One of these they easily extracted ; and having put in a hand, the window was unlatched, and they both climbed in.

Susan often said afterwards, that she could never explain what impelled her, but she had an idea that they were going to assassinate the young gentleman she had seen sitting with the soldiers, and she felt an uncontrollable desire to endeavour to save him. So overpowering was this sentiment, that she was utterly indifferent, or at least insensible to the danger she might incur by her interference ; and without pausing a moment to reflect, they no sooner disappeared within the room, than she approached the window, still keeping, however, out of sight.

For a minute or two she could distinguish their footsteps and their whispering voices ; and then she heard them softly open the door and leave the room. Upon this she advanced, and following their example, climbed into the yet open window, and pursuing their steps (fortu-

nately in her haste she had not put on her shoes, which, besides her bonnet, was the only article of her dress she had taken off when she lay down) she noiselessly proceeded along the passage, and just reached the bottom of the stairs as they reached the top.

Here were the two bed-rooms ; the one that had formerly been hers, and to which she had seen the young gentleman retire, on the right, and the one occupied by the soldiers on the left. The men stopt on the landing-place, and seemed uncertain which to enter ; they listened at both sides, and then having whispered something, the foremost laid his hand on the latch of the right-hand room, and softly opening the door, they entered.

The instant they were within, with a light and fleet step Susan darted up the stairs, burst open the door of the opposite room, rushed to the bed, and seizing the arms of the men who were lying there, cried with all her force to them to awake.

“ Rise ! rise ! awake ! ” she cried ; “ murder and thieves are in the house ! ”

Alarmed by her screams, though not knowing what she said, the soldiers sprung out of bed, and seized their sabres. “ This way, ” she cried,

dragging them to the door, which they just reached as the men, scared by the uproar, were making the best of their way down stairs, whilst two figures in white emerged from the opposite room, crying out in good set English, to know "what in the name of God was the matter?"

"There were villains in the house going to murder you," replied Susan; "they have just escaped down stairs, and the soldiers are gone after them!"

"The Lord look down upon us!" cried a voice Susan thought she recognised.

"I'll dress myself and follow them," said the other person; "my pistols may be of use."

"You shall do no such thing," returned the first, seizing him by the arm; "I shall die of the fright if you leave me. Let the soldiers look after them; it's their business, not ours."

"Gracious me!" cried Susan, who at that moment got a glimpse of the last speaker's face, "sure it's master's voice! Mr. Cripps, sir, is it you?"

"To be sure it's me," returned Mr. Cripps; "why, Susan, how came you here?—where are the girls?"

“Lord knows sir,” said Susan; “I went away two days ago to put a letter in the post for you; and for some reason I can’t make out, they seized me and put me in prison. To-day they set me free, and I made the best of my way back here; but seeing the soldiers through the window below, and none of the people of the inn, I was afraid to enter. Lucky it was, or we might all have been murdered in our beds!”

“Jemima’s safe enough,” said Mr. Cripps; “but I can hear nothing of the other two. We traced you all the way along the road from Paris, till we reached this house this evening, where we found the soldiers, who told us the people of the inn were seized and carried to Lisle yesterday, and a little English girl with them; and as our horses were tired, and the men said there were beds at our service, we resolved to remain here till to-morrow.”

During this conversation, the other stranger had partly dressed himself, and now came forward with his pistols in his hand, prepared to follow the soldiers, and give what assistance he could in apprehending the villains.

“You shan’t go,” cried Mr. Cripps, resolutely seizing him.

“Hark!” cried Susan, “there’s a scuffle below;” and the young man, disregarding Mr. Cripps’s entreaties, burst from him and rushed down the stairs.

“Mr. Leeson! Mr. Leeson!” cried Mr. Cripps. “Lord! Lord! we shall all be murdered!”

“Mr. Leeson!” exclaimed Susan; “it’s Master Harry, as I live;” and away she darted down the stairs after him.

When she reached the kitchen, the two men were already in the power of the soldiers, and Harry was standing with his pistols directed to their heads, ready to fire if they made further resistance.

“Strike a light, will you?” said he to her; “let us see the faces of these scoundrels.”

Susan struck a light, but she was more anxious to see *his* face. She approached him, and held the candle to it. “Master Harry,” she said, “don’t you know me?”

“Good heavens!” cried he, “Susan, is it you?”

“It is, indeed, Master Harry,” said she. “Oh, how many a weary day I’ve sighed to know what was become of you!”

“Let us first secure these villains,” he said, “and then we shall have plenty of time to talk of the past.”

The men, whom it is unnecessary to say were the two Rodolphes, were then, by the mutual aid of the soldiers and Harry, bound, and shut up in a dark closet, which was just large enough to hold them; and from which, having no window, they could only escape by the door, and upon that the soldiers kept guard till morning.

Their next business was to relieve Mr. Cripps's alarm, who being by this time dressed, was very glad to come down stairs and join the party at the fire, which Susan soon blew into a blaze.

"And so you never heard of me?" said Harry.

