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AFTER DARK.

AFTER DARK.

BY

WILKIE COLLINS,

AUTHOR OF "BASIL," "HIDE AND SEEK," &c.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
SMITH, ELDER AND CO., 65 CORNHILL.

1856.

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PREFACE.

I HAVE taken some pains to string together the various stories contained in these Volumes on a single thread of interest, which, so far as I know, has at least the merit of not having been used before.

The pages entitled *Leah's Diary* are, however, intended to fulfil another purpose besides that of serving as the framework for my collection of tales. In this part of the book, and subsequently in the Prologues to the stories, it has been my object to give the reader one more glimpse at that artist-life which circumstances have afforded me peculiar opportunities of studying, and which I have already tried to represent, under another aspect, in my last fiction, *Hide and Seek*. This time, I wish to ask some sympathy for the joys and sorrows of a poor travelling

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portrait-painter—presented from his wife's point of view in *Leah's Diary*, and supposed to be briefly and simply narrated by himself in the *Prologues* to the stories. I have purposely kept these two portions of the book within certain limits; only giving, in the one case, as much as the wife might naturally write in her diary at intervals of household leisure; and, in the other, as much as a modest and sensible man would be likely to say about himself and about the characters he met with in his wanderings. If I have been so fortunate as to make my idea intelligible by this brief and simple mode of treatment, and if I have, at the same time, achieved the necessary object of gathering several separate stories together as neatly fitting parts of one complete whole, I shall have succeeded in a design which I have for some time past been very anxious creditably to fulfil.

Of the tales themselves, taken individually, I have only to say, by way of necessary explanation, that *The Lady of Glenwith Grange* is now offered to the reader for the first time; and that the other stories have appeared in the columns of *Household Words*.

My best thanks are due to Mr Charles Dickens, for his kindness in allowing me to set them in their present framework.

I must also gratefully acknowledge an obligation of another kind to the accomplished artist, Mr W. S. Herrick, to whom I am indebted for the curious and interesting facts on which the tales of "The Terribly Strange Bed" and "The Yellow Mask" are founded.

Although the statement may appear somewhat superfluous to those who know me, it may not be out of place to add, in conclusion, that these stories are entirely of my own imagining, constructing, and writing. The fact that the events of some of my tales occur on foreign ground, and are acted out by foreign personages, appears to have suggested in some quarters the inference that the stories themselves might be of foreign origin. Let me, once for all, assure any readers who may honour me with their attention, that in this, and in all other cases, they may depend on the genuineness of my literary offspring. The little children of my brain may be

weakly enough, and may be sadly in want of a helping hand to aid them in their first attempts at walking on the stage of this great world; but, at any rate, they are not borrowed children. The members of my own literary family are indeed increasing so fast as to render the very idea of borrowing quite out of the question, and to suggest serious apprehensions that I may not have done adding to the large book-population, on my own sole responsibility, even yet.

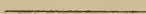
HANOVER TERRACE, REGENT'S PARK,

January 1856.

AFTER DARK.



LEAVES FROM LEAH'S DIARY.



16th *February* 1827.—The doctor has just called for the third time to examine my husband's eyes. Thank God, there is no fear at present of my poor William losing his sight, provided he can be prevailed on to attend rigidly to the medical instructions for preserving it. These instructions, which forbid him to exercise his profession for the next six months at least, are, in our case, very hard to follow. They will but too probably sentence us to poverty, perhaps to actual want; but they must be borne resignedly, and even thankfully, seeing that my husband's forced cessation from work will save him from the dreadful

affliction of loss of sight. I think I can answer for my own cheerfulness and endurance, now that we know the worst. Can I answer for our children also? Surely I can, when there are only two of them. It is a sad confession to make, but now, for the first time since my marriage, I feel thankful that we have no more!

17th. A dread came over me last night, after I had comforted William as well as I could about the future, and had heard him fall off to sleep, that the doctor had not told us the worst. Medical men do sometimes deceive their patients, from what has always seemed to me to be misdirected kindness of heart. The mere suspicion that I had been trifled with on the subject of my husband's illness, caused me such uneasiness, that I made an excuse to get out, and went in secret to the doctor. Fortunately, I found him at home, and in three words I confessed to him the object of my visit.

He smiled, and said I might make myself easy: he had told us the worst.

"And that worst," I said, to make certain, "is, that for the next six months, my husband must allow his eyes to have the most perfect repose?"

"Exactly," the doctor answered. "Mind, I

“don't say that he may not dispense with his green shade, indoors, for an hour or two at a time, as the inflammation gets subdued. But I do most positively repeat that he must not *employ* his eyes. He must not touch a brush or pencil; he must not think of taking another likeness, on any consideration whatever, for the next six months. His persisting in finishing those two portraits at the time when his eyes first began to fail, was the real cause of all the bad symptoms that we have had to combat ever since. I warned him (if you remember, Mrs Kerby?) when he first came to practise in our neighbourhood.”

“I know you did, sir,” I replied. “But what was a poor travelling portrait-painter like my husband, who lives by taking likenesses first in one place and then in another, to do? Our bread depended on his using his eyes, at the very time when you warned him to let them have a rest.”

“Have you no other resources? No money but the money Mr Kerby can get by portrait-painting?” asked the doctor.

“None,” I answered, with a sinking at my heart as I thought of his bill for medical attendance.

“Will you pardon me?” he said, colouring and

looking a little uneasy, "or, rather, will you ascribe it to the friendly interest I feel in you, if I ask whether Mr Kerby realizes a comfortable income by the practice of his profession? Don't," he went on anxiously, before I could reply—"pray don't think I make this inquiry from a motive of impertinent curiosity!"

I felt quite satisfied that he could have no improper motive for asking the question, and so answered it at once plainly and truly.

"My husband makes but a small income," I said. "Famous London portrait-painters get great prices from their sitters; but poor unknown artists, who only travel about the country, are obliged to work hard and be contented with very small gains. After we have paid all that we owe here, I am afraid we shall have little enough left to retire on, when we take refuge in some cheaper place."

"In that case," said the good doctor (I am so glad and proud to remember that I always liked him from the first!) "in that case, don't make yourself anxious about my bill when you are thinking of clearing off your debts here. I can afford to wait till Mr Kerby's eyes are well again, and I shall then ask him for a likeness of my little daughter. By that arrangement

we are sure to be both quits, and both perfectly satisfied."

He considerably shook hands and bade me farewell before I could say half the grateful words to him that were on my lips. Never, never shall I forget that he relieved me of my two heaviest anxieties at the most anxious time of my life. The merciful, warm-hearted man! I could almost have knelt down and kissed his doorstep, as I crossed it on my way home.

18th. If I had not resolved, after what happened yesterday, to look only at the cheerful side of things for the future, the events of to-day would have robbed me of all my courage, at the very outset of our troubles. First, there was the casting up of our bills, and the discovery, when the amount of them was balanced against all the money we have saved up, that we shall only have between three and four pounds left in the cash-box, after we have got out of debt. Then there was the sad necessity of writing letters in my husband's name to the rich people who were ready to employ him, telling them of the affliction that had overtaken him, and of the impossibility of his executing their orders for portraits for the next six months to come. And, lastly, there was the

heart-breaking business for me to go through of giving our landlord warning, just as we had got comfortably settled in our new abode. If William could only have gone on with his work, we might have stopped in this town and in these clean comfortable lodgings for at least three or four months. We have never had the use of a nice empty garret before, for the children to play in; and I never met with any landlady so pleasant to deal with in the kitchen as the landlady here. And now we must leave all this comfort and happiness, and go—I hardly know where. William, in his bitterness, says to the workhouse; but that shall never be, if I have to go out to service to prevent it. The darkness is coming on, and we must save in candles, or I could write much more. Ah me! what a day this has been. I have had but one pleasant moment since it began; and that was in the morning, when I set my little Emily to work on a bead-purse for the kind doctor's daughter. My child, young as she is, is wonderfully neat-handed at stringing beads; and even a poor little empty purse as a token of our gratitude, is better than nothing at all.

19th. A visit from our best friend—our only friend here—the doctor. After he had examined

William's eyes, and had reported that they were getting on as well as can be hoped at present, he asked where we thought of going to live? I said in the cheapest place we could find, and added that I was about to make inquiries in the by-streets of the town that very day. "Put off those inquiries," he said, "till you hear from me again. I am going now to see a patient at a farm-house five miles off. (You needn't look at the children, Mrs Kerby, it's nothing infectious—only a clumsy lad who has broken his collar-bone by a fall from a horse.) They receive lodgers occasionally at the farm-house, and I know no reason why they should not be willing to receive you. If you want to be well housed and well fed at a cheap rate, and if you like the society of honest, hearty people, the farm of Appletreewick is the very place for you. Don't thank me till you know whether I can get you these new lodgings or not. And in the meantime, settle all your business affairs here, so as to be able to move at a moment's notice." With those words the kind-hearted gentleman nodded and went out. Pray heaven he may succeed at the farm-house! We may be sure of the children's health, at least, if we live in the country. Talking of the children, I must not omit to record that

Emily has nearly done one end of the bead-purse already.

20th. A note from the doctor, who is too busy to call. Such good news! They will give us two bedrooms and board us with the family, at Appletreewick, for seventeen shillings a-week. By my calculations, we shall have three pounds sixteen shillings left, after paying what we owe here. That will be enough, at the outset, for four weeks' living at the farm-house, with eight shillings to spare besides. By embroidery work I can easily make nine shillings more to put to that, and there is a fifth week provided for. Surely, in five weeks' time—considering the number of things I can turn my hand to—we may hit on some plan for getting a little money. This is what I am always telling my husband, and what, by dint of constantly repeating it, I am getting to believe myself. William, as is but natural, poor fellow, does not take so light-hearted a view of the future as I do. He says that the prospect of sitting idle and being kept by his wife for months to come, is something more wretched and hopeless than words can describe. I try to raise his spirits by reminding him of his years of honest hard work for me and the children, and of the doctor's assurance that his eyes will get the better, in good

time, of their present helpless state. But he still sighs and murmurs—being one of the most independent and high-spirited of men—about living a burden on his wife. I can only answer, what in my heart of hearts I feel, that I took him for Better and for Worse—that I have had many years of the Better, and that, even in our present trouble, the Worse shows no signs of coming yet!

The bead-purse is getting on fast. Red and blue, in a pretty striped pattern.

21st. A busy day. We go to Appletreewick to-morrow. Paying bills and packing up. All poor William's new canvasses and painting-things huddled together into a packing case. He looked so sad, sitting silent with his green shade on, while his old familiar working materials were disappearing around him, as if he and they were never to come together again, that the tears would start into my eyes, though I am sure I am not one of the crying sort. Luckily, the green shade kept him from seeing me; and I took good care, though the effort nearly choked me, that he should not hear I was crying, at any rate.

The bead-purse is done. How are we to get the steel rings and tassels for it? I am not justified now

in spending sixpence unnecessarily, even for the best of purposes.

22d. —————

23d. *The Farm of Appletreewick.*—Too tired, after our move yesterday, to write a word in my diary about our journey to this delightful place. But now that we are beginning to get settled, I can manage to make up for past omissions.

My first occupation on the morning of the move had, oddly enough, nothing to do with our departure for the farm-house. The moment breakfast was over, I began the day by making Emily as smart and nice-looking as I could, to go to the doctor's with the purse. She had her best silk frock on, showing the mending a little in some places, I am afraid; and her straw hat trimmed with my bonnet ribbon. Her father's neckscarf, turned and joined so that nobody could see it, made a nice mantilla for her—and away she went to the doctor's, with her little determined step, and the purse in her hand (such a pretty hand that it is hardly to be regretted I had no gloves for her). They were delighted with the purse—which I ought to mention was finished with some white beads; we found them in rummaging among our boxes, and they made beautiful rings

and tassels, contrasting charmingly with the blue and red of the rest of the purse. The doctor and his little girl were, as I have said, delighted with the present; and they gave Emily in return a work-box for herself, and a box of sugar-plums for her baby-sister. The child came back all flushed with the pleasure of the visit, and quite helped to keep up her father's spirits with talking to him about it. So much for the highly interesting history of the bead-purse.

Towards the afternoon, the light cart from the farm-house came to fetch us and our things to Apple-treewick. It was quite a warm spring-day, and I had another pang to bear as I saw poor William helped into the cart, looking so sickly and sad with his miserable green shade in the cheerful sunlight. "God only knows, Leah, how this will succeed with us," he said, as we started—then sighed, and fell silent again.

Just outside the town the doctor met us. "Good luck go with you!" he cried, swinging his stick in his usual hasty way: "I shall come and see you as soon as you are all settled at the farm-house."—"Good-bye, sir," says Emily, struggling up with all her might among the bundles in the bottom of the

cart; "Good-bye, and thank you again for the work-box and the sugar-plums." That was my child all over! she never wants telling. The doctor kissed his hand, and gave another flourish with his stick. So we parted.

How I should have enjoyed the drive, if William could only have looked, as I did, at the young firs on the heath bending beneath the steady breeze; at the shadows flying over the smooth fields; at the high white clouds moving on and on in their grand airy procession over the gladsome blue sky! It was a hilly road, and I begged the lad who drove us not to press the horse; so we were nearly an hour, at our slow rate of going, before we drew up at the gate of Appletreewick.

24th February to 2d March.—We have now been here long enough to know something of the place and the people. First, as to the place:—Where the farm-house now is, there was once a famous priory. The tower is still standing, and the great room where the monks ate and drank—used at present as a granary. The house itself seems to have been tacked on to the ruins anyhow. No two rooms in it are on the same level. The children do nothing but tumble about the passages, because there always happens to

be a step up or down, just at the darkest part of every one of them. As for staircases, there seems to me to be one for each bedroom. I do nothing but lose my way—and the farmer says, drolling, that he must have signposts put up for me in every corner of the house from top to bottom. On the ground-floor, besides the usual domestic offices, we have the best parlour—a dark, airless, expensively furnished solitude, never invaded by anybody—the kitchen, and a kind of hall, with a fireplace as big as the drawing-room at our town lodgings. Here we live and take our meals; here the children can racket about to their hearts' content; here the dogs come lumbering in, whenever they can get loose; here wages are paid, visitors are received, bacon is cured, cheese is tasted, pipes are smoked, and naps are taken every evening by the male members of the family. Never was such a comfortable, friendly dwelling-place devised as this hall—I feel already as if half my life had been passed in it.

Out of doors, looking beyond the flower-garden, lawn, back-yards, pigeon-houses, and kitchen-gardens, we are surrounded by a network of smooth grazing-fields, each shut off from the other by its neat hedge-row and its sturdy gate. Beyond the fields, the

hills seem to flow away gently from us into the far blue distance, till they are lost in the bright softness of the sky. At one point, which we can see from our bedroom windows, they dip suddenly into the plain, and show, over the rich marshy flat, a strip of distant sea,—a strip, sometimes blue, sometimes grey; sometimes, when the sun sets, a streak of fire; sometimes, on showery days, a flash of silver light.

The inhabitants of the farm-house have one great and rare merit—they are people whom you can make friends with at once. Between not knowing them at all, and knowing them well enough to shake hands at first sight, there is no ceremonious interval or formal gradation whatever. They received us, on our arrival, exactly as if we were old friends returned from some long travelling expedition. Before we had been ten minutes in the hall, William had the easiest chair and the snuggest corner; the children were eating bread and jam on the window-seat; and I was talking to the farmer's wife, with the cat on my lap, of the time when Emily had the measles.

The family numbers seven, exclusive of the indoor servants of course. First come the farmer and his wife—he a tall, sturdy, loud-voiced, active old man—she the easiest, plumpest, and gayest woman of sixty I ever

met with. They have three sons and two daughters. The two eldest of the young men are employed on the farm; the third is a sailor, and is making holiday-time of it just now at Appletreewick. The daughters are pictures of health and freshness. I have but one complaint to make against them—they are beginning to spoil the children already.

In this tranquil place, and among these genial, natural people, how happily my time might be passed, were it not for the saddening sight of William's affliction, and the wearing uncertainty of how we are to provide for future necessities! It is a hard thing for my husband and me, after having had the day made pleasant by kind words and friendly offices, to feel this one anxious thought always forcing itself on us at night:—Shall we have the means of stopping in our new home in a month's time?

3d. A rainy day; the children difficult to manage; William miserably despondent. Perhaps he influenced me, or perhaps I felt my little troubles with the children more than usual—but, however it was, I have not been so heavy-hearted since the day when my husband first put on the green shade. A listless, hopeless sensation would steal over me—but why write about it? Better to try and forget it.

There is always to-morrow to look to when to-day is at the worst.

4th. *To-morrow* has proved worthy of the faith I put in it. Sunshine again out of doors; and as clear and true a reflection of it in my own heart as I can hope to have just at this time. Oh! that month, that one poor month of respite! What are we to do at the end of the month?

5th. I made my short entry for yesterday in the afternoon, just before tea-time — little thinking of events destined to happen with the evening that would be really worth chronicling, for the sake of the excellent results to which they are sure to lead. My tendency is to be too sanguine about everything, I know; but I am, nevertheless, firmly persuaded that I can see a new way out of our present difficulties — a way of getting money enough to keep us all in comfort at the farm-house until William's eyes are well again.

The new project which is to relieve us from all uncertainties for the next six months actually originated with *me!* It has raised me many inches higher in my own estimation already. If the doctor only agrees with my view of the case when he comes to-morrow, William will allow himself to be per-

suaded, I know—and then let them say what they please, I will answer for the rest.

This is how the new idea first found its way into my head:—

We had just done tea. William, in much better spirits than usual, was talking with the young sailor, who is jocosely called here by the very ugly name of “Foul-weather Dick.” The farmer and his two eldest sons were composing themselves on the oaken settles for their usual nap. The Dame was knitting; the two girls were beginning to clear the tea-table; and I was darning the children’s socks. To all appearance, this was not a very propitious state of things for the creation of new ideas—and yet my idea grew out of it for all that. Talking with my husband on various subjects connected with life in ships, the young sailor began giving us a description of his hammock; telling us how it was slung, how it was impossible to get into it any other way than “stern foremost” (whatever that may mean); how the rolling of the ship made it rock like a cradle; and how, on rough nights, it sometimes swayed to and fro at such a rate as to bump bodily against the ship’s side and wake him up with the sensation of having just received a punch on the head from a remarkably hard fist. Hearing

all this, I ventured to suggest that it must be an immense relief to him to sleep on shore in a good, motionless, solid four-post bed. But to my surprise he scoffed at the idea; said he never slept comfortably out of his hammock; declared that he quite missed his occasional punch on the head from the ship's side; and ended by giving a most comical account of all the uncomfortable sensations he felt when he slept in a four-post bed. The odd nature of one of the young sailor's objections to sleeping on shore reminded my husband (as indeed it did me too) of the terrible story of a Bed in a French Gambling-house, which he once heard from a gentleman whose likeness he took. "You're laughing at me," says honest Foul-weather Dick, seeing William turn towards me and smile.—"No indeed," says my husband—"that last objection of yours to the four-post beds on shore seems by no means ridiculous to *me* at any rate. I once knew a gentleman, Dick, who practically realized your objection."