"One letter we heard Mrs. Gaveston had, soon after you went away," replied Susan, "but no more."

should be

"I wrote one every year," replied Harry, "to say I was safe and doing well, and that she should soon see me again; and I have been only waiting till I was received as a partner into the house where I am now head-clerk—which I am to be shortly—because I wished to present myself to Gaveston as an independent man."

The remainder of the night was passed in relating their separate adventures, and in discussing the mystery of the young ladies' disap-

pearance ; and on the following morning they proceeded to Lisle to claim Jemima and prosecute further enquiries ; whilst the soldiers, their object being gained by the arrest of the two smugglers, shut up the house, and took the same road.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE CONCLUSION.

It was on a fine morning in the month of October, that a great number of people might be seen assembled round the doors of the Court House at Lisle, in the hope of getting a sight of the two Englishmen Remorden and Dillon, as they were conducted from their place of confinement to the Hall of Justice.

Their indictment was for the murder of the Duc de Rochecouart and his servant, which was of itself a subject of much indignation and excitement amongst the populace, to whose capricious favour the duke's magnificence, munificence and personal beauty, had strongly recommended him. It was moreover expected that, although the murder was the crime they were to be tried for, many curious particulars regarding their other misdemeanors would be elicited in the course of the examination, especially regarding their extensive contraband dealings, and

their carrying off the young English ladies, about which latter circumstance very strange stories were afloat.

Added to these sources of unusual interest was another—the two Rodolphes of Nantes, the celebrated Frères de Lait, were also to be brought up on the same day. Their extraordinary attachment, desperate characters, and bold enterprises, had long been the theme of curiosity, wonder, and fear, along the whole of the north coast and the frontier towns. Many dreaded them, a few admired them; and some, who happened to be themselves connected with the contraband trade, felt a deeper interest in the scene.

It was expected that the trial of the two Englishmen would take place first; and when the covered vehicle arrived which contained the criminals, the mob were about to give utterance to their feelings in a howl of indignation, but the door being opened, instead of Remorden and Dillon, the two Rodolphes were handed out. It needed none to say who they were; the curious similarity of person, air and dress, that prevailed between them, was a sufficient introduction to all who beheld them; besides that there was scarcely a hut for many a mile round

the country that had not a rude print of the Frères de Lait pinned over the mantel-piece. It was then understood that a principal witness against the Englishmen not having yet arrived, their trial was for the present postponed.

As they stepped out, the howls which were just beginning to assail their ears were hushed into silence ; and when, manacled and guarded as they were, they turned round after they had ascended the steps, to take a survey of the crowd, a faint cheer was heard to arise from a few scattered voices, which, had not the officers hurried them out of sight, would probably have terminated in a general huzza!—so easily are the lower orders dazzled by a reputation for daring deeds, and so prone to forget the tendency of actions whose boldness they admire.

When the prisoners, officers, and those attached to the train had passed in, amongst whom were several of the leading inhabitants, and strangers who had tickets entitling them to seats in commodious situations, there was a general rush amongst the crowd, which did not cease till the porter, announcing that the hall was full, was about to shut the gates against the unsuccessful candidates, but he was stopt by the arrival of another cortège—the carriages containing the witnesses.

Out of the first were handed Monsieur and Madame le Clerc, Rauque, the two soldiers that had guarded the inn, and other persons whose testimony referred to some late smuggling transactions of importance, which had been the primary cause of the efforts made to arrest the criminals. The second contained Mr. Cripps, Harry Leeson, Susan and Jemima; and when all these had been introduced the gates were closed.

The indictment against the Rodolphes was on two counts; first, as regarded their contraband dealings; and secondly, for having burglariously entered the inn by night, armed with knives, and with intent to rob and murder the inhabitants.

With the first we have little concern, it being sufficient to say, that enterprises of the most desperate character were proved against them by the testimony of many witnesses; in the course of which such extraordinary traits of courage were related, especially exercised in defence of each other, that it was several times found necessary to call the audience to order, and threaten a general expulsion, in order to repress the applause of the people, and obtain silence. Nevertheless, in spite of all the evidence that had

been collected, owing to the great difficulty of distinguishing between them, and appropriating to each their several deeds, and the almost impossibility of inducing their confederates in the contraband trade to come forward as witnesses, it was not found practicable to establish such proofs of criminality as could justify a capital conviction. A temporary imprisonment or confinement to the galleys, appeared the severest sentence they had to expect; but when they came to the second clause of the indictment, the affair assumed a more unfavourable aspect.

The first witness called was Susan, and after her Mr. Cripps, Mr. Leeson, and the soldiers, all of whom narrated the circumstances as they were detailed to the reader in the last chapter; and the relation seemed to leave no doubt in the minds of the judges that they had entered the house with the intent to commit murder; but whether they were in search of any particular victim did not appear so clear. Mr. Cripps and Harry both affirmed that when they opened their eyes, the men were standing one by each bed, with their weapons in their hands, apparently on the point of striking them; but that suddenly scared by Susan's screams, they had darted out of the room, and were down the

stairs before they themselves could reach the door ; but they could assign no motive, unless their object was plunder, as they knew nothing of the men, and had never seen them before.

“ What could we hope to obtain in that house,” said Rodolphe Bruneau, “ that would make it worth our while to commit such a crime ?”

“ Have we ever been accused or in the slightest degree suspected of robbery ?” said Grimaud ; “ or of shedding blood, except in self-defence ?”

“ And doubtless,” said Bruneau, “ you have caused the vault we emerged from to be searched, and must have discovered that if our design were plunder, there was no necessity for our entering the house to obtain a booty.”

The advocate for the crown, however, suggested, that their object in assassinating the inhabitants of the inn, was probably in order to make themselves masters of all the vault contained ; and this appeared to be the general opinion of the court. They had found out, or been told, that such a receptacle for smuggled goods existed, and had concealed themselves there till a favourable opportunity offered for executing their purpose.

Madame le Clerc and Rauque were then called, and asked whether they had shown or

mentioned the vault to the Rodolphes? Rauque being questioned first, answered that he did not recollect; but Madame le Clerc admitted that she had shown it to them, which confirmed the court in their previous opinion; and as nothing more could be elicited, the trial was about to be brought to a conclusion, when the prisoners, who saw clearly by the course things were taking that they would be found guilty, and probably be either condemned to death or to the galleys for life, begged to be heard.

“We are not guilty,” said Rodolphe Bruneau, “of the intentions you impute to us; and we should consider it a heavy aggravation of the penalty we are to suffer, be it what it may, to leave the world with such a stigma attached to our names. We have ever been faithful to all who had dealings with us; there are many present in this court who know it. I cannot appeal to them by name, look or gesture, but I appeal to their hearts if I do not speak the truth.” There was here a murmur amongst the crowd, which testified that the appeal was not unfelt.

“We came to the house of the le Clerc’s by invitation,” continued Bruneau, “having been informed that Madame le Clerc had been long seeking an opportunity of confiding some specu-

lations of importance to our management. We came without suspicion, relying on the same faith we practised to others—but you shall hear how our confidence was requited. We arrived in the evening, having obeyed her summons at considerable risk to ourselves, owing to the unusual alertness of the police and the preventive service, since the enterprise of the Englishmen. She received us hospitably, bade us welcome, and said she had long desired to see us; but deferred her intention of disclosing the particular business she wished to treat of till after supper, and the other persons present had retired.

“Accordingly, she conducted her husband and a little girl that she said belonged to the English prisoners, to bed; and when none remained up but herself and the boy called Rauque, she beckoned us to follow her, giving us to understand that she would now show us some valuable goods, of which she wished us to undertake the transportation. She then conducted us through a back door, into an outhouse, Rauque leading the way. When there, he lighted a candle from a dark lantern he had brought from the house, and pushing aside a mattrass which lay on the floor, he asked our assistance in raising a square of the pavement, which to the eye was scarcely dif-

ferent to the others around it ; a ladder which was leaning against the wall in one corner of the outhouse was then let down, and we were invited to descend. Suspecting no evil, we did so, whilst Rauque held the light over the aperture to show us our way ; but when we reached the bottom, and looked to see the others follow us, the ladder was suddenly drawn up, the stone returned to its place, the aperture closed, and we found ourselves in darkness and alone."

" Interred alive," said Grimaud ; " left to die by starvation !"

The sensation this strange story created may be imagined. Some did not believe it ; but those who best knew the Rodolphes, did, for more reasons than one.

" We finally escaped," continued Bruneau, " by piling what things we could find for the purpose to raise us, and then by standing on each other's shoulders alternately, till we succeeded in loosening and lifting the stone."

" Can it be matter of surprise," said Grimaud, " that on regaining our liberty we should have sought to avenge this unprovoked outrage—this glaring breach of faith—this cruel violation of hospitality ? We had no means of knowing that the inmates of the inn had been changed during

our confinement. The victims we sought were those who had injured us; and we believed the beds we stood by contained Madame le Clerc and her husband."

Many were the eyes turned on Madame le Clerc, as this extraordinary tale was unfolded; but though of a deadly paleness, she maintained an unmoved countenance and imperturbable composure; and as for Rauque, he preserved the same vacant stolid look as usual, which, however, from his answers in the course of the former examination, might be conjectured to be in a great degree assumed. Monsieur le Clerc himself remained, as ever, absent and abstracted; and appeared to feel no interest in what was going on, further than that he was sensible of some little annoyance, at being removed from his own accustomed hearth and easy chair.

"Is this account true?" said the advocate for the crown to Rauque; but Rauque did not appear to hear the question.

"Is it true, I ask you?—you Rauque? Is the account we have heard true?"

"I can't tell," said Rauque; "I know nothing of it."

"Do you admit that these persons have

spoken the truth, Madame le Clerc?" said the advocate.

"Ask them," said she to Rauque, "how they can credit such a story? What motive could I have for inviting these men to my house for such a purpose? or how could I hope to execute it? They are not persons to be so easily entrapped," she added, with a significant smile at the prisoners.

"Nevertheless," said Bruneau, "you know we have spoken the truth."

"The boy knows it too," said Grimaud.

But Madame le Clerc shook her head with an air of contemptuous incredulity; and Rauque, who only spoke when he was obliged, said nothing.