"Excuse me, sir," says Dick, after a pause, and with an appearance of great bewilderment and curiosity; "but could you put 'practically realized' into plain English, so that a poor man like me might have a chance of understanding you?"—"Certainly!"

says my husband, laughing. "I mean that I once knew a gentleman who actually saw and felt what, you say in jest, you are afraid of seeing and feeling whenever you sleep in a four-post bed. Do you understand that?" Foul-weather Dick understood it perfectly, and begged with great eagerness to hear what the gentleman's adventure really was. The Dame, who had been listening to our talk, backed her son's petition; the two girls sat down expectant at the half-cleared tea-table; even the farmer and his drowsy sons roused themselves lazily on the settle—my husband saw that he stood fairly committed to the relation of the story, so he told it without more ado.

I have often heard him relate that strange adventure (William is the best teller of a story I ever met with) to friends of all ranks, in many different parts of England, and I never yet knew it fail of producing an effect. The farm-house audience were, I may almost say, petrified by it. I never before saw people look so long in the same direction, and sit so long in the same attitude, as they did. Even the servants stole away from their work in the kitchen, and, unrebuked by master or mistress, stood quite spell-bound in the doorway to listen. Observing all this in silence,

while my husband was going on with his narrative, the thought suddenly flashed across me:—"Why should William not get a wider audience for that story, as well as for others which he has heard from time to time from his sitters, and which he has hitherto only repeated in private among a few friends? People tell stories in books and get money for them. What if we told our stories in a book? and what if the book sold?—Why, freedom surely from the one great anxiety that is now preying on us! Money enough to stop at the farm-house till William's eyes are fit for work again!" I almost jumped up from my chair as my thought went on shaping itself in this manner. When great men make wonderful discoveries, do they feel sensations like mine, I wonder? Was Sir Isaac Newton within an ace of skipping into the air when he first found out the law of gravitation? Did Friar Bacon long to dance when he lit the match and heard the first charge of gunpowder in the world go off with a bang?

I had to put a strong constraint on myself, or I should have communicated all that was passing in my mind to William before our friends at the farm-house. But I knew it was best to wait until we were alone, and I did wait. What a relief it

was, when we all got up at last to say Good-night!

The moment we were in our own room, I could not stop to take so much as a pin out of my dress before I began. "My dear," said I, "I never heard you tell that gambling-house adventure so well before. What an effect it had upon our friends! what an effect indeed it always has wherever you tell it!"

So far, he did not seem to take much notice. He just nodded, and began to pour out some of the lotion in which he always bathes his poor eyes the last thing at night.

"And, as for that, William," I went on, "all your stories seem to interest people. What a number you have picked up, first and last, from different sitters, in the fifteen years of your practice as a portrait-painter! Have you any idea how many stories you really do know?"

No: he could not undertake to say how many just then. He gave this answer in a very indifferent tone, dabbing away all the time at his eyes with the sponge and lotion. He did it so awkwardly and roughly, as it seemed to me, that I took the sponge from him and applied the lotion tenderly myself.

"Do you think," said I, "if you turned over one

of your stories carefully in your mind beforehand—say the one you told to-night, for example—that you could repeat it all to me, so perfectly and deliberately, that I should be able to take it down in writing from your lips?”

Yes: of course he could. But why ask that question?

“Because I should like to have all the stories that you have been in the habit of relating to our friends set down fairly in writing, by way of preserving them from ever being forgotten.”

Would I bathe his left eye now, because that felt the hottest to-night? I began to forebode that his growing indifference to what I was saying would soon end in his fairly going to sleep before I had developed my new idea, unless I took some means forthwith of stimulating his curiosity, or, in other words, of waking him into a proper state of astonishment and attention. “William,” said I, without another syllable of preface; “I have got a new plan for finding all the money we want for our expenses here.”

He jerked his head up directly, and looked at me. What plan?

“This:—The state of your eyes prevents you for the present from following your profession as an artist,

does it not? Very well! What are you to do with your idle time, my dear? Turn author! And how are you to get the money we want? By publishing a book!"

"Good gracious, Leah! are you out of your senses?" he exclaimed.

I put my arm round his neck, and sat down on his knee (the course I always take when I want to persuade him to anything with as few words as possible).

"Now, William, listen patiently to me," I said. "An artist lies under this great disadvantage in case of accidents—his talents are of no service to him unless he can use his eyes and fingers. An author, on the other hand, can turn his talents to account just as well by means of other people's eyes and fingers as by means of his own. In your present situation, therefore, you have nothing for it, as I said before, but to turn author. Wait! and hear me out. The book I want you to make is a book of all your stories. You shall repeat them, and I will write them down from your dictation. Our manuscript shall be printed—we will sell the book to the public, and so support ourselves honourably in adversity, by doing the best we can to interest and amuse others."

While I was saying all this—I suppose in a very

excitable manner—my husband looked, as our young sailor-friend would phrase it, quite *taken aback*. “You were always quick at contriving, Leah,” he said; “but how in the world came you to think of this plan?”

“I thought of it while you were telling them the gambling-house adventure down stairs,” I answered.

“It is an ingenious idea and a bold idea,” he went on, thoughtfully. “But it is one thing to tell a story to a circle of friends, and another thing to put it into a printed form for an audience of strangers. Consider, my dear, that we are neither of us used to what is called writing for the press.”

“Very true,” said I, “but nobody is used to it when they first begin—and yet plenty of people have tried the hazardous literary experiment successfully. Besides, in our case, we have the materials ready to our hands—surely we can succeed in shaping them presentably, if we aim at nothing but the simple truth.”

“Who is to do the eloquent descriptions and the striking reflections, and all that part of it?” said William, perplexedly shaking his head.

“Nobody!” I replied. “The eloquent descriptions and the striking reflections are just the parts of a story-book that people never read. Whatever we do,

let us not, if we can possibly help it, write so much as a single sentence that can be conveniently skipped. Come! come!" I continued, seeing him begin to shake his head again; "no more objections, William, I am too certain of the success of my plan to endure them. If you still doubt, let us refer the new project to a competent arbitrator. The doctor is coming to see you to-morrow. I will tell him all that I have told you; and if you will promise on your side, I will engage on mine, to be guided entirely by his opinion."

William smiled, and readily gave the promise. This was all I wanted to send me to bed in the best spirits. For, of course, I should never have thought of mentioning the doctor as an arbitrator, if I had not known beforehand that he was sure to be on my side.

6th. The arbitrator has shown that he deserved my confidence in him. He ranked himself entirely on my side before I had half done explaining to him what my new project really was. As to my husband's doubts and difficulties, the dear good man would not so much as hear them mentioned. "No objections," he cried gaily; "set to work, Mr Kerby, and make your fortune. I always said your wife was worth her weight in gold—and here she is now, all ready to

get into the bookseller's scales and prove it. Set to work! set to work!"

"With all my heart," said William, beginning at last to catch the infection of our enthusiasm. "But when my part of the work and my wife's has been completed, what are we to do with the produce of our labour?"

"Leave that to me," answered the doctor. "Finish your book and send it to my house; I will show it at once to the Editor of our county newspaper. He has plenty of literary friends in London, and he will be just the man to help you. By-the-by," added the doctor, addressing me, "you think of everything, Mrs Kerby—pray have you thought of a name yet for the new book?"

At that question, it was my turn to be "taken aback." The idea of naming the book had never once entered my head.

"A good title is of vast importance," said the doctor, knitting his brows thoughtfully. "We must all think about that. What shall it be? eh, Mrs Kerby, what shall it be?"

"Perhaps something may strike us after we have fairly set to work," my husband suggested. "Talking of work," he continued, turning to me; "how are

you to find time, Leah, with your nursery occupations, for writing down all the stories as I tell them?"

"I have been thinking of that this morning," said I, "and have come to the conclusion that I shall have but little leisure to write from your dictation in the daytime. What with dressing and washing the children, teaching them, giving them their meals, taking them out to walk, and keeping them amused at home—to say nothing of sitting sociably at work with the Dame and her two girls in the afternoon—I am afraid I shall have few opportunities of doing my part of the book between breakfast and tea-time. But when the children are in bed, and the farmer and his family are reading or dozing, I should have at least three unoccupied hours to spare. So, if you don't mind putting off our working-time till after dark"————

"There's the title!" shouted the doctor, jumping out of his chair as if he had been shot.

"Where?" cried I, looking all round me in the surprise of the moment, as if I had expected to see the title magically inscribed for us on the walls of the room.

"In your last words, to be sure!" rejoined the doctor. "You said just now, that you would not have leisure to write from Mr Kerby's dictation till

after dark. What can we do better than name the book after the time when the book is written? Call it boldly :—*After Dark.* Stop! before anybody says a word for or against it, let us see how the name looks on paper.”

I opened my writing-desk in a great flutter. The doctor selected the largest sheet of paper and the broadest-nibbed pen he could find, and wrote in majestic round-text letters, with alternate thin and thick strokes beautiful to see, the two cabalistic words :—

AFTER DARK.

We all three laid our heads together over the paper, and in breathless silence studied the effect of the round text: William raising his green shade in the excitement of the moment, and actually disobeying the doctor's orders about not using his eyes, in the doctor's own presence! After a good long stare, we looked round solemnly in each other's faces, and nodded. There was no doubt whatever on the subject after seeing the round-text. In one happy moment the doctor had hit on the right name.

“I have written the title-page,” said our good friend, taking up his hat to go. “And now I leave it to you two to write the book.”

Since then I have mended four pens and bought a quire of letter-paper at the village shop. William is to ponder well over his stories in the daytime, so as to be quite ready for me "after dark." We are to commence our new occupation this evening. My heart beats fast and my eyes moisten when I think of it. How many of our dearest interests depend upon the one little beginning that we are to make to-night!

PROLOGUE TO THE FIRST STORY.

BEFORE I begin, by the aid of my wife's patient attention and ready pen, to relate any of the stories which I have heard at various times from persons whose likenesses I have been employed to take, it will not be amiss if I try to secure the reader's interest in the following pages by briefly explaining how I became possessed of the narrative-matter which they contain.

Of myself I have nothing to say, but that I have followed the profession of a travelling portrait-painter for the last fifteen years. The pursuit of my calling has not only led me all through England, but has taken me twice to Scotland, and once to Ireland. In moving from district to district, I am never guided beforehand by any settled plan. Sometimes the letters of recommendation which I get from persons

who are satisfied with the work I have done for them, determine the direction in which I travel. Sometimes I hear of a new neighbourhood in which there is no resident artist of ability, and remove thither on speculation. Sometimes my friends among the picture-dealers say a good word on my behalf to their rich customers, and so pave the way for me in the large towns. Sometimes my prosperous and famous brother-artists, hearing of small commissions which it is not worth their while to accept, mention my name, and procure me introductions to pleasant country houses. Thus I get on, now in one way and now in another, not winning a reputation or making a fortune, but happier, perhaps, on the whole, than many men who have got both the one and the other. So, at least, I try to think now, though I started in my youth with as high an ambition as the best of them. Thank God it is not my business here to speak of past times and their disappointments. A twinge of the old hopeless heart-ache comes over me sometimes still, when I think of my student days.

One peculiarity of my present way of life is, that it brings me into contact with all sorts of characters. I almost feel, by this time, as if I had painted every civilized variety of the human race. Upon the whole,

my experience of the world, rough as it has been, has not taught me to think unkindly of my fellow-creatures. I have certainly received such treatment at the hands of some of my sitters as I could not describe without saddening and shocking any kind-hearted reader; but, taking one year and one place with another, I have cause to remember with gratitude and respect—sometimes even with friendship and affection—a very large proportion of the numerous persons who have employed me.

Some of the results of my experience are curious in a moral point of view. For example, I have found women almost uniformly less delicate in asking me about my terms, and less generous in remunerating me for my services, than men. On the other hand, men, within my knowledge, are decidedly vainer of their personal attractions, and more vexatiously anxious to have them done full justice to on canvass, than women. Taking both sexes together, I have found young people, for the most part, more gentle, more reasonable, and more considerate than old. And, summing up, in a general way, my experience of different ranks (which extends, let me premise, all the way down from peers to publicans), I have met with most of my formal and ungracious receptions

among rich people of uncertain social standing: the highest classes and the lowest among my employers almost always contrive—in widely different ways of course—to make me feel at home as soon as I enter their houses.

The one great obstacle that I have to contend against in the practice of my profession is not, as some persons may imagine, the difficulty of making my sitters keep their heads still while I paint them, but the difficulty of getting them to preserve the natural look and the every-day peculiarities of dress and manner. People will assume an expression, will brush up their hair, will correct any little characteristic carelessness in their apparel—will, in short, when they want to have their likenesses taken, look as if they were sitting for their pictures. If I paint them, under these artificial circumstances, I fail of course to present them in their habitual aspect, and my portrait, as a necessary consequence, disappoints everybody, the sitter always included. When we wish to judge of a man's character by his handwriting, we want his customary scrawl dashed off with his common work-a-day pen, not his best small-text, traced laboriously with the finest procurable crow-quill point. So it is with portrait-painting,

which is, after all, nothing but a right reading of the externals of character recognisably presented to the view of others.

Experience, after repeated trials, has proved to me that the only way of getting sitters who persist in assuming a set look to resume their habitual expression, is to lead them into talking about some subject in which they are greatly interested. If I can only beguile them into speaking earnestly, no matter on what topic, I am sure of recovering their natural expression; sure of seeing all the little precious every-day peculiarities of the man or woman peep out, one after another, quite unawares. The long, maundering stories about nothing, the wearisome recitals of petty grievances, the local anecdotes unrelieved by the faintest suspicion of anything like general interest, which I have been condemned to hear, as a consequence of thawing the ice off the features of formal sitters by the method just described, would fill hundreds of volumes, and promote the repose of thousands of readers. On the other hand, if I have suffered under the tediousness of the many, I have not been without my compensating gains from the wisdom and experience of the few. To some of my sitters I have been indebted for information

which has enlarged my mind—to some for advice which has lightened my heart—to some for narratives of strange adventure which rivetted my attention at the time, which have served to interest and amuse my fireside circle for many years past, and which are now, I would fain hope, destined to make kind friends for me among a wider audience than any that I have yet addressed.

Singularly enough, almost all the best stories that I have heard from my sitters have been told by accident. I only remember two cases in which a story was volunteered to me; and, although I have often tried the experiment, I cannot call to mind even a single instance in which leading questions (as the lawyers call them) on my part, addressed to a sitter, ever produced any result worth recording. Over and over again, I have been disastrously successful in encouraging dull people to weary me. But the clever people who have something interesting to say, seem, so far as I have observed them, to acknowledge no other stimulant than Chance. For every story which I purpose including in the present collection, excepting one, I have been indebted, in the first instance, to the capricious influence of this same Chance. Something my sitter has seen about me, something

I have remarked in my sinner, or in the room in which I take the likeness, or in the neighbourhood through which I pass on my way to work, has suggested the necessary association, or has started the right train of recollections, and then the story appeared to begin of its own accord. Occasionally, the most casual notice on my part of some very unpromising object, has smoothed the way for the relation of a long and interesting narrative. I first heard one of the most dramatic of the stories that will be presented in this book, merely through being carelessly inquisitive to know the history of a stuffed poodle-dog.

It is thus not without reason that I lay some stress on the desirableness of prefacing each one of the following narratives by a brief account of the curious manner in which I became possessed of it. As to my capacity for repeating these stories correctly, I can answer for it that my memory may be trusted. I may claim it as a merit, because it is after all a mechanical one, that I forget nothing, and that I can call long-past conversations and events as readily to my recollection as if they had happened but a few weeks ago. Of two things at least I feel tolerably certain, beforehand, in meditating over the contents of this book :—First, that I can repeat correctly all

that I have heard ; and, secondly, that I have never missed anything worth hearing when my sitters were addressing me on an interesting subject. Although I cannot take the lead in talking while I am engaged in painting, I can listen while others speak, and work all the better for it.

So much in the way of general preface to the pages for which I am about to ask the reader's attention. Let me now advance to particulars, and describe how I came to hear the first story in the present collection. I begin with it because it is the story that I have oftenest "rehearsed," to borrow a phrase from the stage. Wherever I go, I am sooner or later sure to tell it. Only last night, I was persuaded into repeating it once more by the inhabitants of the farmhouse in which I am now staying.

Not many years ago, on returning from a short holiday-visit to a friend settled in Paris, I found professional letters awaiting me at my agent's in London, which required my immediate presence in Liverpool. Without stopping to unpack, I proceeded by the first conveyance to my new destination ; and, calling at the picture-dealer's shop where portrait-painting engagements were received for me,

found to my great satisfaction that I had remunerative employment in prospect, in and about Liverpool, for at least two months to come. I was putting up my letters in high spirits, and was just leaving the picture-dealer's shop to look out for comfortable lodgings, when I was met at the door by the landlord of one of the largest hotels in Liverpool—an old acquaintance whom I had known as manager of a tavern in London in my student-days.

“Mr Kerby!” he exclaimed, in great astonishment. “What an unexpected meeting!—the last man in the world whom I expected to see, and yet the very man whose services I want to make use of!”

“What, more work for me?” said I; “are all the people in Liverpool going to have their portraits painted?”

“I only know of one,” replied the landlord, “a gentleman staying at my hotel who wants a chalk drawing done of him. I was on my way here to inquire for any artist whom our picture-dealing friend could recommend. How glad I am that I met you before I had committed myself to employing a stranger!”

“Is this likeness wanted at once?” I asked,

thinking of the number of engagements that I had already got in my pocket.

“Immediately—to-day—this very hour, if possible,” said the landlord. “Mr Faulkner, the gentleman I am speaking of, was to have sailed yesterday for the Brazils from this place; but the wind shifted last night to the wrong quarter, and he came ashore again this morning. He may of course be detained here for some time; but he may also be called on board ship at half-an-hour’s notice, if the wind shifts back again in the right direction. This uncertainty makes it a matter of importance that the likeness should be begun immediately. Undertake it if you possibly can, for Mr Faulkner is a liberal gentleman who is sure to give you your own terms.”

I reflected for a minute or two. The portrait was only wanted in chalk, and would not take long—besides I might finish it in the evening, if my other engagements pressed hard upon me in the day-time. Why not leave my luggage at the picture-dealer’s, put off looking for lodgings till night, and secure the new commission boldly by going back at once with the landlord to the hotel? I decided on following this course almost as soon as the idea occurred to me—put my chinks in my pocket, and a sheet of

drawing-paper in the first of my portfolios that came to hand—and so presented myself before Mr Faulkner, ready to take his likeness, literally at five minutes' notice.

I found him a very pleasant, intelligent man, young and handsome. He had been a great traveller; had visited all the wonders of the East; and was now about to explore the wilds of the vast South American continent. Thus much he told me good-humouredly and unconstrainedly while I was preparing my drawing materials.

As soon as I had put him in the right light and position, and had seated myself opposite to him, he changed the subject of conversation, and asked me, a little confusedly as I thought, if it was not a customary practice among portrait-painters to gloss over the faults in their sitters' faces, and to make as much as possible of any good points which their features might possess.

“Certainly,” I answered. “You have described the whole art and mystery of successful portrait-painting in a few words.”

“May I beg, then,” said he, “that you will depart from the usual practice in my case, and draw me with all my defects, exactly as I am? The fact

is," he went on, after a moment's pause, "the likeness you are now preparing to take is intended for my mother. My roving disposition makes me a great anxiety to her, and she parted from me this last time very sadly and unwillingly. I don't know how the idea came into my head, but it struck me this morning that I could not better employ the time while I was delayed here on shore, than by getting my likeness done to send to her as a keepsake. She has no portrait of me since I was a child, and she is sure to value a drawing of me more than anything else I could send to her. I only trouble you with this explanation to prove that I am really sincere in my wish to be drawn unflatteringly, exactly as I am."