"I confess," said the advocate, "the story does seem very improbable; and we must admit that it would be as difficult to find a motive for undertaking such an enterprise, as it would be to execute it. It seems much more likely that they went there for the purpose of plundering the vault, which they might have heard of from their confederates; and that when they pretended to quit the house they concealed themselves there."

"But," said Grimaud, "we might have

emptied the vault of its contents by night, without any necessity for assassinating the people of the house."

"Tell them," said Madame le Clerc to Rauque, "that they durst not, because our testimony against them, had we survived, would have been their ruin. They would have forfeited their characters, and been no more trusted—no more employed. They would have been betrayed to justice, and sufficient evidence offered to put them out of the way for ever."

As no testimony could be brought to reinforce either side, probability, and the credit to be attached to the assertions of the different parties, was all that remained to guide the decision; and it was considered that both these were against the Rodolphes.

In spite, therefore, of their reiterated asseverations that they had spoken the truth, they were condemned to the galleys for life; the authorities being extremely glad of this opportunity to get rid of two such obnoxious and troublesome individuals.

As they were led out they cast a vengeful look at Madame le Clerc, who answered it by a smile of triumph.

The crowd, eager to see the last of the pri-

soners, rushed after them, and thus stopping up the way, prevented the immediate departure of the more orderly part of the audience, who waited for a clearer passage; and before these had time to retire, it was understood that the principal witness against the Englishmen having arrived, their trial would immediately take place.

On learning this, many persons resumed their seats; amongst whom were Mr. Cripps, Harry, and Susan; as also Madame le Clerc, who had only been detained as a witness in the case of the Rodolphes, nothing having been proved against herself sufficient to justify her being placed at the bar. It is true, the contents of the vault were of an illegal description; but she affirmed that the whole was the property of the customers that came to the house, in which she had no interest. The goods were seized, and herself set free.

If was not long before a yell from the populace without announced the arrival of the prisoners; and presently afterwards the doors were thrown open, and they made their appearance, followed by the crowd. Whether from apprehension or confinement, their aspects were considerably changed since Susan had last seen

them; their faces were pale, their cheeks sunk, their eyes hollow; and the looseness of their habiliments testified that their bodies had considerably shrunk from their former dimensions. They nevertheless aimed at bearing themselves as independently as possible; but the effort was unsuccessful—their depression involuntarily betrayed their consciousness of the desperate predicament in which they stood.

Many persons of distinction, friends and connexions of the late duke, were present, besides strangers; and altogether, the court was crowded to suffocation, not an inch of room being left vacant in any part of it.

Amongst this great assemblage there was no one who felt a deeper interest in the scene than Susan. In Colonel Jones, for she yet knew him by no other name, she believed she saw the only person from whom there was the slightest hope of ever learning the truth respecting her brother's fate. As his character was unveiled, her first impressions had gained strength; till now she felt perfectly confirmed in her persuasion, and what had been but suspicion, amounted to conviction.

“What,” said she, to Harry Leeson, to whom she had related all the foregoing circumstances,

and communicated all her suspicions ; “ what should bring such a person as that to Oakfield, to enquire when Mr. Wentworth was to return ? Mr. Wentworth could have no acquaintance, nor no business with a man of his character. And I still believe, and shall to the day of my death, that I was not altogether asleep, but in a sort of trance, that night in your uncle’s room, and that that man was there—and another too—Heaven forgive me if I’m wrong !”

“ If anything had been missing,” said Harry, “ I should think so too. But nothing was.”

“ One thing was, Mr. Harry,” replied Susan. “ Your uncle’s will.”

“ If it’s certain one existed,” answered Harry.

“ I firmly believe it,” replied Susan. “ Mr. Franklyn, Mr. Rice, and Mr. Olliphant the lawyer, all declared there was a will ; and Jeremy told me that he had been present when Mr. Wentworth signed it, and was one of the witnesses himself. And more than that, that there were two copies of it.”

“ I never heard this before,” said Harry.

“ No,” answered Susan ; “ how should you ? It would have been useless and cruel to tell it you at the time—you were but a child then. And since, you have seen no one who could tell it

you. But in that will it is said that you were provided for handsomely, and that the greatest part of the fortune was settled on Miss Wentworth."

"If this man is condemned to die," said Harry, "we may possibly learn the truth yet. He will have no further interest in concealing it; and will probably feel little compunction at betraying his confederates."

When the indictment had been read, and the case stated by the advocate engaged for the prosecution, the first, and indeed only witness, (except the troop of cavalry that had arrested their flight,) was called by the name of "Madame Amabel Jean or Jons;" and to the surprise of Susan and of Harry, who perfectly remembered her, for even as a boy her extraordinary beauty had struck him, Mabel Lightfoot was introduced.

Though often interrupted by her tears, she gave her evidence clearly and succinctly. The purport of it the reader already knows; and it is sufficient to say, that corroborated by the officers of the troop, and the balls found in the bodies of the victims, the crime was satisfactorily established.

The prisoners, however, had engaged an advocate of ability on their side; and it now became his turn to be heard.

“My lords and gentlemen,” said he, “however satisfied I may be of the innocence of my clients—at least of their freedom from any criminal intention—and whatever confidence I may have in the grounds of their defence, I yet never rose to address your lordships with a more reluctant feeling on my own part, and a greater distrust in my own powers of producing that conviction in your minds which is firmly established in mine.