Secretly respecting and admiring him for what he had just said, I promised that his directions should be implicitly followed, and began to work immediately. Before I had pursued my occupation for ten minutes the conversation began to flag, and the usual obstacle to my success with a sitter gradually set itself up between us. Quite unconsciously, of course, Mr Faulkner stiffened his neck, shut his mouth, and contracted his eyebrows—evidently under the impression that he was facilitating the process of taking his portrait by making his face as like a lifeless mask as

possible. All traces of his natural animated expression were fast disappearing, and he was beginning to change into a heavy and rather melancholy-looking man.

This complete alteration was of no great consequence so long as I was only engaged in drawing the outline of his face and the general form of his features. I accordingly worked on doggedly for more than an hour—then left off to point my chalks again, and to give my sitter a few minutes' rest. Thus far the likeness had not suffered through Mr Faulkner's unfortunate notion of the right way of sitting for his portrait; but the time of difficulty, as I well knew, was to come. It was impossible for me to think of putting any expression into the drawing unless I could contrive some means, when he resumed his chair, of making him look like himself again. "I will talk to him about foreign parts," thought I, "and try if I can't make him forget that he is sitting for his picture in that way."

While I was pointing my chalks, Mr Faulkner was walking up and down the room. He chanced to see the portfolio I had brought with me leaning against the wall, and asked if there were any sketches in it. I told him there were a few which I had made

during my recent stay in Paris. "In Paris?" he repeated, with a look of interest; "may I see them?"

I gave him the permission he asked as a matter of course. Sitting down, he took the portfolio on his knee, and began to look through it. He turned over the first five sketches rapidly enough; but when he came to the sixth, I saw his face flush directly, and observed that he took the drawing out of the portfolio, carried it to the window, and remained silently absorbed in the contemplation of it for full five minutes. After that, he turned round to me, and asked very anxiously if I had any objection to part with that sketch.

It was the least interesting drawing of the collection—merely a view in one of the streets running by the backs of the houses in the Palais Royal. Some four or five of these houses were comprised in the view, which was of no particular use to me in any way; and which was too valueless, as a work of art, for me to think of selling it. I begged his acceptance of it at once. He thanked me quite warmly; and then, seeing that I looked a little surprised at the odd selection he had made from my sketches, laughingly asked me if I could guess why he had been so anx-

ious to become possessed of the view which I had given him?

“Probably,” I answered, “there is some remarkable historical association connected with that street at the back of the Palais Royal, of which I am ignorant.”

“No,” said Mr Faulkner, “at least none that I know of. The only association connected with the place in *my* mind is a purely personal association. Look at this house in your drawing—the house with the water-pipe running down it from top to bottom. I once passed a night there—a night I shall never forget to the day of my death. I have had some awkward travelling adventures in my time; but *that* adventure——! Well, never mind, suppose we begin the sitting. I make but a bad return for your kindness in giving me the sketch, by thus wasting your time in mere talk.”

“Come! come!” thought I, as he went back to the sitter’s chair, “I shall see your natural expression on your face if I can only get you to talk about that adventure.” It was easy enough to lead him in the right direction. At the first hint from me, he returned to the subject of the house in the back street. Without, I hope, showing any undue curi-

osity, I contrived to let him see that I felt a deep interest in everything he now said. After two or three preliminary hesitations, he at last, to my great joy, fairly started on the narrative of his adventure. In the interest of his subject he soon completely forgot that he was sitting for his portrait—the very expression that I wanted came over his face—and my drawing proceeded towards completion, in the right direction, and to the best purpose. At every fresh touch I felt more and more certain that I was now getting the better of my grand difficulty; and I enjoyed the additional gratification of having my work lightened by the recital of a true story, which possessed in my estimation all the excitement of the most exciting romance.

This, as I recollect it, is how Mr Faulkner told me his adventure:—

THE TRAVELLER'S STORY
OF
A TERRIBLY STRANGE BED.

SHORTLY after my education at college was finished, I happened to be staying at Paris with an English friend. We were both young men then, and lived, I am afraid, rather a wild life, in the delightful city of our sojourn. One night we were idling about the neighbourhood of the Palais Royal, doubtful to what amusement we should next betake ourselves. My friend proposed a visit to Frascati's; but his suggestion was not to my taste. I knew Frascati's, as the French saying is, by heart; had lost and won plenty of five-franc pieces there, merely for amusement's sake, until it was amusement no longer, and was thoroughly tired, in fact, of all the ghastly respectabilities of such a social anomaly as a respectable gambling-house. "For Heaven's sake," said I to my friend,

“let us go somewhere where we can see a little genuine, blackguard, poverty-stricken gaming, with no false gingerbread glitter thrown over it at all. Let us get away from fashionable Frascati’s, to a house where they don’t mind letting in a man with a ragged coat, or a man with no coat, ragged or otherwise.” — “Very well,” said my friend, “we needn’t go out of the Palais Royal to find the sort of company you want. Here’s the place just before us; as blackguard a place, by all report, as you could possibly wish to see.” In another minute we arrived at the door, and entered the house, the back of which you have drawn in your sketch.

When we got up stairs, and had left our hats and sticks with the doorkeeper, we were admitted into the chief gambling-room. We did not find many people assembled there. But, few as the men were who looked up at us on our entrance, they were all types—lamentably true types—of their respective classes.

We had come to see blackguards; but these men were something worse. There is a comic side, more or less appreciable, in all blackguardism—here there was nothing but tragedy—mute, weird tragedy. The quiet in the room was horrible. The thin, haggard,

long-haired young man, whose sunken eyes fiercely watched the turning up of the cards, never spoke ; the flabby, fat-faced, pimply player, who pricked his piece of pasteboard perseveringly, to register how often black won, and how often red—never spoke ; the dirty, wrinkled old man, with the vulture eyes and the darned greatcoat, who had lost his last *sou*, and still looked on desperately, after he could play no longer—never spoke. Even the voice of the croupier sounded as if it were strangely dulled and thickened in the atmosphere of the room. I had entered the place to laugh ; but the spectacle before me was something to weep over. I soon found it necessary to take refuge in excitement from the depression of spirits which was fast stealing on me. Unfortunately I sought the nearest excitement, by going to the table, and beginning to play. Still more unfortunately, as the event will show, I won—won prodigiously ; won incredibly ; won at such a rate, that the regular players at the table crowded round me ; and staring at my stakes with hungry, superstitious eyes, whispered to one another, that the English stranger was going to break the bank.

The game was *Rouge et Noir*. I had played at it in every city in Europe, without, however, the care

or the wish to study the Theory of Chances—that philosopher's stone of all gamblers! And a gambler, in the strict sense of the word, I had never been. I was heart-whole from the corroding passion for play. My gaming was a mere idle amusement. I never resorted to it by necessity, because I never knew what it was to want money. I never practised it so incessantly as to lose more than I could afford, or to gain more than I could coolly pocket without being thrown off my balance by my good luck. In short, I had hitherto frequented gambling-tables—just as I frequented ball-rooms and opera-houses—because they amused me, and because I had nothing better to do with my leisure hours.

But on this occasion it was very different—now, for the first time in my life, I felt what the passion for play really was. My success first bewildered, and then, in the most literal meaning of the word, intoxicated me. Incredible as it may appear, it is nevertheless true, that I only lost when I attempted to estimate chances, and played according to previous calculation. If I left everything to luck, and staked without any care or consideration, I was sure to win—to win in the face of every recognised probability in favour of the bank. At first, some of the men

present ventured their money safely enough on my colour ; but I speedily increased my stakes to sums which they dared not risk. One after another they left off playing, and breathlessly looked on at my game.

Still, time after time, I staked higher and higher, and still won. The excitement in the room rose to fever pitch. The silence was interrupted by a deep, muttered chorus of oaths and exclamations in different languages, every time the gold was shovelled across to my side of the table—even the imperturbable croupier dashed his rake on the floor in a (French) fury of astonishment at my success. But one man present preserved his self-possession ; and that man was my friend. He came to my side, and whispering in English, begged me to leave the place satisfied with what I had already gained. I must do him the justice to say, that he repeated his warnings and entreaties several times ; and only left me and went away, after I had rejected his advice (I was to all intents and purposes gambling-drunk) in terms which rendered it impossible for him to address me again that night.

Shortly after he had gone, a hoarse voice behind me cried :—“ Permit me, my dear sir !—permit me

to restore to their proper place two Napoleons which you have dropped. Wonderful luck, sir! I pledge you my word of honour as an old soldier, in the course of my long experience in this sort of thing, I never saw such luck as yours!—never! Go on, sir—*Sacré mille bombes!* Go on boldly, and break the bank!”

I turned round and saw, nodding and smiling at me with inveterate civility, a tall man, dressed in a frogged and braided surtout.

If I had been in my senses, I should have considered him, personally, as being rather a suspicious specimen of an old soldier. He had goggling blood-shot eyes, mangy mustachios, and a broken nose. His voice betrayed a barrack-room intonation of the worst order, and he had the dirtiest pair of hands I ever saw—even in France. These little personal peculiarities exercised, however, no repelling influence on me. In the mad excitement, the reckless triumph of that moment, I was ready to “fraternize” with anybody who encouraged me in my game. I accepted the old soldier’s offered pinch of snuff; clapped him on the back, and swore he was the honestest fellow in the world—the most glorious relic of the Grand Army that I had ever met with. “Go on!”

cried my military friend, snapping his fingers in ecstasy,—“Go on, and win! Break the bank—*Mille tonnerres!* my gallant English comrade, break the bank!”

And I *did* go on—went on at such a rate, that in another quarter of an hour the croupier called out: “Gentlemen! the bank has discontinued for to-night.” All the notes, and all the gold in that “bank,” now lay in a heap under my hands; the whole floating capital of the gambling-house was waiting to pour into my pockets!

“Tie up the money in your pocket-handkerchief, my worthy sir,” said the old soldier, as I wildly plunged my hands into my heap of gold. “Tie it up, as we used to tie up a bit of dinner in the Grand Army; your winnings are too heavy for any breeches pockets that ever were sewed. There! that’s it!—shovel them in, notes and all! *Credié!* what luck!—Stop! another Napoleon on the floor! *Ah! sacré petit polisson de Napoleon!* have I found thee at last? Now then, sir—two tight double knots each way with your honourable permission, and the money’s safe. Feel it! feel it, fortunate sir! hard and round as a cannon ball—*Ah, bah!* if they had only fired such cannon balls at us at Austerlitz—*nom d’une pipe!* if they

only had! And now, as an ancient grenadier, as an ex-brave of the French army, what remains for me to do? I ask what? Simply this: to entreat my valued English friend to drink a bottle of champagne with me, and toast the goddess Fortune in foaming goblets before we part!”

Excellent ex-brave! Convivial ancient grenadier! Champagne by all means! An English cheer for an old soldier! Hurrah! hurrah! Another English cheer for the goddess Fortune! Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!

“Bravo! the Englishman; the amiable, gracious Englishman, in whose veins circulates the vivacious blood of France! Another glass? *Ah, bah!*—the bottle is empty! Never mind! *Vive le vin!* I, the old soldier, order another bottle, and half-a-pound of *bon-bons* with it!”

“No, no, ex-brave; never—ancient grenadier! *Your* bottle last time; *my* bottle this. Behold it! Toast away! The French Army!—the great Napoleon!—the present company! the croupier! the honest croupier’s wife and daughters—if he has any! the Ladies generally! Everybody in the world!”

By the time the second bottle of champagne was emptied, I felt as if I had been drinking liquid fire—

my brain seemed all a-flame. No excess in wine had ever had this effect on me before in my life. Was it the result of a stimulant acting upon my system when I was in a highly excited state? Was my stomach in a particularly disordered condition? Or was the champagne amazingly strong?

“Ex-brave of the French Army!” cried I, in a mad state of exhilaration, “*I* am on fire! how are *you*? You have set me on fire! Do you hear; my hero of Austerlitz? Let us have a third bottle of champagne to put the flame out!”

The old soldier wagged his head, rolled his goggle eyes, until I expected to see them slip out of their sockets; placed his dirty forefinger by the side of his broken nose; solemnly ejaculated “Coffee!” and immediately ran off into an inner room.

The word pronounced by the eccentric veteran seemed to have a magical effect on the rest of the company present. With one accord they all rose to depart. Probably they had expected to profit by my intoxication; but finding that my new friend was benevolently bent on preventing me from getting dead drunk, had now abandoned all hope of thriving pleasantly on my winnings. Whatever their motive might be, at any rate they went away in a body.

When the old soldier returned, and sat down again opposite to me at the table, we had the room to ourselves. I could see the croupier, in a sort of vestibule which opened out of it, eating his supper in solitude. The silence was now deeper than ever.

A sudden change, too, had come over the "ex-brave." He assumed a portentously solemn look; and when he spoke to me again, his speech was ornamented by no oaths, enforced by no finger-snapping, enlivened by no apostrophes or exclamations.

"Listen, my dear sir," said he, in mysteriously confidential tones—"listen to an old soldier's advice. I have been to the mistress of the house (a very charming woman, with a genius for cookery!) to impress on her the necessity of making us some particularly strong and good coffee. You must drink this coffee in order to get rid of your little amiable exaltation of spirits before you think of going home—you *must*, my good and gracious friend! With all that money to take home to-night, it is a sacred duty to yourself to have your wits about you. You are known to be a winner to an enormous extent by several gentlemen present to-night, who, in a certain point of view, are very worthy and excellent fellows; but they are mortal men, my dear sir, and they have

their amiable weaknesses! Need I say more? Ah, no, no! you understand me! Now, this is what you must do—send for a cabriolet when you feel quite well again—draw up all the windows when you get into it—and tell the driver to take you home only through the large and well-lighted thoroughfares. Do this; and you and your money will be safe. Do this; and to-morrow you will thank an old soldier for giving you a word of honest advice.”

Just as the ex-brave ended his oration in very lachrymose tones, the coffee came in, ready poured out in two cups. My attentive friend handed me one of the cups with a bow. I was parched with thirst, and drank it off at a draught. Almost instantly afterwards, I was seized with a fit of giddiness, and felt more completely intoxicated than ever. The room whirled round and round furiously; the old soldier seemed to be regularly bobbing up and down before me like the piston of a steam-engine. I was half deafened by a violent singing in my ears; a feeling of utter bewilderment, helplessness, idiocy, overcame me. I rose from my chair, holding on by the table to keep my balance; and stammered out, that I felt dreadfully unwell—so unwell that I did not know how I was to get home.

“ My dear friend,” answered the old soldier, and even his voice seemed to be bobbing up and down as he spoke—“ my dear friend, it would be madness to go home in *your* state; you would be sure to lose your money; you might be robbed and murdered with the greatest ease. *I* am going to sleep here: do *you* sleep here, too—they make up capital beds in this house—take one; sleep off the effects of the wine, and go home safely with your winnings to-morrow—to-morrow, in broad daylight.”

I had but two ideas left:—one, that I must never let go hold of my handkerchief full of money; the other, that I must lie down somewhere immediately, and fall off into a comfortable sleep. So I agreed to the proposal about the bed, and took the offered arm of the old soldier, carrying my money with my disengaged hand. Preceded by the croupier, we passed along some passages and up a flight of stairs into the bed-room which I was to occupy. The ex-brave shook me warmly by the hand; proposed that we should breakfast together, and then, followed by the croupier, left me for the night.

I ran to the wash-hand stand; drank some of the water in my jug; poured the rest out, and plunged my face into it—then sat down in a chair and tried

to compose myself. I soon felt better. The change for my lungs, from the fetid atmosphere of the gambling-room to the cool air of the apartment I now occupied ; the almost equally refreshing change for my eyes, from the glaring gas-lights of the "Salon" to the dim, quiet flicker of one bedroom candle ; aided wonderfully the restorative effects of cold water. The giddiness left me, and I began to feel a little like a reasonable being again. My first thought was of the risk of sleeping all night in a gambling-house ; my second, of the still greater risk of trying to get out after the house was closed, and of going home alone at night, through the streets of Paris with a large sum of money about me. I had slept in worse places than this on my travels, so I determined to lock, bolt, and barricade my door, and take my chance till the next morning.

Accordingly, I secured myself against all intrusion ; looked under the bed, and into the cupboard ; tried the fastening of the window ; and then, satisfied that I had taken every proper precaution, pulled off my upper clothing, put my light, which was a dim one, on the hearth among a feathery litter of wood ashes, and got into bed, with the handkerchief full of money under my pillow.

I soon felt not only that I could not go to sleep, but that I could not even close my eyes. I was wide awake, and in a high fever. Every nerve in my body trembled—every one of my senses seemed to be preternaturally sharpened. I tossed and rolled, and tried every kind of position, and perseveringly sought out the cold corners of the bed, and all to no purpose. Now, I thrust my arms over the clothes; now, I poked them under the clothes; now, I violently shot my legs straight out down to the bottom of the bed; now, I convulsively coiled them up as near my chin as they would go; now, I shook out my crumpled pillow, changed it to the cool side, patted it flat, and lay down quietly on my back; now, I fiercely doubled it in two, set it up on end, thrust it against the board of the bed, and tried a sitting-posture. Every effort was in vain; I groaned with vexation, as I felt that I was in for a sleepless night.

What could I do? I had no book to read. And yet, unless I found out some method of diverting my mind, I felt certain that I was in the condition to imagine all sorts of horrors; to rack my brain with forebodings of every possible and impossible danger; in short, to pass the night in suffering all conceivable varieties of nervous terror.

I raised myself on my elbow, and looked about the room—which was brightened by a lovely moonlight pouring straight through the window—to see if it contained any pictures or ornaments that I could at all clearly distinguish. While my eyes wandered from wall to wall, a remembrance of Le Maistre's delightful little book, "*Voyage autour de ma Chambre*," occurred to me. I resolved to imitate the French author, and find occupation and amusement enough to relieve the tedium of my wakefulness, by making a mental inventory of every article of furniture I could see, and by following up to their sources the multitude of associations which even a chair, a table, or a wash-hand stand may be made to call forth.

In the nervous unsettled state of my mind at that moment, I found it much easier to make my inventory than to make my reflections, and thereupon soon gave up all hope of thinking in Le Maistre's fanciful track—or, indeed, of thinking at all. I looked about the room at the different articles of furniture, and did nothing more.

There was, first, the bed I was lying in; a four-post bed, of all things in the world to meet with in Paris!—yes, a thorough clumsy British four-poster,

with the regular top lined with chintz—the regular fringed valance all round—the regular stifling unwholesome curtains, which I remembered having mechanically drawn back against the posts without particularly noticing the bed when I first got into the room. Then there was the marble-topped wash-hand stand, from which the water I had spilt, in my hurry to pour it out, was still dripping, slowly and more slowly, on to the brick-floor. Then two small chairs, with my coat, waistcoat, and trousers flung on them. Then a large elbow-chair covered with dirty-white dimity, with my cravat and shirt-collar thrown over the back. Then a chest of drawers with two of the brass handles off, and a tawdry, broken china inkstand placed on it by way of ornament for the top. Then the dressing-table, adorned by a very small looking-glass, and a very large pin-cushion. Then the window—an unusually large window. Then a dark old picture, which the feeble candle dimly showed me. It was the picture of a fellow in a high Spanish hat, crowned with a plume of towering feathers. A swarthy sinister ruffian, looking upward, shading his eyes with his hand, and looking intently upward—it might be at some tall gallows at which he was going to be hanged.