“This distrust, this apprehension, my lords, arises from the ungrateful course which in justice to my clients I am forced to adopt. I need not ask, for I cannot doubt, the impression that the evidence just elicited has made, not only on your lordships’ minds, but on the mind of every individual in this numerous assembly. We are but men—but mortal—and alas! how difficult is it—how nearly impossible, to divest ourselves of prejudice, to be uninfluenced by appearance, to keep our judgment clear when our eyes are dazzled, our ears bewitched, our senses enthralled!—to elude, in short, the powerful spell flung over us by the most transcendent beauty, the most enchanting grace, reinforced by an intellect so clear, so subtle, so astute,—the apparent—alas! that it should be *but* apparent—

the apparent innocence of youth, combined with the consummate art of age !—for there are lives in which experience is gathered so fast, that I will not say the wisdom, but the cunning of years is accumulated in a few short seasons.

“ But, gentlemen, it is not in the lives of the innocent, the simple, the pure in thought, the virtuous in deed, that this premature consummation takes place ; this unnatural maturity, where the core is ripe even to rottenness, whilst the outside, so smooth, so blooming, so brilliant, would deter the most sacrilegious hand, abash the boldest eye ! Is it not rather where the seeds of vice have fallen in the rankest soil—where, to drop our metaphor, depravity has been nursed in the cradle,—where impurity has been imbibed with the first lessons of the horn book, —where the earliest germ of the infant mind has been diseased,—where taint has grown upon taint by habit, encouragement, propinquity, association ; till all that should be pure is defiled, all that should be innocent, depraved, all that should be beautiful, deformed ; in short, till all within is foul even to corruption, whilst all without still shines bright and unspotted as the snowy garments of the blest, misleading our judgments, betraying our passions, bewildering

our senses, and perplexing our understandings!

“Your lordships will be disposed to ask me, ‘to what purpose this exordium?’ My lords, it is a feeble attempt to clear the path before me in some measure from the mass of prejudice I see accumulated against my unfortunate clients, and in favor of the witness for the prosecution. I say the witness, my lords, for in fact, there is but one witness. On the sole testimony of one person, the prisoners at the bar are to be judged; and it is therefore but equitable that that testimony should be nicely sifted, its value accurately weighed, its claims to confidence maturely considered.

“Now, my lords, how stands the case? In a certain family of high respectability and liberal fortune, who resided in one of the provinces of England, dwelt, in the capacity of dairy-maid, a young woman called Mabel Lightfoot, whose unparalleled beauty and extraordinary fascinations, made her the envy of her own sex and the wonder and admiration of the other.

“It is to be supposed that a creature so gifted was not without innumerable suitors; and, in effect, there was not a servant in the family, nor a hind in the village, who did not lay his humble

fortunes at her feet ; but scorn was the meed of all—of all but one—to him only she stooped ; and on him she lavished all those favors and all that devoted affection for which the sex are so remarkable, when given up to one devouring and exclusive passion.

“This fortunate individual, my lords, who bore the palm of victory from all competitors, held the situation of footman in the family that harboured the enchantress. He was one who, from peculiar circumstances, was regarded with especial kindness by his master ; and whose obligations could bind mankind, ought to have been ready to shed his blood in his defence. The peculiar esteem in which he was held, placed him much about the person of the old gentleman, to whose private apartments he had access at all hours. Well, my lords, will it be believed?—whether tempted by the father of mischief himself, or seduced by the most pernicious, the most beguiling of his emissaries, —a lovely, crafty, and abandoned woman, this young man, this trusted servant, this favoured dependant himself took the life he should have died to save ! stole upon the old man in his hours of repose, murdered him in his sleep, broke open his portfolio, robbed him to a considerable

amount, and then fled with his paramour; and so well were their plans laid, so artfully was their escape contrived, that all the researches instituted by private vengeance, or by public justice, proved utterly ineffectual; pursuit was fruitless; their track was never discovered.

“Though time inevitably relaxed perquisitions that promised so little success, it may be easily conceived that the resentment and the desire of vengeance on the part of the family, and of those most immediately connected with them, lost nothing of its force; and I leave it to your lordships’ imaginations—to the imaginations of all present—to picture what must have been the sensations of an intimate and attached friend of the injured parties, on suddenly and most unexpectedly meeting with one, and as he first supposed, both of these heinous criminals; for it happened that the person of the unfortunate and lamented Duke de Rochechouart, his height, and his complexion, bore a singular resemblance to the young man whose history I have been detailing.

“Was it not natural, my lords, that the first impulse should have been pursuit?—that a seizure should be attempted?—that resistance should be opposed?—that prudence, forbear-

ance, the possibility of error, and the dangers of rashness, should have been overlooked and forgotten in the excitement of the chace. The trigger was drawn—the ball did its mission ; and when it was too late, my unfortunate clients discovered their mistake ; their mistake of one of the parties. not of the other ; for the companion of the Duke de Rochechouart, his mistress, his paramour, was the lovely woman, the sorceress, that pernicious emanation of evil clothed in the robes of glory, the beautiful and seducing dairy-maid—in short, the Mabel Lightfoot, whose story you have just heard, and whose powerful spells you can scarcely yet shake off.