At any rate, he had the appearance of thoroughly deserving it.

This picture put a kind of constraint upon me to look upward too—at the top of the bed. It was a gloomy and not an interesting object, and I looked back at the picture. I counted the feathers in the man's hat—they stood out in relief—three white, two green. I observed the crown of his hat, which was of a conical shape, according to the fashion supposed to have been favoured by Guido Fawkes. I wondered what he was looking up at. It couldn't be at the stars; such a desperado was neither astrologer nor astronomer. It must be at the high gallows, and he was going to be hanged presently. Would the executioner come into possession of his conical crowned hat and plume of feathers? I counted the feathers again—three white, two green.

While I still lingered over this very improving and intellectual employment, my thoughts insensibly began to wander. The moonlight shining into the room reminded me of a certain moonlight night in England—the night after a picnic party in a Welsh valley. Every incident of the drive homeward, through lovely scenery, which the moonlight made lovelier than ever, came back to my remembrance,

though I had never given the picnic a thought for years; though, if I had *tried* to recollect it, I could certainly have recalled little or nothing of that scene long past. Of all the wonderful faculties that help to tell us we are immortal, which speaks the sublime truth more eloquently than memory? Here was I, in a strange house of the most suspicious character, in a situation of uncertainty, and even of peril, which might seem to make the cool exercise of my recollection almost out of the question; nevertheless, remembering, quite involuntarily, places, people, conversations, minute circumstances of every kind, which I had thought forgotten for ever, which I could not possibly have recalled at will even under the most favourable auspices. And what cause had produced in a moment the whole of this strange, complicated, mysterious effect? Nothing but some rays of moonlight shining in at my bedroom window.

I was still thinking of the picnic—of our merriment on the drive home—of the sentimental young lady who *would* quote Childe Harold because it was moonlight. I was absorbed by these past scenes and past amusements, when, in an instant, the thread on which my memories hung snapped asunder: my attention immediately came back to present things more

vidly than ever, and I found myself, I neither knew why nor wherefore, looking hard at the picture again.

Looking for what?

Good God, the man had pulled his hat down on his brows!—No! the hat itself was gone! Where was the conical crown? Where the feathers—three white, two green? Not there! In place of the hat and feathers, what dusky object was it that now hid his forehead, his eyes, his shading hand?

Was the bed moving?

I turned on my back and looked up. Was I mad? drunk? dreaming? giddy again? or was the top of the bed really moving down—sinking slowly, regularly, silently, horribly, right down throughout the whole of its length and breadth—right down upon Me, as I lay underneath?

My blood seemed to stand still. A deadly paralyzing coldness stole all over me, as I turned my head round on the pillow, and determined to test whether the bed-top was really moving or not, by keeping my eye on the man in the picture.

The next look in that direction was enough. The dull, black, frowsy outline of the valance above me was within an inch of being parallel with his waist. I still looked breathlessly. And steadily, and slowly

—very slowly—I saw the figure, and the line of frame below the figure, vanish, as the valance moved down before it.

I am, constitutionally, anything but timid. I have been on more than one occasion in peril of my life, and have not lost my self-possession for an instant; but when the conviction first settled on my mind that the bed-top was really moving, was steadily and continuously sinking down upon me, I looked up shuddering, helpless, panic-stricken, beneath the hideous machinery for murder, which was advancing closer and closer to suffocate me where I lay.

I looked up, motionless, speechless, breathless. The candle, fully spent, went out; but the moonlight still brightened the room. Down and down, without pausing and without sounding, came the bed-top, and still my panic-terror seemed to bind me faster and faster to the mattress on which I lay—down and down it sank, till the dusty odour from the lining of the canopy came stealing into my nostrils.

At that final moment the instinct of self-preservation startled me out of my trance, and I moved at last. There was just room for me to roll myself sideways off the bed. As I dropped noiselessly to

the floor, the edge of the murderous canopy touched me on the shoulder.

Without stopping to draw my breath, without wiping the cold sweat from my face, I rose instantly on my knees to watch the bed-top. I was literally spell-bound by it. If I had heard footsteps behind me, I could not have turned round; if a means of escape had been miraculously provided for me, I could not have moved to take advantage of it. The whole life in me was, at that moment, concentrated in my eyes.

It descended—the whole canopy, with the fringe round it, came down—down—close down; so close that there was not room now to squeeze my finger between the bed-top and the bed. I felt at the sides, and discovered that what had appeared to me from beneath to be the ordinary light canopy of a four-post bed, was in reality a thick, broad mattress, the substance of which was concealed by the valance and its fringe. I looked up and saw the four posts rising hideously bare. In the middle of the bed-top was a huge wooden screw that had evidently worked it down through a hole in the ceiling, just as ordinary presses are worked down on the substance selected for compression. The frightful apparatus moved

without making the faintest noise. There had been no creaking as it came down; there was now not the faintest sound from the room above. Amid a dead and awful silence I beheld before me—in the nineteenth century, and in the civilized capital of France—such a machine for secret murder by suffocation as might have existed in the worst days of the Inquisition, in the lonely inns among the Hartz Mountains, in the mysterious tribunals of Westphalia! Still, as I looked on it, I could not move, I could hardly breathe, but I began to recover the power of thinking, and in a moment I discovered the murderous conspiracy framed against me in all its horror.

My cup of coffee had been drugged, and drugged too strongly. I had been saved from being smothered by having taken an overdose of some narcotic. How I had chafed and fretted at the fever-fit which had preserved my life by keeping me awake! How recklessly I had confided myself to the two wretches who had led me into this room, determined, for the sake of my winnings, to kill me in my sleep by the surest and most horrible contrivance for secretly accomplishing my destruction! How many men, winners like me, had slept, as I had proposed to sleep,

in that bed, and had never been seen or heard of more! I shuddered at the bare idea of it.

But, ere long, all thought was again suspended by the sight of the murderous canopy moving once more. After it had remained on the bed—as nearly as I could guess—about ten minutes, it began to move up again. The villains who worked it from above evidently believed that their purpose was now accomplished. Slowly and silently, as it had descended, that horrible bed-top rose towards its former place. When it reached the upper extremities of the four posts, it reached the ceiling too. Neither hole nor screw could be seen; the bed became in appearance an ordinary bed again—the canopy an ordinary canopy, even to the most suspicious eyes.

Now, for the first time, I was able to move—to rise from my knees—to dress myself in my upper clothing—and to consider of how I should escape. If I betrayed, by the smallest noise, that the attempt to suffocate me had failed, I was certain to be murdered. Had I made any noise already? I listened intently, looking towards the door.

No! no footsteps in the passage outside—no sound of a tread, light or heavy, in the room above—absolute silence everywhere. Besides locking and

bolting my door, I had moved an old wooden chest against it, which I had found under the bed. To remove this chest (my blood ran cold as I thought what its contents *might* be!) without making some disturbance was impossible; and, moreover, to think of escaping through the house, now barred up for the night, was sheer insanity. Only one chance was left me—the window. I stole to it on tiptoe.

My bedroom was on the first floor, above an *entresol*, and looked into the back street, which you have sketched in your view. I raised my hand to open the window, knowing that on that action hung, by the merest hair's-breadth, my chance of safety. They keep vigilant watch in a House of Murder. If any part of the frame cracked, if the hinge creaked, I was a lost man! It must have occupied me at least five minutes, reckoning by time—five *hours*, reckoning by suspense—to open that window. I succeeded in doing it silently—in doing it with all the dexterity of a housebreaker—and then looked down into the street. To leap the distance beneath me would be almost certain destruction! Next, I looked round at the sides of the house. Down the left side ran the thick water-pipe which you have drawn—it passed close by the outer edge of the win-

dow. The moment I saw the pipe, I knew I was saved. My breath came and went freely for the first time since I had seen the canopy of the bed moving down upon me!

To some men the means of escape which I had discovered might have seemed difficult and dangerous enough—to *me* the prospect of slipping down the pipe into the street did not suggest even a thought of peril. I had always been accustomed, by the practice of gymnastics, to keep up my schoolboy powers as a daring and expert climber; and knew that my head, hands, and feet would serve me faithfully in any hazards of ascent or descent. I had already got one leg over the window-sill, when I remembered the handkerchief filled with money under my pillow. I could well have afforded to leave it behind me, but I was revengefully determined that the miscreants of the gambling-house should miss their plunder as well as their victim. So I went back to the bed and tied the heavy handkerchief at my back by my cravat.

Just as I had made it tight and fixed it in a comfortable place, I thought I heard a sound of breathing outside the door. The chill feeling of horror ran through me again as I listened. No! dead silence still in the passage—I had only heard the night-air

blowing softly into the room. The next moment I was on the window-sill—and the next I had a firm grip on the water-pipe with my hands and knees.

I slid down into the street easily and quietly, as I thought I should, and immediately set off at the top of my speed to a branch “Prefecture” of Police, which I knew was situated in the immediate neighbourhood. A “Sub-prefect,” and several picked men among his subordinates, happened to be up, maturing, I believe, some scheme for discovering the perpetrator of a mysterious murder which all Paris was talking of just then. When I began my story, in a breathless hurry and in very bad French, I could see that the Sub-prefect suspected me of being a drunken Englishman who had robbed somebody; but he soon altered his opinion as I went on, and before I had anything like concluded, he shoved all the papers before him into a drawer, put on his hat, supplied me with another (for I was bare-headed), ordered a file of soldiers, desired his expert followers to get ready all sorts of tools for breaking open doors and ripping up brick-flooring, and took my arm, in the most friendly and familiar manner possible, to lead me with him out of the house. I will venture to say, that when the Sub-prefect was a little boy,

and was taken for the first time to the Play, he was not half as much pleased as he was now at the job in prospect for him at the gambling-house!

Away we went through the streets, the Sub-prefect cross-examining and congratulating me in the same breath as we marched at the head of our formidable *posse comitatus*. Sentinels were placed at the back and front of the house the moment we got to it; a tremendous battery of knocks was directed against the door; a light appeared at a window; I was told to conceal myself behind the police—then came more knocks, and a cry of “Open in the name of the law!” At that terrible summons bolts and locks gave way before an invisible hand, and the moment after the Sub-prefect was in the passage, confronting a waiter half-dressed and ghastly pale. This was the short dialogue which immediately took place:—

“We want to see the Englishman who is sleeping in this house?”

“He went away hours ago.”

“He did no such thing. His friend went away; *he* remained. Show us to his bedroom!”

“I swear to you, Monsieur le Sous-prefet, he is not here! he——”

“I swear to you, Monsieur le Garçon, he is. He

slept here—he didn't find your bed comfortable—he came to us to complain of it—here he is among my men—and here am I ready to look for a flea or two in his bedstead. Renaudin! (calling to one of the subordinates, and pointing to the waiter) collar that man, and tie his hands behind him. Now, then, gentlemen, let us walk up stairs!”

Every man and woman in the house was secured—the “Old Soldier” the first. Then I identified the bed in which I had slept, and then we went into the room above.

No object that was at all extraordinary appeared in any part of it. The Sub-prefect looked round the place, commanded everybody to be silent, stamped twice on the floor, called for a candle, looked attentively at the spot he had stamped on, and ordered the flooring there to be carefully taken up. This was done in no time. Lights were produced, and we saw a deep raftered cavity between the floor of this room and the ceiling of the room beneath. Through this cavity there ran perpendicularly a sort of case of iron thickly greased; and inside the case appeared the screw, which communicated with the bed-top below. Extra lengths of screw, freshly oiled; levers covered with felt; all the complete upper works of a

heavy press—constructed with infernal ingenuity so as to join the fixtures below, and when taken to pieces again to go into the smallest possible compass—were next discovered and pulled out on the floor. After some little difficulty the Sub-prefect succeeded in putting the machinery together, and, leaving his men to work it, descended with me to the bedroom. The smothering canopy was then lowered, but not so noiselessly as I had seen it lowered. When I mentioned this to the Sub-prefect, his answer, simple as it was, had a terrible significance. “My men,” said he, “are working down the bed-top for the first time—the men whose money you won were in better practice.”

We left the house in the sole possession of two police agents—every one of the inmates being removed to prison on the spot. The Sub-prefect, after taking down my “*procès-verbal*” in his office, returned with me to my hotel to get my passport. “Do you think,” I asked, as I gave it to him, “that any men have really been smothered in that bed, as they tried to smother *me*?”

“I have seen dozens of drowned men laid out at the Morgue,” answered the Sub-prefect, “in whose pocket-books were found letters, stating that they

had committed suicide in the Seine, because they had lost everything at the gaming-table. Do I know how many of those men entered the same gambling-house that *you* entered? won as *you* won? took that bed as *you* took it? slept in it? were smothered in it? and were privately thrown into the river, with a letter of explanation written by the murderers and placed in their pocket-books? No man can say how many or how few have suffered the fate from which you have escaped. The people of the gambling-house kept their bedstead machinery a secret from *us*—even from the police! The dead kept the rest of the secret for them. Good night, or rather good morning, Monsieur Faulkner! Be at my office again at nine o'clock—in the meantime, *au revoir!*”

The rest of my story is soon told. I was examined and re-examined; the gambling-house was strictly searched all through from top to bottom; the prisoners were separately interrogated; and two of the less guilty among them made a confession. *I* discovered that the Old Soldier was the master of the gambling-house—*justice* discovered that he had been drummed out of the army as a vagabond years ago; that he had been guilty of all sorts of villanies since; that he was in possession of stolen property, which

the owners identified ; and that he, the croupier, another accomplice, and the woman who had made my cup of coffee, were all in the secret of the bedstead. There appeared some reason to doubt whether the inferior persons attached to the house knew anything of the suffocating machinery ; and they received the benefit of that doubt, by being treated simply as thieves and vagabonds. As for the Old Soldier and his two head-myrmidons, they went to the galleys ; the woman who had drugged my coffee was imprisoned for I forget how many years ; the regular attendants at the gambling-house were considered “ suspicious,” and placed under “ surveillance ;” and I became, for one whole week (which is a long time), the head “ lion ” in Parisian society. My adventure was dramatised by three illustrious playmakers, but never saw theatrical daylight ; for the censorship forbade the introduction on the stage of a correct copy of the gambling-house bedstead.

One good result was produced by my adventure which any censorship must have approved :—it cured me of ever again trying “ Rouge et Noir ” as an amusement. The sight of a green cloth, with packs of cards and heaps of money on it, will henceforth be for ever associated in my mind with the sight of a

bed-canopy descending to suffocate me in the silence and darkness of the night.

Just as Mr Faulkner pronounced these words, he started in his chair and resumed his stiff dignified position in a great hurry. "Bless my soul!" cried he, with a comic look of astonishment and vexation, "while I have been telling you what is the real secret of my interest in the sketch you have so kindly given to me, I have altogether forgotten that I came here to sit for my portrait. For the last hour or more I must have been the worst model you ever had to draw from!"

"On the contrary, you have been the best," said I. "I have been trying to catch your likeness; and, while telling your story, you have unconsciously shown me the natural expression I wanted to ensure my success."*

* *Note by Mrs Kerby.* I cannot let this story end without mentioning what the chance saying was which caused it to be told at the farm-house the other night. Our friend the young sailor, among his other quaint objections to sleeping on shore, declared that he particularly hated four-post beds, because he never slept in one without doubting whether the top might not come down in the night and suffocate him. I thought this chance reference to the distinguishing feature of William's

narrative curious enough, and my husband agreed with me. But he says it is scarcely worth while to mention such a trifle in anything so important as a book. I cannot venture, after this, to do more than slip these lines in modestly at the end of the story. If the printers should notice my few last words, perhaps they may not mind the trouble of putting them into some out of the way corner, in very small type. L. K.

PROLOGUE TO THE SECOND STORY.

THE beginning of an excellent connexion which I succeeded in establishing in and around that respectable watering-place, Tidbury-on-the-Marsh, was an order for a life-size oil-portrait of a great local celebrity—one Mr Boxsious, a Solicitor, who was understood to do the most thriving business of any lawyer in the town.

The portrait was intended as a testimonial “expressive (to use the language of the circular forwarded to me at the time) of the eminent services of Mr Boxsious in promoting and securing the prosperity of the town.” It had been subscribed for by the “Municipal Authorities and resident Inhabitants” of Tidbury-on-the-Marsh; and it was to be presented, when done, to Mrs Boxsious, “as a slight but sincere token”—and so forth. A timely recommendation from one of my kindest friends and patrons placed

the commission for painting the likeness in my lucky hands; and I was instructed to attend on a certain day at Mr Boxsious's private residence with all my materials ready for taking a first sitting.

On arriving at the house, I was shown into a very prettily furnished morning-room. The bow-window looked out on a large enclosed meadow which represented the principal square in Tidbury. On the opposite side of the meadow I could see the new hotel (with a wing lately added), and, close by, the old hotel obstinately unchanged since it had first been built. Then, further down the street, the doctor's house, with a coloured lamp and a small doorplate, and the banker's office, with a plain lamp and a big doorplate—then some dreary private lodging-houses—then, at right angles to these, a street of shops; the cheesemonger's very small, the chemist's very smart, the pastrycook's very dowdy, and the greengrocer's very dark. I was still looking out at the view thus presented, when I was suddenly apostrophized by a glib disputatious voice behind me.

“Now, then, Mr Artist!” cried the voice, “do you call that getting ready for work? Where are your paints and brushes, and all the rest of it? My name's Boxsious, and I'm here to sit for my picture.”

I turned round and confronted a little man with his legs astraddle and his hands in his pockets. He had light-grey eyes, red all round the lids, bristling pepper-coloured hair, an unnaturally rosy complexion, and an eager, impudent, clever look. I made two discoveries in one glance at him:—First, that he was a wretched subject for a portrait; secondly, that, whatever he might do or say, it would not be of the least use for me to stand on my dignity with him.

“I shall be ready directly, sir,” said I.

“Ready directly?” repeated my new sitter. “What do you mean, Mr Artist, by ready directly? I’m ready *now*. What was your contract with the Town Council who have subscribed for this picture? To paint the portrait! And what was my contract? To sit for it! Here am I ready to sit, and there are you not ready to paint me. According to all the rules of law and logic, you are committing a breach of contract already.—Stop! let’s have a look at your paints. Are they the best quality? If not, I warn you, sir, there’s a second breach of contract!—Brushes too? Why, they’re old brushes, by the Lord Harry! The Town Council pay you well, Mr Artist; why don’t you work for them with new brushes?—What? you work best with old? I con-

tend, sir, that you can't. Does my housemaid clean best with an old broom? Do my clerks write best with old pens? Don't colour up, and don't look as if you were going to quarrel with me! You can't quarrel with me. If you were fifty times as irritable a man as you look you couldn't quarrel with me. I'm not young, and I'm not touchy—I'm Boxsious, the lawyer; the only man in the world who can't be insulted, try it how you like!"

He chuckled as he said this, and walked away to the window. It was quite useless to take anything he said seriously, so I finished preparing my palette for the morning's work with the utmost serenity of look and manner that I could possibly assume.

"There!" he went on, looking out of the window, "do you see that fat man slouching along the Parade, with a snuffy nose? That's my favourite enemy, Dunball. He tried to quarrel with me ten years ago, and he has done nothing but bring out the hidden benevolence of my character ever since. Look at him! look how he frowns as he turns this way.—And now look at me! I can smile and nod to him. I make a point of always smiling and nodding to him—it keeps my hand in for other enemies.—Good morning! (I've cast him twice in heavy damages)

good morning, Mr Dunball! He bears malice, you see; he won't speak; he's short in the neck, passionate, and four times as fat as he ought to be; he has fought against my amiability for ten mortal years; when he can't fight any longer, he'll die suddenly, and I shall be the innocent cause of it."

Mr Boxsious uttered this fatal prophecy with extraordinary complacency, nodding and smiling out of the window all the time at the unfortunate man who had rashly tried to provoke him. When his favourite enemy was out of sight, he turned away and indulged himself in a brisk turn or two up and down the room. Meanwhile I lifted my canvass on the easel, and was on the point of asking him to sit down, when he assailed me again.

"Now, Mr Artist!" he cried, quickening his walk impatiently, "in the interests of the Town Council, your employers, allow me to ask you for the last time when you are going to begin?"

"And allow me, Mr Boxsious, in the interest of the Town Council also," said I, "to ask you if your notion of the proper way of sitting for your portrait is to walk about the room?"

"Aha! well put—devilish well put!" returned Mr Boxsious; "that's the only sensible thing you

have said since you entered my house; I begin to like you already." With these words he nodded at me approvingly, and jumped into the high chair that I had placed for him with the alacrity of a young man.

"I say, Mr Artist," he went on, when I had put him into the right position (he insisted on the front view of his face being taken, because the Town Council would get the most for their money in that way), "you don't have many such good jobs as this, do you?"

"Not many," I said. "I should not be a poor man if commissions for life-size portraits often fell in my way."

"You poor!" exclaimed Mr Boxsious, contemptuously. "I dispute that point with you at the outset. Why, you've got a good cloth coat, a clean shirt, and a smooth-shaved chin! You've got the sleek look of a man who has slept between sheets and had his breakfast. You can't humbug me about poverty, for I know what it is. Poverty means looking like a scarecrow, feeling like a scarecrow, and getting treated like a scarecrow. That was *my* luck, let me tell you, when I first thought of trying the law.—Poverty indeed! Do you shake in your shoes, Mr Artist, when you think what you were at twenty? I do, I can promise you!"

He began to shift about so irritably in his chair, that, in the interests of my work, I was obliged to make an effort to calm him.

“It must be a pleasant occupation for you in your present prosperity,” said I, “to look back sometimes at the gradual processes by which you passed from poverty to competence, and from that to the wealth you now enjoy.”

“Gradual, did you say?” cried Mr Boxsious; “it wasn’t gradual at all. I was sharp, damned sharp, and I jumped at my first start in business slap into five hundred pounds in one day.”

“That was an extraordinary step in advance,” I rejoined. “I suppose you contrived to make some profitable investment ——?”

“Not a bit of it! I hadn’t a spare sixpence to invest with. I won the money by my brains, my hands, and my pluck; and, what’s more, I’m proud of having done it! That was rather a curious case, Mr Artist. Some men might be shy of mentioning it: I never was shy in my life, and I mention it right and left everywhere—the whole case, just as it happened, except the names. Catch me ever committing myself to mentioning names! Mum’s the word, sir, with yours to command, Thomas Boxsious.”

“As you mention ‘the case’ everywhere,” said I, “perhaps you would not be offended with me if I told you I should like to hear it.”

“Man alive! haven’t I told you already that I can’t be offended? And didn’t I say a moment ago that I was proud of the case? I’ll tell you, Mr Artist—but, stop! I’ve got the interests of the Town Council to look after in this business. Can you paint as well when I’m talking as when I’m not? Don’t sneer, sir; you’re not wanted to sneer—you’re wanted to give an answer—yes or no?”

“Yes, then,” I replied, in his own sharp way. “I can always paint the better when I am hearing an interesting story.”

“What do you mean by talking about a story? I’m not going to tell you a story: I’m going to make a statement. A statement is a matter of fact, therefore the exact opposite of a story, which is a matter of fiction. What I am now going to tell you really happened to me.”

I was glad to see that he settled himself quietly in his chair before he began. His odd manners and language made such an impression on me at the time, that I think I can repeat his “statement” now almost word for word as he addressed it to me.

THE LAWYER'S STORY

OF

A STOLEN LETTER.

I SERVED my time—never mind in whose office—and I started in business for myself in one of our English country towns—I decline stating which. I hadn't a farthing of capital, and my friends in the neighbourhood were poor and useless enough, with one exception. That exception was Mr Frank Gatliffe, son of Mr Gatliffe, member for the county, the richest man and the proudest for many a mile round about our parts.—Stop a bit, Mr Artist! you needn't perk up and look knowing. You won't trace any particulars by the name of Gatliffe. I'm not bound to commit myself or anybody else by mentioning names. I have given you the first that came into my head.

Well, Mr Frank was a stanch friend of mine,

and ready to recommend me whenever he got the chance. I had contrived to get him a little timely help—for a consideration, of course—in borrowing money at a fair rate of interest: in fact, I had saved him from the Jews. The money was borrowed while Mr Frank was at college. He came back from college, and stopped at home a little while, and then there got spread about all our neighbourhood a report that he had fallen in love, as the saying is, with his young sister's governess, and that his mind was made up to marry her.—What! you're at it again, Mr Artist! You want to know her name, don't you? What do you think of Smith?

Speaking as a lawyer, I consider Report, in a general way, to be a fool and a liar. But in this case report turned out to be something very different. Mr Frank told me he was really in love, and said upon his honour (an absurd expression which young chaps of his age are always using) he was determined to marry Smith the governess—the sweet darling girl, as *he* called her; but I'm not sentimental, and *I* call her Smith the governess. Well, Mr Frank's father, being as proud as Lucifer, said “No” as to marrying the governess, when Mr Frank wanted him to say “Yes.” He was a man of business, was old Gat-

liffe, and he took the proper business course. He sent the governess away with a first-rate character and a spanking present, and then he looked about him to get something for Mr Frank to do. While he was looking about, Mr Frank bolted to London after the governess, who had nobody alive belonging to her to go to but an aunt—her father's sister. The aunt refuses to let Mr Frank in without the squire's permission. Mr Frank writes to his father, and says he will marry the girl as soon as he is of age, or shoot himself. Up to town comes the squire and his wife and his daughter, and a lot of sentimentality, not in the slightest degree material to the present statement, takes place among them; and the upshot of it is that old Gatliffe is forced into withdrawing the word No, and substituting the word Yes.

I don't believe he would ever have done it, though, but for one lucky peculiarity in the case. The governess's father was a man of good family—pretty nigh as good as Gatliffe's own. He had been in the army: had sold out: set up as a wine-merchant—failed—died: ditto his wife, as to the dying part of it. No relation, in fact, left for the squire to make inquiries about but the father's sister—who had behaved, as old Gatliffe said, like a thorough-bred

gentlewoman in shutting the door against Mr Frank in the first instance. So, to cut the matter short, things were at last made up pleasant enough. The time was fixed for the wedding, and an announcement about it—Marriage in High Life and all that—put into the county paper. There was a regular biography, besides, of the governess's father, so as to stop people from talking—a great flourish about his pedigree, and a long account of his services in the army; but not a word, mind ye, of his having turned wine-merchant afterwards. Oh, no—not a word about that!

I knew it, though, for Mr Frank told me. He hadn't a bit of pride about him. He introduced me to his future wife one day when I met them out walking, and asked me if I did not think he was a lucky fellow. I don't mind admitting that I did, and that I told him so. Ah! but she was one of my sort, was that governess. Stood, to the best of my recollection, five foot four. Good lissome figure, that looked as if it had never been boxed up in a pair of stays. Eyes that made me feel as if I was under a pretty stiff cross-examination the moment she looked at me. Fine red, fresh, kiss-and-come-again sort of lips. Cheeks and complexion—— No, Mr Artist, you would'nt identify her by her cheeks

and complexion, if I drew you a picture of them this very moment. She has had a family of children since the time I'm talking of; and her cheeks are a trifle fatter and her complexion is a shade or two redder now than when I first met her out walking with Mr Frank.

The marriage was to take place on a Wednesday. I decline mentioning the year or the month. I had started as an attorney on my own account—say six weeks, more or less, and was sitting alone in my office on the Monday morning before the wedding-day, trying to see my way clear before me and not succeeding particularly well, when Mr Frank suddenly bursts in, as white as any ghost that ever was painted, and says he's got the most dreadful case for me to advise on, and not an hour to lose in acting on my advice.

“Is this in the way of business, Mr Frank?” says I, stopping him just as he was beginning to get sentimental. “Yes or no, Mr Frank?” rapping my new office paper-knife on the table to pull him up short all the sooner.

“My dear fellow”—he was always familiar with me—“it's in the way of business, certainly; but friendship”——

I was obliged to pull him up short again and regularly examine him as if he had been in the witness-box, or he would have kept me talking to no purpose half the day.

“Now, Mr Frank,” says I, “I can’t have any sentimentality mixed up with business matters. You please to stop talking, and let me ask questions. Answer in the fewest words you can use. Nod when nodding will do instead of words.”

I fixed him with my eye for about three seconds, as he sat groaning and wriggling in his chair. When I’d done fixing him, I gave another rap with my paper-knife on the table to startle him up a bit. Then I went on.

“From what you have been stating up to the present time,” says I, “I gather that you are in a scrape which is likely to interfere seriously with your marriage on Wednesday?”

(He nodded, and I cut in again before he could say a word) :—

“The scrape affects your young lady, and goes back to the period of a transaction in which her late father was engaged, don’t it?”

(He nods, and I cut in once more) :—

“There is a party who turned up after seeing the

announcement of your marriage in the paper, who is cognizant of what he oughtn't to know, and who is prepared to use his knowledge of the same to the prejudice of the young lady and of your marriage, unless he receives a sum of money to quiet him? Very well. Now, first of all, Mr Frank, state what you have been told by the young lady herself about the transaction of her late father. How did you first come to have any knowledge of it?"

"She was talking to me about her father one day so tenderly and prettily, that she quite excited my interest about him," begins Mr Frank; "and I asked her, among other things, what had occasioned his death. She said she believed it was distress of mind in the first instance; and added that this distress was connected with a shocking secret, which she and her mother had kept from everybody, but which she could not keep from me, because she was determined to begin her married life by having no secrets from her husband." Here Mr Frank began to get sentimental again, and I pulled him up short once more with the paper-knife.

"She told me," Mr Frank went on, "that the great mistake of her father's life was his selling out of the army and taking to the wine trade. He had

no talent for business ; things went wrong with him from the first. His clerk, it was strongly suspected, cheated him"—

"Stop a bit," says I. "What was that suspected clerk's name?"

"Davager," says he.

"Davager," says I, making a note of it. "Go on, Mr Frank."

"His affairs got more and more entangled," says Mr Frank ; "he was pressed for money in all directions ; bankruptcy, and consequent dishonour (as he considered it), stared him in the face. His mind was so affected by his troubles that both his wife and daughter, towards the last, considered him to be hardly responsible for his own acts. In this state of desperation and misery, he"— Here Mr Frank began to hesitate.

We have two ways in the law of drawing evidence off nice and clear from an unwilling client or witness. We give him a fright or we treat him to a joke. I treated Mr Frank to a joke.

"Ah!" says I, "I know what he did. He had a signature to write ; and, by the most natural mistake in the world, he wrote another gentleman's name instead of his own—eh?"

“It was to a bill,” says Mr Frank, looking very crest-fallen, instead of taking the joke. “His principal creditor wouldn’t wait till he could raise the money, or the greater part of it. But he was resolved, if he sold off everything, to get the amount and repay”——

“Of course!” says I, “drop that. The forgery was discovered. When?”

“Before even the first attempt was made to negotiate the bill. He had done the whole thing in the most absurdly and innocently wrong way. The person whose name he had used was a staunch friend of his, and a relation of his wife’s: a good man as well as a rich one. He had influence with the chief creditor, and he used it nobly. He had a real affection for the unfortunate man’s wife, and he proved it generously.”

“Come to the point,” says I. “What did he do? In a business way what did he do?”

“He put the false bill into the fire, drew a bill of his own to replace it, and then—only then—told my dear girl and her mother all that had happened. Can you imagine anything nobler?” asks Mr Frank.

“Speaking in my professional capacity, I can’t imagine anything greener?” says I. “Where was the father? Off, I suppose?”

“ Ill in bed,” says Mr Frank, colouring. “ But, he mustered strength enough to write a contrite and grateful letter the same day, promising to prove himself worthy of the noble moderation and forgiveness extended to him, by selling off everything he possessed to repay his money-debt. He did sell off everything, down to some old family pictures that were heirlooms; down to the little plate he had; down to the very tables and chairs that furnished his drawing-room. Every farthing of the debt was paid; and he was left to begin the world again, with the kindest promises of help from the generous man who had forgiven him. It was too late. His crime of one rash moment—atoned for though it had been—preyed upon his mind. He became possessed with the idea that he had lowered himself for ever in the estimation of his wife and daughter, and”——

“ He died,” I cut in. “ Yes, yes, we know that. Let’s go back for a minute to the contrite and grateful letter that he wrote. My experience in the law, Mr Frank, has convinced me that if everybody burnt everybody else’s letters, half the Courts of Justice in this country might shut up shop. Do you happen to know whether the letter we are now

speaking of contained anything like an avowal or confession of the forgery?"

"Of course it did," says he. "Could the writer express his contrition properly without making some such confession?"

"Quite easy, if he had been a lawyer," says I. "But never mind that; I'm going to make a guess,—a desperate guess, mind. Should I be altogether in error, if I thought that this letter had been stolen; and that the fingers of Mr Davager, of suspicious commercial celebrity, might possibly be the fingers which took it?"

"That is exactly what I wanted to make you understand," cries Mr Frank.

"How did he communicate the interesting fact of the theft to you?"

"He has not ventured into my presence. The scoundrel actually had the audacity"——

"Aha!" says I. "The young lady herself! Sharp practitioner, Mr Davager."

"Early this morning when she was walking alone in the shrubbery," Mr Frank goes on, "he had the assurance to approach her, and to say that he had been watching his opportunity of getting a private interview for days past. He then showed her—

actually showed her—her unfortunate father's letter; put into her hands another letter directed to me; bowed, and walked off; leaving her half-dead with astonishment and terror. If I had only happened to be there at the time——!" says Mr Frank, shaking his fist murderously in the air by way of a finish.

"It's the greatest luck in the world that you were not," says I. "Have you got that other letter?"

He handed it to me. It was so remarkably humorous and short, that I remember every word of it at this distance of time. It began in this way:

"To Francis Gatcliffe, Esq., jun.—Sir,—I have an extremely curious autograph letter to sell. The price is a Five hundred pound note. The young lady to whom you are to be married on Wednesday will inform you of the nature of the letter, and the genuineness of the autograph. If you refuse to deal, I shall send a copy to the local paper, and shall wait on your highly respected father with the original curiosity, on the afternoon of Tuesday next. Having come down here on family business, I have put up at the family hotel—being to be heard of at the Gatcliffe Arms. Your very obedient servant,

"ALFRED DAVAGER."

“A clever fellow that,” says I, putting the letter into my private drawer.

“Clever!” cries Mr Frank, “he ought to be horsewhipped within an inch of his life. I would have done it myself; but she made me promise, before she told me a word of the matter, to come straight to you.”

“That was one of the wisest promises you ever made,” says I. “We can’t afford to bully this fellow, whatever else we may do with him. Do you think I am saying anything libellous against your excellent father’s character when I assert that if he saw the letter he would certainly insist on your marriage being put off, at the very least?”

“Feeling as my father does about my marriage, he would insist on its being dropped altogether, if he saw this letter,” says Mr Frank, with a groan. “But even that is not the worst of it. The generous, noble girl herself says, that if the letter appears in the paper, with all the unanswerable comments this scoundrel would be sure to add to it, she would rather die than hold me to my engagement—even if my father would let me keep it.”

As he said this his eyes began to water. He was a weak young fellow, and ridiculously fond of her.

I brought him back to business with another rap of the paper-knife.

“Hold up, Mr Frank,” says I. “I have a question or two more. Did you think of asking the young lady, whether, to the best of her knowledge, this infernal letter was the only written evidence of the forgery now in existence?”

“Yes, I did think directly of asking her that,” says he; “and she told me she was quite certain that there was no written evidence of the forgery except that one letter.”

“Will you give Mr Davager his price for it?” says I.

“Yes,” says Mr Frank, quite peevish with me for asking him such a question. He was an easy young chap in money-matters, and talked of hundreds as most men talk of sixpences.

“Mr Frank,” says I, “you came here to get my help and advice in this extremely ticklish business, and you are ready, as I know without asking, to remunerate me for all and any of my services at the usual professional rate. Now, I’ve made up my mind to act boldly—desperately if you like—on the hit or miss—win-all-or-lose-all principle—in dealing with this matter. Here is my proposal. I’m going

to try if I can't do Mr Davager out of his letter. If I don't succeed before to-morrow afternoon, you hand him the money, and I charge you nothing for professional services. If I do succeed, I hand you the letter instead of Mr Davager; and you give me the money instead of giving it to him. It's a precious risk for me, but I'm ready to run it. You must pay your five hundred any way. What do you say to my plan? Is it Yes, Mr Frank—or No?"

"Hang your questions!" cries Mr Frank, jumping up; "you know it's Yes ten thousand times over. Only you earn the money and"—

"And you will be too glad to give it to me. Very good. Now go home. Comfort the young lady—don't let Mr Davager so much as set eyes on you—keep quiet—leave everything to me—and feel as certain as you please that all the letters in the world can't stop your being married on Wednesday." With these words I hustled him off out of the office; for I wanted to be left alone to make my mind up about what I should do.

The first thing, of course, was to have a look at the enemy. I wrote to Mr Davager, telling him that I was privately appointed to arrange the little business-matter between himself and "another party"

(no names!) on friendly terms; and begging him to call on me at his earliest convenience. At the very beginning of the case, Mr Davager bothered me. His answer was, that it would not be convenient to him to call till between six and seven in the evening. In this way, you see, he contrived to make me lose several precious hours, at a time when minutes almost were of importance. I had nothing for it but to be patient, and to give certain instructions, before Mr Davager came, to my boy Tom.

There never was such a sharp boy of fourteen before, and there never will be again, as my boy Tom. A spy to look after Mr Davager was, of course, the first requisite in a case of this kind; and Tom was the smallest, quickest, quietest, sharpest, stealthiest little snake of a chap that ever dogged a gentleman's steps and kept cleverly out of range of a gentleman's eyes. I settled it with the boy that he was not to show at all, when Mr Davager came; and that he was to wait to hear me ring the bell when Mr Davager left. If I rang twice he was to show the gentleman out. If I rang once, he was to keep out of the way and follow the gentleman wherever he went till he got back to the inn. Those were the only preparations I could make to begin with; being

obliged to wait, and let myself be guided by what turned up.

About a quarter to seven my gentleman came.

In the profession of the law we get somehow quite remarkably mixed up with ugly people, blackguard people, and dirty people. But far away the ugliest and dirtiest blackguard I ever saw in my life was Mr Alfred Davager. He had greasy white hair and a mottled face. He was low in the forehead, fat in the stomach, hoarse in the voice, and weak in the legs. Both his eyes were bloodshot, and one was fixed in his head. He smelt of spirits, and carried a toothpick in his mouth. "How are you? I've just done dinner," says he—and he lights a cigar, sits down with his legs crossed, and winks at me.