“ It was then, that aware of their danger, my ill-starred clients turned to fly—that they became the fugitives ; whilst she, who had fled before, seeing her advantage, and mounted on a capital horse, became the pursuer.

“ The rest is known ; and my simple and unvarnished tale is told. But is this sufficient ? Is my word all that is required to support a statement so unexpected, and bring conviction to your lordships’ minds ? Certainly not ; and before I proceed further, I will, if so permitted, summon a witness, whose testimony, of the

most unexceptionable nature, will, I believe, be found entirely corroborative of my assertions.”

Whatever effect this defence might have produced upon the judges, its influence on the minds of the audience in general was evident. The abhorrence with which the prisoners had been regarded was exceedingly mitigated; and the murmurs and exclamations which broke from the assembly at different points of the narrative, especially where the murder and subsequent elopement were detailed, evinced that the object of their displeasure was changed.

But there was one person in the court whose feelings, whilst she listened to the discourse, must rather be left to the imagination than be made the subject of analysis. The pain, the curiosity, the surprise, and at the bottom of all, the hope, which she could not suppress, that the moment was perhaps arrived that was to vindicate her brother, and possibly even restore him to her, though of that she had less expectation, created a commotion in her breast, that without the kind support of her friend Harry, who sat beside her, would have scarcely permitted her to await the sequel; whilst he himself, most deeply interested, was prepared to observe with the closest attention the nature of

the evidence to be adduced, holding himself ready for the moment when perhaps his own testimony, or that of Susan herself, might be offered with advantage. For whatever changes had been wrought in the minds of the other assistants, there was none in theirs. They still believed that Andrew was innocent, that Mabel, whatever had been her errors, was neither concerned in the murder nor the robbery, and that the prisoners at the bar were guilty of the crime imputed to them, with all its aggravations.

But how was the interest and excitement of the scene augmented when a huissier of the court, who had disappeared for a few minutes, returned, leading in Mr. Gaveston! He, then, was the witness announced by the advocate for the defence, whose unimpeachable testimony was to establish the guilt of Andrew and of Mabel, invalidate her evidence, and vindicate the prisoners! It is needless to say that this avowed connexion with men of characters so infamous, was to them the strongest confirmation of all their previous suspicions.

“Before this witness is sworn,” continued Monsieur Périer, the advocate, “it is necessary that we should prove his identity; and not only that, but also his respectability, that your lord-

ships may be enabled to judge of the degree of credibility to be attached to his evidence. Fortunately, by the testimony of Monsieur Rigaud, Monsieur Moreau, and other worthy and well known inhabitants of Lisle, we shall have no difficulty in doing that to your entire satisfaction."

The gentlemen named, who were persons concerned in the wine trade, and had had various opportunities of seeing Mr. Gaveston, were then called ; and unanimously testified to his being a gentleman of fortune, a partner in the house, and connexion of the late Mr. Wentworth, and the husband of his daughter. Monsieur Moreau also declared that he had happened to be in England at the time the events above detailed had taken place ; that he had always heard them related as by Monsieur Périer ; and that he had himself seen bills posted on the walls and advertisements in the newspapers, offering a reward for the apprehension of the footman and the dairy-maid.

These points being satisfactorily established, Mr. Gaveston's evidence was then taken ; which, it is unnecessary to say, was in all respects a repetition of Monsieur Périer's story ; and the powerful effect it produced in favour of the

prisoners may be conceived ; especially, when he acknowledged the gallant colonel as an intimate friend of the family.

Towards the close of his examination, however, a circumstance occurred, which appeared in some degree to give a shock to the self-possession with which he had hitherto presented his testimony, and to shake the confidence of the acute lawyers who were listening to it. A little boy, dressed in a sort of page's livery, was seen quietly to steal across the hall, and to slip a note into the hand of Monsieur Dumont, the principal advocate for the prosecution. The child then withdrew as he had come, and disappeared amongst the assembly at the back of the hall.

After receiving this billet Monsieur Dumont arose, and commenced a very close and subtle cross examination of the witness ; in the course of which he put many questions that were evidently unexpected and unpleasant ; and which caused Mr. Gaveston frequently to hesitate and change colour. Amongst others, he was particularly pressed as to whether he had not seen Mabel after her elopement from Oakfield—whether he had not seen her on the night she went away—whether he had not been accessory to her departure—whether he had not after-

wards seen her in London—and whether he had not sent her to France as Miss Jones, and paid the expences of her journey, &c. &c. To all of which interrogations, however, he answered in the negative ; but their effect upon his nerves was beyond his control ; whilst Susan and Harry, who could not conceive whence the intimation had come that had set Monsieur Dumont upon this track, became more and more entranced with expectation, and elated by hope.