I tried at first to take the measure of him in a wheedling confidential way; but it was no good. I asked him in a facetious smiling manner, how he had got hold of the letter. He only told me in answer that he had been in the confidential employment of the writer of it, and that he had always been famous since infancy for a sharp eye to his own interests. I paid him some compliments; but he was not to be flattered. I tried to make him lose his temper; but he kept it in spite of me. It ended in his driving

me to my last resource—I made an attempt to frighten him.

“Before we say a word about the money,” I began, “let me put a case, Mr Davager. The pull you have on Mr Francis Gatcliffe is, that you can hinder his marriage on Wednesday. Now, suppose I have got a magistrate’s warrant to apprehend you in my pocket? Suppose I have a constable to execute it in the next room? Suppose I bring you up to-morrow—the day before the marriage—charge you only generally with an attempt to extort money, and apply for a day’s remand to complete the case? Suppose, as a suspicious stranger, you can’t get bail in this town? Suppose”——

“Stop a bit,” says Mr Davager: “Suppose I should not be the greenest fool that ever stood in shoes? Suppose I should not carry the letter about me? Suppose I should have given a certain envelope to a certain friend of mine in a certain place in this town? Suppose the letter should be inside that envelope, directed to old Gatcliffe, side by side with a copy of the letter directed to the editor of the local paper? Suppose my friend should be instructed to open the envelope, and take the letters to their right address, if I don’t appear to claim them from him

this evening? In short, my dear sir, suppose you were born yesterday, and suppose I wasn't?" says Mr Davager, and winks at me again.

He didn't take me by surprise, for I never expected that he had the letter about him. I made a pretence of being very much taken aback, and of being quite ready to give in. We settled our business about delivering the letter and handing over the money in no time. I was to draw out a document which he was to sign. He knew the document was stuff and nonsense just as well as I did, and told me I was only proposing it to swell my client's bill. Sharp as he was, he was wrong there. The document was not to be drawn out to gain money from Mr Frank, but to gain time from Mr Davager. It served me as an excuse to put off the payment of the five hundred pounds till three o'clock on the Tuesday afternoon. The Tuesday morning Mr Davager said he should devote to his amusement, and asked me what sights were to be seen in the neighbourhood of the town. When I had told him, he pitched his toothpick into my grate, yawned, and went out.

I rang the bell once—waited till he had passed the window—and then looked after Tom. There was my jewel of a boy on the opposite side of the

street, just setting his top going in the most playful manner possible! Mr Davager walked away up the street, towards the market-place. Tom whipped his top up the street towards the market-place too.

In a quarter-of-an-hour he came back, with all his evidence collected in a beautifully clear and compact state. Mr Davager had walked to a public-house just outside the town, in a lane leading to the high road. On a bench outside the public-house there sat a man smoking. He said "All right?" and gave a letter to Mr Davager, who answered "All right," and walked back to the inn. In the hall he ordered hot rum and water, cigars, slippers, and a fire to be lit in his room. After that he went up stairs, and Tom came away.

I now saw my road clear before me—not very far on, but still clear. I had housed the letter, in all probability for that night, at the Gatcliffe Arms. After tipping Tom, I gave him directions to play about the door of the inn, and refresh himself when he was tired at the tart-shop opposite, eating as much as he pleased, on the understanding that he crammed all the time with his eye on the window. If Mr Davager went out, or Mr Davager's friend called on him, Tom was to let me know. He was also to take a little

note from me to the head chambermaid—an old friend of mine—asking her to step over to my office, on a private matter of business, as soon as her work was done for that night. After settling these little matters, having half-an-hour to spare, I turned to and did myself a bloater at the office-fire, and had a drop of gin and water hot, and felt comparatively happy.

When the head chambermaid came, it turned out, as good luck would have it, that Mr Davager had drawn her attention rather too closely to his ugliness, by offering her a testimony of his regard in the shape of a kiss. I no sooner mentioned him than she flew into a passion; and when I added, by way of clinching the matter, that I was retained to defend the interests of a very beautiful and deserving young lady (name not referred to, of course) against the most cruel underhand treachery on the part of Mr Davager, the head chambermaid was ready to go any lengths that she could safely to serve my cause. In few words I discovered that Boots was to call Mr Davager at eight the next morning, and was to take his clothes down stairs to brush as usual. If Mr D. had not emptied his own pockets overnight, we arranged that Boots was to forget to empty them for

him, and was to bring the clothes down stairs just as he found them. If Mr D.'s pockets were emptied, then, of course, it would be necessary to transfer the searching process to Mr D.'s room. Under any circumstances, I was certain of the head chambermaid; and under any circumstances also, the head chambermaid was certain of Boots.

I waited till Tom came home, looking very puffy and bilious about the face; but as to his intellects, if anything rather sharper than ever. His report was uncommonly short and pleasant. The inn was shutting up; Mr Davager was going to bed in rather a drunken condition; Mr Davager's friend had never appeared. I sent Tom (properly instructed about keeping our man in view all the next morning) to his shake-down behind the office-desk, where I heard him hiccupping half the night, as even the best boys will, when over-excited and too full of tarts.

At half-past seven next morning, I slipped quietly into Boots's pantry.

Down came the clothes. No pockets in trousers. Waistcoat pockets empty. Coat pockets with something in them. First, handkerchief; secondly, bunch of keys; thirdly, cigar-case; fourthly, pocket-book. Of course I wasn't such a fool as to expect to find the

letter there, but I opened the pocket-book with a certain curiosity, notwithstanding.

Nothing in the two pockets of the book but some old advertisements cut out of newspapers, a lock of hair tied round with a dirty bit of ribbon, a circular letter about a loan society, and some copies of verses not likely to suit any company that was not of an extremely free-and-easy description. On the leaves of the pocket-book, people's addresses scrawled in pencil, and bets jotted down in red ink. On one leaf, by itself, this queer inscription :

“MEM. 5 ALONG. 4 ACROSS.”

I understood everything but those words and figures, so of course I copied them out into my own book. Then I waited in the pantry till Boots had brushed the clothes and had taken them up stairs. His report when he came down was, that Mr D. had asked if it was a fine morning. Being told that it was, he had ordered breakfast at nine, and a saddle-horse to be at the door at ten, to take him to Grimwith Abbey—one of the sights in our neighbourhood which I had told him of the evening before.

“I'll be here, coming in by the back way, at half-past ten,” says I to the head chambermaid.

“What for?” says she.

“To take the responsibility of making Mr Davager’s bed off your hands for this morning only,” says I.

“Any more orders?” says she.

“One more,” says I. “I want to hire Sam for the morning. Put it down in the order-book that he’s to be brought round to my office at ten.”

In case you should think Sam was a man, I’d better perhaps tell you he was a pony. I’d made up my mind that it would be beneficial to Tom’s health, after the tarts, if he took a constitutional airing on a nice hard saddle in the direction of Grimwith Abbey.

“Anything else?” says the head chambermaid.

“Only one more favour,” says I. “Would my boy Tom be very much in the way if he came, from now till ten, to help with the boots and shoes, and stood at his work close by this window which looks out on the staircase?”

“Not a bit,” says the head chambermaid.

“Thank you,” says I; and stepped back to my office directly.

When I had sent Tom off to help with the boots and shoes, I reviewed the whole case exactly as it stood at that time.

There were three things Mr Davager might do

with the letter. He might give it to his friend again before ten—in which case, Tom would most likely see the said friend on the stairs. He might take it to his friend, or to some other friend, after ten—in which case Tom was ready to follow him on Sam the pony. And, lastly, he might leave it hidden somewhere in his room at the inn—in which case, I was all ready for him with a search-warrant of my own granting, under favour always of my friend the head chambermaid. So far I had my business arrangements all gathered up nice and compact in my own hands. Only two things bothered me; the terrible shortness of the time at my disposal, in case I failed in my first experiments for getting hold of the letter, and that queer inscription which I had copied out of the pocket-book.

“MEM. 5 ALONG. 4 ACROSS.”

It was the measurement most likely of something, and he was afraid of forgetting it; therefore, it was something important. Query—something about himself? Say “5” (inches) “along”—he doesn’t wear a wig. Say “5” (feet) “along”—it can’t be coat, waistcoat, trousers, or underclothing. Say “5” (yards) “along”—it can’t be anything about himself, unless he wears round his body the rope

that he's sure to be hanged with one of these days. Then it is *not* something about himself. What do I know of that is important to him besides? I know of nothing but the Letter. Can the memorandum be connected with that? Say, yes. What do "5 along" and "4 across" mean then? The measurement of something he carries about with him?—or the measurement of something in his room? I could get pretty satisfactorily to myself as far as that; but I could get no further.

Tom came back to the office, and reported him mounted for his ride. His friend had never appeared. I sent the boy off, with his proper instructions, on Sam's back—wrote an encouraging letter to Mr Frank to keep him quiet—then slipped into the inn by the back way a little before half-past ten. The head chambermaid gave me a signal when the landing was clear. I got into his room without a soul but her seeing me, and locked the door immediately.

The case was, to a certain extent, simplified now. Either Mr Davager had ridden out with the letter about him, or he had left it in some safe hiding-place in his room. I suspected it to be in his room, for a reason that will a little astonish you—his trunk, his dressing-case, and all the drawers

and cupboards were left open. I knew my customer, and I thought this extraordinary carelessness on his part rather suspicious.

Mr Davager had taken one of the best bedrooms at the Gatcliffe Arms. Floor carpeted all over, walls beautifully papered, four-poster, and general furniture first-rate. I searched, to begin with, on the usual plan, examining everything in every possible way, and taking more than an hour about it. No discovery. Then I pulled out a carpenter's rule which I had brought with me. Was there anything in the room which—either in inches, feet, or yards—answered to “5 along” and “4 across?” Nothing. I put the rule back in my pocket—measurement was no good, evidently. Was there anything in the room that would count up to 5 one way and 4 another, seeing that nothing would measure up to it? I had got obstinately persuaded by this time that the letter must be in the room—principally because of the trouble I had had in looking after it. And persuading myself of that, I took it into my head next, just as obstinately, that “5 along” and “4 across” must be the right clue to find the letter by—principally because I had'nt left myself, after all my searching and thinking, even so much as the ghost

of another guide to go by. "5 along"—where could I count five along the room, in any part of it?

Not on the paper. The pattern there was pillars of trellis-work and flowers, enclosing a plain green ground—only four pillars along the wall and only two across. The furniture? There were not five chairs or five separate pieces of any furniture in the room altogether. The fringes that hung from the cornice of the bed? Plenty of them, at any rate! Up I jumped on the counterpane, with my penknife in my hand. Every way that "5 along" and "4 across" could be reckoned on those unlucky fringes I reckoned on them—probed with my penknife—scratched with my nails—crunched with my fingers. No use; not a sign of a letter; and the time was getting on—oh, Lord! how the time did get on in Mr Davager's room that morning.

I jumped down from the bed, so desperate at my ill-luck that I hardly cared whether anybody heard me or not. Quite a little cloud of dust rose at my feet as they thumped on the carpet.

"Hullo!" thought I, "my friend the head chambermaid takes it easy here. Nice state for a carpet to be in, in one of the best bedrooms at the Gatcliffe Arms." Carpet! I had been jumping up on the

bed, and staring up at the walls, but I had never so much as given a glance down at the carpet. Think of me pretending to be a lawyer, and not knowing how to look low enough!

The carpet! It had been a stout article in its time; had evidently begun in a drawing-room; then descended to a coffee-room; then gone upstairs altogether to a bedroom. The ground was brown, and the pattern was bunches of leaves and roses speckled over the ground at regular distances. I reckoned up the bunches. Ten along the room—eight across it. When I had stepped out five one way and four the other, and was down on my knees on the centre bunch, as true as I sit on this chair I could hear my own heart beating so loud that it quite frightened me.

I looked narrowly all over the bunch, and I felt all over it with the ends of my fingers, and nothing came of that. Then I scraped it over slowly and gently with my nails. My second finger-nail stuck a little at one place. I parted the pile of the carpet over that place, and saw a thin slit which had been hidden by the pile being smoothed over it—a slit about half an inch long, with a little end of brown thread, exactly the colour of the carpet-ground, stick-

ing out about a quarter of an inch from the middle of it. Just as I laid hold of the thread gently, I heard a footstep outside the door.

It was only the head chambermaid. "Haven't you done yet?" she whispers.

"Give me two minutes," says I, "and don't let anybody come near the door—whatever you do, don't let anybody startle me again by coming near the door."

I took a little pull at the thread, and heard something rustle. I took a longer pull, and out came a piece of paper, rolled up tight like those candle-lighters that the ladies make. I unrolled it—and, by George! there was the letter!

"The original letter!—I knew it by the colour of the ink. The letter that was worth five hundred pound to me! It was all I could do to keep myself at first from throwing my hat into the air, and hooraying like mad. I had to take a chair and sit quiet in it for a minute or two, before I could cool myself down to my proper business level. I knew that I was safely down again when I found myself pondering how to let Mr Davager know that he had been done by the innocent country attorney after all.

It was not long before a nice little irritating plan

occurred to me. I tore a blank leaf out of my pocket-book, wrote on it with my pencil "Change for a five hundred pound note," folded up the paper, tied the thread to it, poked it back into the hiding-place, smoothed over the pile of the carpet, and then bolted off to Mr Frank. He in his turn bolted off to show the letter to the young lady, who first certified to its genuineness, then dropped it into the fire, and then took the initiative for the first time since her marriage engagement, by flinging her arms round his neck, kissing him with all her might, and going into hysterics in his arms. So at least Mr Frank told me, but that's not evidence. It is evidence, however, that I saw them married with my own eyes on the Wednesday; and that while they went off in a carriage and four to spend the honeymoon, I went off on my own legs to open a credit at the Town and County Bank with a five hundred pound note in my pocket.

As to Mr Davager, I can tell you nothing more about him, except what is derived from hearsay evidence, which is always unsatisfactory evidence, even in a lawyer's mouth.

My inestimable boy, Tom, although twice kicked off by Sam the pony, never lost hold of the bridle,

and kept his man in sight from first to last. He had nothing particular to report, except that on the way out to the Abbey Mr Davager had stopped at the public-house, had spoken a word or two to his friend of the night before, and had handed him what looked like a bit of paper. This was no doubt a clue to the thread that held the letter, to be used in case of accidents. In every other respect Mr D. had ridden out and ridden in like an ordinary sightseer. Tom reported him to me as having dismounted at the hotel about two. At half-past, I locked my office door, nailed a card under the knocker with "not at home till to-morrow" written on it, and retired to a friend's house a mile or so out of the town for the rest of the day.

Mr Davager, I have been since given to understand, left the Gatcliffe Arms that same night with his best clothes on his back, and with all the valuable contents of his dressing-case in his pockets. I am not in a condition to state whether he ever went through the form of asking for his bill or not; but I can positively testify that he never paid it, and that the effects left in his bedroom did not pay it either. When I add to these fragments of evidence that he and I have never met (luckily for me, you will say) since I

jockeyed him out of his bank-note, I have about fulfilled my implied contract as maker of a statement with you, sir, as hearer of a statement. Observe the expression, will you? I said it was a Statement before I began; and I say it's a Statement now I've done. I defy you to prove it's a Story! —How are you getting on with my portrait? I like you very well, Mr Artist; but if you have been taking advantage of my talking to shirk your work, as sure as you're alive I'll split upon you to the Town Council!"

I attended a great many times at my queer sitter's house before his likeness was completed. To the last he was dissatisfied with the progress I made. Fortunately for me, the Town Council approved of the portrait when it was done. Mr Boxsious, however, objected to them as being much too easy to please. He did not dispute the fidelity of the likeness, but he asserted that I had not covered the canvass with half paint enough for my money. To this day (for he is still alive), he describes me to all inquiring friends as "The Painter-Man who jockeyed the Town Council."

PROLOGUE TO THE THIRD STORY.

IT was a sad day for me when Mr Lanfray of Rockleigh Place, discovering that his youngest daughter's health required a warm climate, removed from his English establishment to the South of France. Roving from place to place, as I am obliged to do, though I make many acquaintances, I keep but few friends. The nature of my calling is, I am quite aware, mainly answerable for this. People cannot be blamed for forgetting a man who, on leaving their houses, never can tell them for certain when he is likely to be in their neighbourhood again.

Mr Lanfray was one of the few exceptional persons who always remembered me. I have proofs of his friendly interest in my welfare in the shape of letters which I treasure with grateful care. The last of these is an invitation to his house in the South of France. There is little chance at present of my being able to

profit by his kindness ; but I like to read his invitation from time to time, for it makes me fancy, in my happier moments, that I may one day really be able to accept it.

My introduction to this gentleman, in my capacity of portrait-painter, did not promise much for me in a professional point of view. I was invited to Rockleigh—or to “The Place,” as it was more frequently called among the people of the county—to take a likeness in water-colours, on a small scale, of the French governess who lived with Mr Lanfray’s daughters. My first idea on hearing of this was, that the governess was about to leave her situation, and that her pupils wished to have a memorial of her in the shape of a portrait. Subsequent inquiry, however, informed me that I was in error. It was the eldest of Mr Lanfray’s daughters, who was on the point of leaving the house to accompany her husband to India ; and it was for her that the portrait had been ordered, as a home remembrance of her best and dearest friend. Besides these particulars, I discovered that the governess, though still called “Mademoiselle,” was an old lady ; that Mr Lanfray had been introduced to her many years since in France, after the death of his wife ; that she was

absolute mistress in the house; and that her three pupils had always looked up to her as a second mother, from the time when their father first placed them under her charge.

These scraps of information made me rather anxious to see Mademoiselle Clairfait, the governess.

On the day appointed for my attendance at the comfortable country-house of Rockleigh, I was detained on the road, and did not arrive at my destination until late in the evening. The welcome accorded to me by Mr Lanfray gave an earnest of the unvarying kindness that I was to experience at his hands in after-life. I was received at once on equal terms, as if I had been a friend of the family, and was presented the same evening to my host's daughters. They were not merely three elegant and attractive young women, but—what means much more than that—three admirable subjects for pictures, the bride particularly. Her young husband did not strike me much at first sight: he seemed rather shy and silent. After I had been introduced to him, I looked round for Mademoiselle Clairfait, but she was not present; and I was soon afterwards informed by Mr Lanfray that she always spent the latter part of the evening in her own room.

At the breakfast-table the next morning I again looked for my sitter, and once more in vain. "Mamma, as we call her," said one of the ladies, "is dressing expressly for her picture, Mr Kerby. I hope you are not above painting silk, lace, and jewellery. The dear old lady, who is perfection in everything else, is perfection also in dress, and is bent on being painted in all her splendour."

This explanation prepared me for something extraordinary; but I found that my anticipations had fallen far below the reality when Mademoiselle Clairfait at last made her appearance, and announced that she was ready to sit for her portrait.

Never before or since have I seen such perfect dressing and such active old age in combination. "Mademoiselle" was short and thin; her face was perfectly white all over, the skin being puckered up in an infinite variety of the smallest possible wrinkles. Her bright black eyes were perfect marvels of youthfulness and vivacity. They sparkled, and beamed, and ogled, and moved about over everybody and everything at such a rate, that the plain grey hair above them looked unnaturally venerable, and the wrinkles below an artful piece of masquerade to represent old age. As for her dress, I remember few

harder pieces of work than the painting of it. She wore a silver-grey silk gown, that seemed always flashing out into some new light whenever she moved. It was as stiff as a board, and rustled like the wind. Her head, neck, and bosom were enveloped in clouds of the airiest-looking lace I ever saw, disposed about each part of her with the most exquisite grace and propriety, and glistening at all sorts of unexpected places with little fairy-like toys in gold and precious stones. On her right wrist she wore three small bracelets with the hair of her three pupils worked into them; and on her left, one large bracelet with a miniature let in over the clasp. She had a dark crimson and gold scarf thrown coquettishly over her shoulders, and held a lovely little feather-fan in her hand. When she first presented herself before me in this costume, with a brisk curtsy and a bright smile, filling the room with perfume, and gracefully flirting the feather-fan, I lost all confidence in my powers as a portrait-painter immediately. The brightest colours in my box looked dowdy and dim, and I myself felt like an unwashed, unbrushed, unpresentable sloven.

“Tell me, my angels,” said Mademoiselle, apostrophizing her pupils in the prettiest foreign English, “am I the cream of all creams this morning? Do I

carry my sixty years resplendently? Will the savages in India, when my own love exhibits my picture among them, say, 'Ah! smart! smart! this was a great dandy?' And the gentleman, the skilful artist, whom it is even more an honour than a happiness to meet, does he approve of me for a model? Does he find me pretty and paintable from top to toe?" Here she dropped me another brisk curtsy, placed herself in a languishing position in the sitter's chair, and asked us all if she looked like a shepherdess in Dresden china.

The young ladies burst out laughing, and Mademoiselle, as gay as any of them and a great deal shriller, joined in the merriment. Never before had I contended with any sitter half as restless as that wonderful old lady. No sooner had I begun than she jumped out of the chair, and exclaiming, "*Grand Dieu!* I have forgotten to embrace my angels this morning," ran up to her pupils, raised herself on tiptoe before them in quick succession, put the two first fingers of each hand under their ears, kissed them lightly on both cheeks, and was back again in the chair before an English governess could have said, "Good morning, my dears, I hope you all slept well last night."

I began again. Up jumped Mademoiselle for the second time, and tripped across the room to a cheval glass. "No!" I heard her say to herself, "I have not discomposed my head in kissing my angels. I may come back and pose for my picture."

Back she came. I worked from her for five minutes at the most. "Stop!" cries Mademoiselle, jumping up for the third time; "I must see how this skilful artist is getting on. *Grand Dieu!* why he has done nothing!"

For the fourth time I began, and for the fourth time the old lady started out of her chair. "Now I must repose myself," said Mademoiselle, walking lightly from end to end of the room, and humming a French air, by way of taking a rest.

I was at my wits' end, and the young ladies saw it. They all surrounded my unmanageable sitter, and appealed to her compassion for me. "Certainly!" said Mademoiselle, expressing astonishment by flinging up both her hands with all the fingers spread out in the air. "But why apostrophize me thus? I am here, I am ready, I am at the service of this skilful artist. Why apostrophize me?"

A fortunate chance-question of mine steadied her for some time. I inquired if I was expected to draw

the whole of my sitter's figure as well as her face. Mademoiselle replied by a comic scream of indignation. If I was the brave and gifted man for whom she took me, I ought to be ready to perish rather than leave out an inch of her anywhere. Dress was her passion, and it would be an outrage on her sentiments if I did not do full justice to everything she had on—to her robe, to her lace, to her scarf, to her fan, to her rings, her jewels, and, above all, to her bracelets. I groaned in spirit at the task before me, but made my best bow of acquiescence. Mademoiselle was not to be satisfied by a mere bow: she desired the pleasure of specially directing my attention, if I would be so amiable as to get up and approach her, to one of her bracelets in particular—the bracelet with the miniature, on her left wrist. It had been the gift of the dearest friend she ever had, and the miniature represented that friend's beloved and beautiful face. Could I make a tiny, tiny copy of that likeness in my drawing? Would I only be so obliging as to approach for one little moment, and see if such a thing were possible?

I obeyed unwillingly enough, expecting, from Mademoiselle's expression, to see a common-place portrait of some unfortunate admirer whom she had

treated with unmerited severity in the days of her youth. To my astonishment, I found that the miniature, which was very beautifully painted, represented a woman's face—a young woman with kind, sad eyes, pale delicate cheeks, light hair, and such a pure, tender, lovely expression, that I thought of Raphael's Madonnas the moment I looked at her portrait.

The old lady observed the impression which the miniature produced on me, and nodded her head in silence. "What a beautiful, innocent, pure face!" I said.

Mademoiselle Clairfait gently brushed a particle of dust from the miniature with her handkerchief, and kissed it. "I have three angels still left," she said, looking at her pupils. "They console me for the fourth, who has gone to heaven."

She patted the face on the miniature gently with her little withered white fingers, as if it had been a living thing. "*Sister Rose!*" she sighed to herself, then, looking up again at me, said:—"I should like it put into my portrait, sir, because I have always worn it since I was a young woman, for '*Sister Rose's* sake."

The sudden change in her manner from the extreme of flighty gaiety to the extreme of quiet sadness,

would have looked theatrical in a woman of any other nation. It seemed, however, perfectly natural and appropriate in her. I went back to my drawing, rather perplexed. Who was "Sister Rose?" Not one of the Lanfray family apparently. The composure of the young ladies when the name was mentioned showed plainly enough that the original of the miniature had been no relation of theirs.

I tried to stifle my curiosity on the subject of Sister Rose, by giving myself entirely to my work. For a full half-hour, Mademoiselle Clairfait sat quietly before me with her hands crossed on her lap, and her eyes fixed on the bracelet. This happy alteration enabled me to do something towards completing the outline of her face and figure. I might even under fortunate circumstances have vanquished the preliminary difficulties of my task at one effort; but the fates were against me that day. While I was still working rapidly and to my satisfaction, a servant knocked at the door, to announce luncheon, and Mademoiselle lightly roused herself from her serious reflections and her quiet position in a moment.

"Ah me!" she said, turning the miniature round on her wrist till it was out of sight. "What animals

we are after all! The spiritual part of us is at the mercy of the stomach. My heart is absorbed by tender thoughts, yet I am not the less ready for luncheon! Come, my children and fellow-mortals. *Allons cultiver notre jardin!*”

With this quotation from *Candide*, plaintively delivered, the old lady led the way out of the room, and was followed by her younger pupils. The eldest sister remained behind for a moment, and reminded me that the lunch was ready.

“I am afraid you have found the dear old soul rather an unruly sitter,” she said, noticing the look of dissatisfaction with which I was regarding my drawing. “But she will improve as you go on. She has done better already for the last half-hour, has she not?”

“Much better,” I answered. “My admiration of the miniature on the bracelet seemed—I suppose, by calling up some old associations—to have a strangely soothing effect on Mademoiselle Clairfait.”

“Ah, yes! only remind her of the original of that portrait, and you change her directly, whatever she may have been saying or doing the moment before. Sometimes she talks of *Sister Rose*, and of all that she went through in the time of the French Revolu-

tion, by the hour together. It is wonderfully interesting—at least we all think so.”

“I presume that the lady described as ‘Sister Rose,’ was a relation of Mademoiselle Clairfait’s?”

“No, only a very dear friend. Mademoiselle Clairfait is the daughter of a silk-mercier, once established at Chalons-sur-Marne. Her father happened to give an asylum in his office to a lonely old man, to whom ‘Sister Rose’ and her brother had been greatly indebted in the revolutionary time; and out of a train of circumstances connected with that, the first acquaintance between Mademoiselle and the friend whose portrait she wears, arose. After the time of her father’s bankruptcy, and for many years before we were placed under her charge, our good old governess lived entirely with ‘Sister Rose’ and her brother. She must then have heard all the interesting things that she has since often repeated to my sisters and myself.”

“Might I suggest,” said I, after an instant’s consideration, “that the best way to give me a fair chance of studying Mademoiselle Clairfait’s face at the next sitting, would be to lead her thoughts again to that quieting subject of the miniature, and to the events which the portrait recalls? It is really the

only plan, after what I have observed this morning, that I can think of for enabling me to do myself and my sitter justice."

"I am delighted to hear you say so," replied the lady; "for the execution of your plan, by me or by my sisters, will be the easiest thing in the world. A word from us at any time, will set Mademoiselle thinking, and talking too, of the friend of her youthful days. Depend on our assistance so far. And now, let me show you the way to the luncheon table."

Two good results followed the ready rendering of the help I had asked from my host's daughters. I succeeded with my portrait of Mademoiselle Clairfait, and I heard the story which occupies the following pages.

In the case of the preceding narratives, I have repeated what was related to me, as nearly as possible in the very words of my sitters. In the case of this third story, it is impossible for me to proceed upon the same plan. The circumstances of "Sister Rose's" eventful history were narrated to me at different times, and in the most fragmentary and discursive manner. Mademoiselle Clairfait characteristically mixed up with the direct interest of her story, not

only references to places and people which had no recognisable connexion with it, but outbursts of passionate political declamation, on the extreme liberal side—to say nothing of little tender apostrophes to her beloved friend, which sounded very prettily as she spoke them, but which would lose their effect altogether by being transferred to paper. Under these circumstances, I have thought it best to tell the story in my own way—rigidly adhering to the events of it exactly as they were related; and never interfering on my own responsibility except to keep order in the march of the incidents, and to present them to the best of my ability variously as well as interestingly to the reader.

THE FRENCH GOVERNESS'S STORY

OF

SISTER ROSE.

PART FIRST.—CHAPTER I.

“WELL, Monsieur Guillaume, what is the news this evening?”

“None that I know of, Monsieur Justin, except that Mademoiselle Rose is to be married to-morrow.”

“Much obliged, my respectable old friend, for so interesting and unexpected a reply to my question. Considering that I am the valet of Monsieur Danville, who plays the distinguished part of bridegroom in the little wedding comedy to which you refer, I think I may assure you, without offence, that your news is, so far as I am concerned, of the stalest pos-

sible kind. Take a pinch of snuff, Monsieur Guillaume, and excuse me if I inform you that my question referred to public news, and not to the private affairs of the two families whose household interests we have the pleasure of promoting.”

“ I don't understand what you mean by such a phrase as promoting household interests, Monsieur Justin. I am the servant of Monsieur Louis Trudaine, who lives here with his sister, Mademoiselle Rose. You are the servant of Monsieur Danville, whose excellent mother has made up the match for him with my young lady. As servants, both of us, the pleasantest news we can have any concern with is news that is connected with the happiness of our masters. I have nothing to do with public affairs; and, being one of the old school, I make it my main object in life to mind my own business. If our homely domestic politics have no interest for you, allow me to express my regret, and to wish you a very good evening.”

“ Pardon me, my dear sir, I have not the slightest respect for the old school, or the least sympathy with people who only mind their own business. However, I accept your expressions of regret; I reciprocate your Good evening; and I trust to find

you improved in temper, dress, manners, and appearance the next time I have the honour of meeting you. Adieu, Monsieur Guillaume, and *Vive la bagatelle!*”

These scraps of dialogue were interchanged on a lovely summer evening in the year seventeen hundred and eighty-nine, before the back-door of a small house which stood on the banks of the Seine, about three miles westward of the city of Rouen. The one speaker was lean, old, crabbed, and slovenly; the other was plump, young, oily-mannered, and dressed in the most gorgeous livery costume of the period. The last days of genuine dandyism were then rapidly approaching all over the civilized world; and Monsieur Justin was, in his own way, dressed to perfection, as a living illustration of the expiring glories of his epoch.

After the old servant had left him, he occupied himself for a few minutes in contemplating, superciliously enough, the back view of the little house before which he stood. Judging by the windows, it did not contain more than six or eight rooms in all. Instead of stables and outhouses, there was a conservatory attached to the building on one side, and a low long room, built of wood gaily painted, on the other. One of the windows of this room was left

uncurtained, and through it could be seen, on a sort of dresser inside, bottles filled with strangely-coloured liquids, oddly-shaped utensils of brass and copper, one end of a large furnace, and other objects, which plainly proclaimed that the apartment was used as a chemical laboratory.

“Think of our bride’s brother amusing himself in such a place as that with cooking drugs in saucepans,” muttered Monsieur Justin, peeping into the room. “I am the least particular man in the universe, but I must say I wish we were not going to be connected by marriage with an amateur apothecary. Pah! I can smell the place through the window.”

With these words Monsieur Justin turned his back on the laboratory in disgust, and sauntered towards the cliffs overhanging the river.

Leaving the garden attached to the house, he ascended some gently-rising ground by a winding path. Arrived at the summit, the whole view of the Seine with its lovely green islands, its banks fringed with trees, its gliding boats, and little scattered waterside cottages opened before him. Westward, where the level country appeared beyond the further bank of the river, the landscape was all a-glow with the crimson of the setting sun. Eastward, the long

shadows and mellow intervening lights, the red glory that quivered on the rippling water, the steady ruby-fire glowing on cottage windows that reflected the level sunlight, led the eye onward and onward, along the windings of the Seine, until it rested upon the spires, towers, and broadly-massed houses of Rouen, with the wooded hills rising beyond them for background. Lovely to look on at any time, the view was almost supernaturally beautiful now under the gorgeous evening light that glowed upon it. All its attractions, however, were lost on the valet; he stood yawning with his hands in his pockets, looking neither to the right nor to the left, but staring straight before him at a little hollow, beyond which the ground sloped away smoothly to the brink of the cliff. A bench was placed here, and three persons—an old lady, a gentleman, and a young girl—were seated on it, watching the sunset, and by consequence turning their backs on Monsieur Justin. Near them stood two gentlemen, also looking towards the river and the distant view. These five figures attracted the valet's attention, to the exclusion of every other object around him.

“ There they are still,” he said to himself discontentedly. “ Madame Danville in the same place on

the seat; my master, the bridegroom, dutifully next to her; Mademoiselle Rose, the bride, bashfully next to him; Monsieur Trudaine, the amateur apothecary brother, affectionately next to her; and Monsieur Lomaque, our queer land-steward, officially in waiting on the whole party. There they all are indeed, incomprehensibly wasting their time still in looking at nothing! Yes," continued Monsieur Justin, lifting his eyes wearily, and staring hard, first up the river at Rouen, then down the river at the setting sun; "yes, plague take them, looking at nothing, absolutely and positively at nothing, all this while."

Here Monsieur Justin yawned again, and, returning to the garden, sat himself down in an arbour and resignedly went to sleep.

If the valet had ventured near the five persons whom he had been apostrophizing from a distance, and if he had been possessed of some little refinement of observation, he could hardly have failed to remark that the bride and bridegroom of the morrow, and their companions on either side, were all, in a greater or less degree, under the influence of some secret restraint, which affected their conversation, their gestures, and even the expression of their faces. Madame Danville

—a handsome, richly-dressed old lady, with very bright eyes, and a quick suspicious manner—looked composedly and happily enough, as long as her attention was fixed on her son. But when she turned from him towards the bride, a hardly-perceptible uneasiness passed over her face—an uneasiness which only deepened to positive distrust and dissatisfaction whenever she looked towards Mademoiselle Trudaine's brother. In the same way, her son, who was all smiles and happiness while he was speaking with his future wife, altered visibly in manner and look, exactly as his mother altered, whenever the presence of Monsieur Trudaine specially impressed itself on his attention. Then, again, Lomaque the land-steward—quiet, sharp, skinny Lomaque, with the submissive manner, and the red-rimmed eyes—never looked up at his master's future brother-in-law without looking away again rather uneasily, and thoughtfully drilling holes in the grass with his long sharp-pointed cane. Even the bride herself, the pretty innocent girl, with her childish shyness of manner, seemed to be affected like the others. Doubt, if not distress, overshadowed her face from time to time, and the hand which her lover held trembled a little, and grew restless, when she accidentally caught her brother's eye.

Strangely enough there was nothing to repel, but, on the contrary, everything to attract in the look and manner of the person whose mere presence seemed to exercise such a curiously constraining influence over the wedding-party. Louis Trudaine was a remarkably handsome man. His expression was singularly kind and gentle; his manner irresistibly winning in its frank, manly firmness and composure. His words, when he occasionally spoke, seemed as unlikely to give offence as his looks; for he only opened his lips in courteous reply to questions directly addressed to him. Judging by a latent mournfulness in the tones of his voice, and by the sorrowful tenderness which clouded his kind earnest eyes whenever they rested on his sister, his thoughts were certainly not of the happy or the hopeful kind. But he gave them no direct expression; he intruded his secret sadness, whatever it might be, on no one of his companions. Nevertheless, modest and self-restrained as he was, there was evidently some reproving or saddening influence in his presence which affected the spirits of everyone near him, and darkened the eve of the wedding to bride and bridegroom alike.

As the sun slowly sank in the heaven, the con-

versation flagged more and more. After a long silence the bridegroom was the first to start a new subject.

“Rose, love,” he said, “that magnificent sunset is a good omen for our marriage; it promises another lovely day to-morrow.”

The bride laughed and blushed.

“Do you really believe in omens, Charles?” she said.

“My dear,” interposed the old lady, before her son could answer, “if Charles does believe in omens, it is nothing to laugh at. You will soon know better, when you are his wife, than to confound him, even in the slightest things, with the common herd of people. All his convictions are well founded—so well, that if I thought he really did believe in omens, I should most assuredly make up my mind to believe in them too.”

“I beg your pardon, madam,” Rose began tremulously, “I only meant——”

“My dear child, have you so little knowledge of the world as to suppose that I could be offended——”

“Let Rose speak,” said the young man.

He turned round petulantly, almost with the air of a spoilt child, to his mother, as he said those

words. She had been looking fondly and proudly on him the moment before. Now her eyes wandered disconcertedly from his face; she hesitated an instant with a sudden confusion which seemed quite foreign to her character, then whispered in his ear:

“Am I to blame, Charles, for trying to make her worthy of you?”

Her son took no notice of the question. He only reiterated sharply,—“Let Rose speak.”

“I really had nothing to say,” faltered the young girl, growing more and more confused.

“Oh, but you had!”

There was such an ungracious sharpness in his voice, such an outburst of petulance in his manner as he spoke, that his mother gave him a warning touch on the arm, and whispered “Hush!”

Monsieur Lomaque the land-steward, and Monsieur Trudaine the brother, both glanced searchingly at the bride, as the words passed the bridegroom’s lips. She seemed to be frightened and astonished, rather than irritated or hurt. A curious smile puckered up Lomaque’s lean face, as he looked demurely down on the ground, and began drilling a fresh hole in the turf with the sharp point of his cane. Trudaine turned aside quickly, and, sighing, walked away a

few paces; then came back, and seemed about to speak, but Danville interrupted him.

“ Pardon me, Rose,” he said; “ I am so jealous of even the appearance of any want of attention towards you, that I was nearly allowing myself to be irritated about nothing.”

He kissed her hand very gracefully and tenderly as he made his excuse; but there was a latent expression in his eye which was at variance with the apparent spirit of his action. It was noticed by nobody but observant and submissive Monsieur Lomaque, who smiled to himself again, and drilled harder than ever at his hole in the grass.

“ I think Monsieur Trudaine was about to speak,” said Madame Danville. “ Perhaps he will have no objection to let us hear what he was going to say.”

“ None, madame,” replied Trudaine politely. “ I was about to take upon myself the blame of Rose’s want of respect for believers in omens, by confessing that I have always encouraged her to laugh at superstitions of every kind.”