Their curiosity, however, on one point, was very soon relieved ; for no sooner was the cross examination concluded, than Monsieur Dumont begged to be allowed to bring forward some witnesses on his side—witnesses, he admitted, whose appearance was to him wholly unexpected—whom he had never seen, and whose names and claims to authenticity he had yet to learn ; and then addressing his looks towards the quarter of the hall whence the page had emerged, he requested that the persons who had intimated their desire to be interrogated, would advance ; and immediately Mr. Simpson and Mr. Olliphant stepped forward, and presented themselves with a salutation to the court.

After a few words exchanged with Monsieur Dumont, the wine-merchants, Rigaud, Moreau,

&c., were recalled, and testified most fully to the identity, station, and respectability of the two strangers. This done, Mr. Olliphant's evidence was first taken.

He began with admitting the fact of the murder and robbery, and the suspicions that had fixed on Andrew and Mabel, from their disappearance; and added, that till very lately, the whole affair had been so enveloped in mystery, that a very few weeks ago it would have been wholly out of his power to have thrown any light on it, or to have shaken in any degree the testimony of the last witness. But a combination of circumstances, he said, when least looked for or expected, and when all attempts to discover the truth had long ceased, had suddenly lifted the veil, and disclosed a tissue of villainy, so far surpassing whatever the advocate for the prisoners had attempted to establish, that the only apprehension he had was, that the evidence he and his friend had to adduce, would scarcely be credited, from the enormity of the wickedness it portrayed.

He then, after mentioning the unaccountable disappearance of the will, of whose existence he and others were perfectly aware, and the consequences that resulted from its loss, went

on to relate the singular accident by which it had been recovered, their proceedings thereupon, and the suspicions that Mr. Gaveston's deportment had excited; the unexpected arrival and disclosures of Mabel, which had led to the identification of Julia Clark, her sudden and mysterious departure, which, together with their desire to obtain an interview with Jones and to watch Gaveston, had brought them to France: and finally, how, by a train of accidents, as singular as any of the preceding, they had only a few nights before rescued her from a watery grave, to which that monster of wickedness, Gaveston, had consigned her, in order to annihilate her evidence with her life. In fact, he added, it was her subsequent illness and incapacity for travelling which had detained them and Mabel on the road, and prevented their arriving till the day appointed for the trial. "Fortunately, probably," he said; "for had our presence been known, the line of defence you have heard would never have been adopted; and so favourable an opportunity of vindicating the innocent and exposing the guilty might never have recurred."

After this Julia Clark was brought forward; and her evidence, confirmed by Mr. Simpson's,

was heard. She asserted, in conclusion, that Mr. Gaveston, or Godfrey, as she had always believed him to be, had induced her to take a walk with him on the night she was found in the water ; and under pretence of making her stoop down to see something which he said he saw floating, had taken the opportunity of pushing her in ; and that, but for the sagacity of the little beggar-boy, she must infallibly have perished, before any assistance could have arrived to extricate her.

In order to establish, beyond a doubt, the truth of this latter part of the story, Mr. Simpson begged to call Basil ; whereupon the little page, now beggar-boy no longer, related how he had been returning from the country with his sticks, and how, immediately after he had heard a scream proceeding from the water, he had been nearly knocked down by a gentleman, who seemed to be hastening from the spot whence the sound had emanated. He then related how, after he had obtained assistance, and she was saved, he had gone home ; and that then the idea first occurred to him, that the man he had seen running away had pushed her into the water. " I recalled his features and appearance," said

Basil, "and I thought I should know him if I met him again."

"And did you meet him again?" said Monsieur Dumont.

"I did," replied Basil. "On the following morning, when I went out early to look for work, I met a worthy couple, hurrying with their luggage to the mail-coach office, in the Rue de Bouloy. They had a basket that incommoded them, and I offered to carry it thither for a sous, which they agreed to give me. Whilst I was standing there, seeing them off, and helping them to take care of their baggage, who should I see but *mon homme*! I recognized him directly. He came into the court with a *commissionnaire*, who carried his *portmanteau*, and enquired for the mail to Lisle. A thought struck me; and whilst he was busy speaking to the *chef du bureau* about his place, I took out my knife, and cut off a little corner of his coat. He mounted the mail and departed; and I went soon afterwards to my good master, Monsieur Simpson, and told him what I had done. He has the same coat on now. Examine it, and compare this little corner with it, and you'll see that it matches exactly."

But this verification of a fact, which, however, nobody doubted, for the opinions of the audience were once more changed, was found impracticable, Mr. Gaveston having already left the court-house; and, as it was discovered on enquiry, departed in great haste for Brussels.

One more confirmation of his villainy yet remained. Harry Leeson, in compliance with Susan's entreaty, made known to Monsieur Dumont that there were yet two more English persons in court who requested permission to say a few words connected with this case, which though perhaps unnecessary, were yet very important to the persons concerned.

He then narrated the circumstance of Mr. Gaveston's having given him, when a boy, some weeks after the murder of Mr. Wentworth, a half-crown, which the housemaid recognized as one she had seen laid by in Mr. Wentworth's portfolio to be preserved; and that, for particular reasons, this half-crown had been kept ever since. "This woman, the housemaid I allude to," said he, "is now in court; and I learn from her, that for some reason or other, which she cannot explain, a few days since, on coming to Lisle on business, she was seized and thrown into confinement, and the box, contain-

ing the half-crown in question, was taken, with other things, from her pockets, and not restored. We now request that enquiry may be made, and that it may be produced."

This being done, and the box opened, Julia Clark begged permission to see the coin, which, being handed to her, she immediately recognized as having been in her possession for some time. Mr. Dyson, she said, had desired her to keep it, lest she should make a mistake and pass it, which he did not wish to do, for particular reasons. "Afterwards," added she, "he asked me for it, saying that he had a bet to pay Mr. Godfrey, and that it would do for him." We may here observe, although it was not shewn her till another occasion, that she also recognized the shirt button that Susan had brought from Maningtree, as one of a pair that she had given to Mr. Gaveston—the initials J. C. and W. G. being intended for Julia Clark and Walter Godfrey.

The trial was now concluded; and the prisoners, by the evidence of these unexpected witnesses, being replaced exactly in the situation they had held after Mabel's testimony, were found guilty, and condemned to death.

The recognitions and -congratulations that

were exchanged amongst parties so unexpectedly met, we will not detain the reader with describing : but there was one r union still more unlooked for, if possible, than the others, which we must mention.

It had been observed by those near her, that when Julia Clark was introduced into the court, and named, that Madame le Clerc had suddenly started from her seat, as if about to rush forward, but had sunk back again, apparently fainting. As, owing to the great pressure, it would have been impossible to get her out, her neighbours contented themselves with procuring a glass of water from one of the huissiers, and giving her such aid as they could, by means of which she was enabled to sit out the trial. But the moment the proceedings closed, and the assembly began to move, she was seen, preceded by Rauque, who cleared a path for her with his elbows, making her way eagerly into the centre of the hall, where the witnesses yet stood. When she reached Julia, who, supported by Mr. Simpson's arm, was in conversation with Susan, she laid her hand on her shoulder, and opened her lips, as if she was about to speak ; but as her daughter turned round, and cried, " Oh Heavens ! it's my mother !" the mysterious

dumb woman, the hostess of the lone inn, the unfortunate Julie le Moine, sunk upon the ground in strong convulsions. From thence she was carried to her bed ; where, after a few days' illness, produced by the violent passions and agitations she had been subject to, she expired, having been affectionately attended by her daughter to the last.

When Monsieur le Clerc, the father, the Valentine Clerk of Nantes, was introduced to his daughter, he recognised her, exclaiming, " Ah ma fille !" and seemed for a short time to be somewhat roused from his lethargy : but when the excitement of novelty ceased, he fell into his usual state of abstraction, in which he passed the rest of his days, attended by his daughter, who, through Mr. Simpson's kindness, was again established in a respectable shop, far from the scene of her former adventures and abasement.

Previous to the execution of the prisoners Remorden and Dillon, several efforts were made to induce the former to make known the real particulars of Mr. Wentworth's murder, and more especially to disclose the fate of Andrew Hopley ; but all persuasions were ineffectual.

He had promised Gaveston, provided he would corroborate the story Monsieur Périer was instructed to relate, that he would appoint him heir to the Remorden property; and that whether the defence proved successful or not, he would never betray the secret—and he kept his word.

But what human lips refused to reveal, the labours of the road-makers ere long disclosed.

Mr. Gaveston, when he left the court, seeing that all that remained for him was a life of infamy or a disgraceful death, fled with all speed to Brussels; where, after making a will, bequeathing whatever he had at his disposal to little Julia, his only child, he retired to his chamber in the hotel, and blew out his brains.

As soon as his death was known in England, Mr. Borthwick naturally allowed the road to follow the line proposed; and when they broke up the grounds of the old Manor House, in the deep dry well alluded to by the crones in the early part of our story, under a heap of withered branches and furze, were found the remains of Andrew Hopley, with his clothes and other articles, amongst which were the remnants of a

shirt stained with blood, marked "W. G.," and bearing in one of its sleeves the fellow stud to that in Susan's possession.

We may here close our volume in the words of Monsieur Périer—"Our simple and unvarnished tale is told;"—but we venture to hope with somewhat better success.

Mabel Lightfoot, notwithstanding many kind offers of protection and countenance in England, and the entreaties of Don Querubin, who on learning the death of the Duc de Rochecouart hastened to lay his title and fortunes at her feet, (being on the point of obtaining a divorce from the fair Dorothée, who had abandoned him for "metal more attractive,") declared her resolution of spending the remainder of her days as boarder in a convent.

Our English friends returned to their own country, where Mrs. Gaveston, who was never permitted to learn the particulars of her husband's crimes, joined them. She was, however, made acquainted with the existence of little Julia, whose education and welfare she kindly superintended. Harry Leeson, who was shortly after the above events received as a partner in the house of Mr. Glassford, the captain's brother, married the daughter of the latter, by whose in-

terest it will be easily understood he had been placed in so advantageous a situation; and the moment he had a roof of his own to shelter her, he realised the generous projects of his boyhood, and made it a home, and a refuge of peace and happiness for poor Susan Hopley.

THE END.

LONDON:

BLATCH AND LAMPERT, PRINTERS, GROVE PLACE, BROMPTON. S

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA



3 1951 P00 296 686 T