“ You a ridiculer of superstitions ! ” said Danville, turning quickly on him. “ You who have built a laboratory; you who are an amateur professor of the occult arts of chemistry, a seeker after the Elixir

of Life. On my word of honour, you astonish me!"

There was an ironical politeness in his voice, look, and manner as he said this, which his mother and his land-steward, Monsieur Lomaque, evidently knew how to interpret. The first touched his arm again and whispered "Be careful!" the second suddenly grew serious, and left off drilling his hole in the grass. Rose neither heard the warning of Madame Danville, nor noticed the alteration in Lomaque. She was looking round at her brother, and was waiting with a bright affectionate smile to hear his answer. He nodded, as if to reassure her, before he spoke again to Danville.

"You have rather romantic ideas about experiments in chemistry," he said quietly. "Mine have so little connexion with what you call the occult arts, that all the world might see them, if all the world thought it worth while. The only Elixirs of Life that I know of are a quiet heart and a contented mind. Both those I found, years and years ago, when Rose and I first came to live together in the house yonder."

He spoke with a quiet sadness in his voice, which meant far more to his sister than the simple words

he uttered. Her eyes filled with tears: she turned for a moment from her lover and took her brother's hand. "Don't talk, Louis, as if you thought you were going to lose your sister, because——" Her lip began to tremble, and she stopped suddenly.

"More jealous than ever of your taking her away from him!" whispered Madame Danville in her son's ear. "Hush! don't, for God's sake, take any notice of it," she added hurriedly, as he rose from the seat and faced Trudaine with undisguised irritation and impatience in his manner. Before he could speak, the old servant Guillaume made his appearance, and announced that coffee was ready. Madame Danville again said "Hush!" and quickly took one of his arms, while he offered the other to Rose. "Charles!" said the young girl, amazedly, "how flushed your face is, and how your arm trembles!"

He controlled himself in a moment, smiled, and said to her, "Can't you guess why, Rose? I am thinking of to-morrow." While he was speaking, he passed close by the land-steward, on his way back to the house with the ladies. The smile returned to Monsieur Lomaque's lean face, and a curious light twinkled in his red-rimmed eyes, as he began a fresh hole in the grass.

“ Won't you go indoors, and take some coffee ? ” asked Trudaine, touching the land-steward on the arm.

Monsieur Lomaque started a little, and left his cane sticking in the ground. “ A thousand thanks, monsieur,” he said: “ may I be allowed to follow you ? ”

“ I confess the beauty of the evening makes me a little unwilling to leave this place just yet.”

“ Ah! the beauties of nature—I feel them with you, Monsieur Trudaine: I feel them here.” Saying this, Lomaque laid one hand on his heart, and with the other pulled his stick out of the grass. He had looked as little at the landscape or the setting sun as Monsieur Justin himself.

They sat down, side by side, on the empty bench; and then there followed an awkward pause. Submissive Lomaque was too discreet to forget his place, and venture on starting a new topic. Trudaine was pre-occupied, and disinclined to talk. It was necessary, however, in common politeness, to say something. Hardly attending himself to his own words, he began with a common-place phrase,—“ I regret, Monsieur Lomaque, that we have not had more opportunities of bettering our acquaintance.”

“ I feel deeply indebted,” rejoined the land-steward, “ to the admirable Madame Danville for having chosen me as her escort hither from her son’s estate near Lyons, and having thereby procured for me the honour of this introduction.” Both Monsieur Lomaque’s red-rimmed eyes were seized with a sudden fit of winking, as he made this polite speech. His enemies were accustomed to say, that whenever he was particularly insincere, or particularly deceitful, he always took refuge in the weakness of his eyes, and so evaded the trying ordeal of being obliged to look steadily at the person whom he was speaking with.

“ I was pleased to hear you mention my late father’s name, at dinner, in terms of high respect,” continued Trudaine, resolutely keeping up the conversation. “ Did you know him ? ”

“ I am indirectly indebted to your excellent father,” answered the land-steward, “ for the very situation which I now hold. At a time when the good word of a man of substance and reputation was needed to save me from poverty and ruin, your father spoke that word. Since then, I have, in my own very small way, succeeded in life, until I have risen to the honour of superintending the estate of Monsieur Danville.”

“Excuse me—but your way of speaking of your present situation rather surprises me. Your father, I believe, was a merchant, just as Danville’s father was a merchant; the only difference between them was, that one failed, and the other realized a large fortune. Why should you speak of yourself as honoured by holding your present place?”

“Have you never heard?” exclaimed Lomaque, with an appearance of great astonishment, “or can you have heard, and forgotten, that Madame Danville is descended from one of the noble houses of France? Has she never told you, as she has often told me, that she condescended when she married her late husband; and that her great object in life is to get the title of her family (years since extinct in the male line) settled on her son?”

“Yes,” replied Trudaine; “I remember to have heard something of this, and to have paid no great attention to it at the time, having little sympathy with such aspirations as you describe. You have lived many years in Danville’s service, Monsieur Lomaque, have you”—he hesitated for a moment, then continued, looking the land-steward full in the face, “have you found him a good and kind master?”

Lomaque’s thin lips seemed to close instinctively

at the question, as if he were never going to speak again. He bowed — Trudaine waited — he only bowed again. Trudaine waited a third time. Lomaque looked at his host with perfect steadiness for an instant, then his eyes began to get weak again. “You seem to have some special interest,” he quietly remarked, “if I may say so without offence, in asking me that question.”

“I deal frankly, at all hazards, with every one,” returned Trudaine; “and stranger as you are, I will deal frankly with you. I acknowledge that I have an interest in asking that question—the dearest, the tenderest of all interests.” At those last words, his voice trembled for a moment, but he went on firmly; “from the beginning of my sister’s engagement with Danville, I made it my duty not to conceal my own feelings: my conscience and my affection for Rose counselled me to be candid to the last, even though my candour should distress or offend others. When we first made the acquaintance of Madame Danville, and when I first discovered that her son’s attentions to Rose were not unfavourably received, I felt astonished, and, though it cost me a hard effort, I did not conceal that astonishment from my sister”—

Lomaque, who had hitherto been all attention,

started here, and threw up his hands in amazement. "Astonished, did I hear you say? Astonished, Monsieur Trudaine, that the attentions of a young gentleman possessed of all the graces and accomplishments of a highly-bred Frenchman should be favourably received by a young lady! Astonished that such a dancer, such a singer, such a talker, such a notoriously fascinating ladies' man as Monsieur Danville should, by dint of respectful assiduity, succeed in making some impression on the heart of Mademoiselle Rose! Oh! Monsieur Trudaine, venerated Monsieur Trudaine, this is almost too much to credit!" Lomaque's eyes grew weaker than ever, and winked incessantly, as he uttered this apostrophe. At the end, he threw up his hands again, and blinked inquiringly all round him, in mute appeal to universal nature.

"When, in the course of time, matters were farther advanced," continued Trudaine, without paying any attention to the interruption; "when the offer of marriage was made, and when I knew that Rose had in her own heart accepted it, I objected, and I did not conceal my objections"——

"Heavens!" interposed Lomaque again, clasping his hands this time with a look of bewilderment;

“what objections? what possible objections to a man young and well-bred, with an immense fortune and an uncompromised character? I have heard of these objections: I know they have made bad blood; and I ask myself again and again, what can they be?”

“God knows I have often tried to dismiss them from my mind, as fanciful and absurd,” said Trudaine, “and I have always failed. It is impossible, in your presence, that I can describe in detail what my own impressions have been, from the first, of the master whom you serve. Let it be enough if I confide to you that I cannot, even now, persuade myself of the sincerity of his attachment to my sister, and that I feel—in spite of myself, in spite of my earnest desire to put the most implicit confidence in Rose’s choice—a distrust of his character and temper, which now, on the eve of the marriage, amounts to positive terror. Long secret suffering, doubt, and suspense, wring this confession from me, Monsieur Lomaque, almost unawares, in defiance of caution, in defiance of all the conventionalities of society. You have lived for years under the same roof with this man; you have seen him in his most unguarded and private moments. I tempt you to betray no confidence—I

only ask you if you can make me happy by telling me that I have been doing your master grievous injustice by my opinion of him? I ask you to take my hand, and tell me if you can, in all honour, that my sister is not risking the happiness of her whole life by giving herself in marriage to Danville to-morrow!"

He held out his hand while he spoke. By some strange chance, Lomaque happened just at that moment to be looking away towards those beauties of nature which he admired so greatly. "Really, Monsieur Trudaine, really such an appeal from you, at such a time, amazes me." Having got so far, he stopped and said no more.

"When we first sat down together here, I had no thought of making this appeal, no idea of talking to you as I have talked," pursued the other. "My words have escaped me, as I told you, almost unawares—you must make allowances for them and for me. I cannot expect others, Monsieur Lomaque, to appreciate and understand my feelings for Rose. We two have lived alone in the world together: father, mother, kindred, they all died years since and left us. I am so much older than my sister, that I have learnt to feel towards her more as a father than as a

brother. All my life, all my dearest hopes, all my highest expectations have centred in her. I was past the period of my boyhood when my mother put my little child-sister's hand in mine, and said to me on her death-bed, 'Louis, be all to her that I have been, for she has no one left to look to but you.' Since then the loves and ambitions of other men have not been my loves or my ambitions. Sister Rose—as we all used to call her in those past days, as I love to call her still—Sister Rose has been the one aim, the one happiness, the one precious trust, the one treasured reward of all my life. I have lived in this poor house, in this dull retirement, as in a Paradise, because Sister Rose, my innocent, happy, bright-faced Eve, has lived here with me. Even if the husband of her choice had been the husband of mine, the necessity of parting with her would have been the hardest, the bitterest of trials. As it is, thinking what I think, dreading what I dread, judge what my feelings must be on the eve of her marriage; and know why, and with what object, I made the appeal which surprised you a moment since, but which cannot surprise you now. Speak if you will—I can say no more." He sighed bitterly; his head dropped on his breast, and the hand which he had

extended to Lomaque trembled as he withdrew it and let it fall at his side.

The land-steward was not a man accustomed to hesitate, but he hesitated now. He was not usually at a loss for phrases in which to express himself, but he stammered at the very outset of his reply. "Suppose I answered," he began slowly; "suppose I told you that you wronged him, would my testimony really be strong enough to shake opinions, or rather presumptions, which have been taking firmer and firmer hold of you for months and months past? Suppose, on the other hand, that my master had his little"—(Lomaque hesitated before he pronounced the next word)—"his little—infirmities, let me say; but only hypothetically, mind that—infirmities; and suppose I had observed them, and was willing to confide them to you, what purpose would such a confidence answer now, at the eleventh hour, with Mademoiselle Rose's heart engaged, with the marriage fixed for to-morrow? No! no! trust me"—

Trudaine looked up suddenly. "I thank you for reminding me, Monsieur Lomaque, that it is too late now to make inquiries, and by consequence too late also to trust in others. My sister has chosen; and on the subject of that choice my lips shall be

henceforth sealed. The events of the future are with God: whatever they may be, I hope I am strong enough to bear my part in them with the patience and the courage of a man! I apologize, Monsieur Lomaque, for having thoughtlessly embarrassed you by questions which I had no right to ask. Let us return to the house—I will show you the way.”

Lomaque’s lips opened, then closed again: he bowed uneasily, and his sallow complexion whitened for a moment.

Trudaine led the way in silence back to the house: the land-steward following slowly at a distance of several paces, and talking in whispers to himself. “His father was the saving of me,” muttered Lomaque; “that is truth, and there is no getting over it: his father was the saving of me; and yet here am I—no! it’s too late!—too late to speak—too late to act—too late to do anything!”

Close to the house they were met by the old servant. “My young lady had just sent me to call you in to coffee, Monsieur,” said Guillaume. “She has kept a cup hot for you, and another cup for Monsieur Lomaque.”

The land-steward started—this time with genuine astonishment. “For me!” he exclaimed. “Made-

moiselle Rose has troubled herself to keep a cup of coffee hot for me?" The old servant stared; Trudaine stopped and looked back. "What is there so very surprising," he asked, "in such an ordinary act of politeness on my sister's part?"

"Excuse me, Monsieur Trudaine," answered Lomaque: "you have not passed such an existence as mine—you are not a friendless old man—you have a settled position in the world, and are used to be treated with consideration. I am not. This is the first occasion in my life on which I find myself an object for the attention of a young lady, and it takes me by surprise. I repeat my excuses—pray let us go in."

Trudaine made no reply to this curious explanation. He wondered at it a little, however, and he wondered still more, when, on entering the drawing-room, he saw Lomaque walk straight up to his sister, and—apparently not noticing that Danville was sitting at the harpsichord and singing at the time—address her confusedly and earnestly with a set speech of thanks for his hot cup of coffee. Rose looked perplexed, and half inclined to laugh, as she listened to him. Madame Danville, who sat by her side, frowned, and tapped the land-steward contemptuously on the arm with her fan.

“Be so good as to keep silent until my son has done singing,” she said. Lomaque made a low bow, and retiring to a table in a corner, took up a newspaper lying on it. If Madame Danville had seen the expression that came over his face when he turned away from her, proud as she was, her aristocratic composure might possibly have been a little ruffled.

Danville had finished his song, had quitted the harpsichord, and was talking in whispers to his bride; Madame Danville was adding a word to the conversation every now and then; Trudaine was seated apart at the far-end of the room, thoughtfully reading a letter which he had taken from his pocket—when an exclamation from Lomaque, who was still engaged with the newspaper, caused all the other occupants of the apartment to suspend their employments and look up.

“What is it?” asked Danville, impatiently.

“Shall I be interrupting, if I explain?” inquired Lomaque, getting very weak in the eyes again, as he deferentially addressed himself to Madame Danville.

“You have already interrupted us,” said the old lady sharply; “so you may now just as well explain.”

“It is a passage from the *Scientific Intelligence*,

which has given me great delight, and which will be joyful news for every one here." Saying this, Lomaque looked significantly at Trudaine, and then read from the newspaper these lines:—

“ACADEMY OF SCIENCES, PARIS.—The vacant sub-professorship of chemistry has been offered, we are rejoiced to hear, to a gentleman whose modesty has hitherto prevented his scientific merits from becoming sufficiently prominent in the world. To the members of the academy he has been long since known as the originator of some of the most remarkable improvements in chemistry which have been made of late years—improvements, the credit of which he has, with rare, and we were almost about to add, culpable moderation, allowed others to profit by with impunity. No man in any profession is more thoroughly entitled to have a position of trust and distinction conferred on him by the state than the gentleman to whom we refer—M. Louis Trudaine.”

Before Lomaque could look up from the paper to observe the impression which his news produced, Rose had gained her brother's side, and was kissing him in a flutter of delight.

“Dear Louis,” she cried, clapping her hands, “let

me be the first to congratulate you! How proud and glad I am! You accept the professorship, of course?"

Trudaine, who had hastily and confusedly put his letter back in his pocket the moment Lomaque began to read, seemed at a loss for an answer. He patted his sister's hand rather absently, and said,

"I have not made up my mind; don't ask me why, Rose—at least not now, not just now." An expression of perplexity and distress came over his face, as he gently motioned her to resume her chair.

"Pray, is a sub-professor of chemistry supposed to hold the rank of a gentleman?" asked Madame Danville, without the slightest appearance of any special interest in Lomaque's news.

"Of course not," replied her son, with a sarcastic laugh; "he is expected to work and make himself useful. What gentleman does that?"

"Charles!" exclaimed the old lady, reddening with anger.

"Bah!" cried Danville, turning his back on her, "enough of chemistry. Lomaque! now you have begun reading the newspaper, try if you can't find something interesting to read about. What are the last accounts from Paris? Any more symptoms of a general revolt?"

Lomaque turned to another part of the paper. "Bad, very bad prospects for the restoration of tranquillity," he said. "Necker, the people's minister, is dismissed. Placards against popular gatherings are posted all over Paris. The Swiss Guards have been ordered to the Champs Elysées, with four pieces of artillery. No more is yet known, but the worst is dreaded. The breach between the aristocracy and the people is widening fatally almost hour by hour."

Here he stopped and laid down the newspaper. Trudaine took it from him, and shook his head forebodingly, as he looked over the paragraph which had just been read.

"Bah!" cried Madame Danville. "The People, indeed! Let those four pieces of artillery be properly loaded, let the Swiss Guards do their duty, and we shall hear no more of the People!"

"I advise you not to be sure of that," said her son, carelessly, "there are rather too many people in Paris for the Swiss Guards to shoot conveniently. Don't hold your head too aristocratically high, mother, till we are quite certain which way the wind really does blow. Who knows if I may not have to bow just as low one of these days to King Mob, as

ever you curtsyed in your youth to King Louis the Fifteenth!"

He laughed complacently as he ended, and opened his snuff-box. His mother rose from her chair, her face crimson with indignation.

"I won't hear you talk so—it shocks, it horrifies me!" she exclaimed with vehement gesticulation. "No, no! I decline to hear another word. I decline to sit by patiently, while my son, whom I love, jests at the most sacred principles, and sneers at the memory of an anointed king. This is my reward, is it, for having yielded and having come here, against all the laws of etiquette, the night before the marriage? I comply no longer; I resume my own will and my own way. I order you, my son, to accompany me back to Rouen. We are the bridegroom's party, and we have no business overnight at the house of the bride. You meet no more till you meet at the church. Justin! my coach! Lomaque, pick up my hood. Monsieur Trudaine! thanks for your hospitality; I shall hope to return it with interest the first time you are in our neighbourhood. Mademoiselle! put on your best looks to-morrow, along with your wedding finery; remember that my son's bride must do honour to my son's taste. Justin!

my coach—drone, vagabond, idiot, where is my coach!”

“My mother looks handsome when she is in a passion, does she not, Rose?” said Danville, quietly putting up his snuff-box as the old lady sailed out of the room. “Why you seem quite frightened, love,” he added, taking her hand with his easy graceful air, “frightened, let me assure you, without the least cause. My mother has but that one prejudice, and that one weak point, Rose. You will find her a very dove for gentleness, as long as you do not wound her pride of caste. Come, come! on this night, of all others, you must not send me away with such a face as that.”

He bent down and whispered to her a bridegroom’s compliment, which brought the blood back to her cheek in an instant.

“Ah! how she loves him—how dearly she loves him,” thought her brother, watching her from his solitary corner of the room, and seeing the smile that brightened her blushing face when Danville kissed her hand at parting.

Lomaque, who had remained imperturbably cool during the outbreak of the old lady’s anger; Lomaque, whose observant eyes had watched sarcastically

the effect of the scene between mother and son on Trudaine and his sister, was the last to take leave. After he had bowed to Rose with a certain gentleness in his manner, which contrasted strangely with his wrinkled haggard face, he held out his hand to her brother. "I did not take your hand when we sat together on the bench," he said, "may I take it now?"

Trudaine met his advance courteously, but in silence. "You may alter your opinion of me one of these days." Adding those words in a whisper, Monsieur Lomaque bowed once more to the bride and went out.

For a few minutes after the door had closed, the brother and sister kept silence. "Our last night together at home!" that was the thought which now filled the heart of each. Rose was the first to speak. Hesitating a little, as she approached her brother, she said to him anxiously:

"I am sorry for what happened with Madame Danville, Louis. Does it make you think the worse of Charles?"

"I can make allowance for Madame Danville's anger," returned Trudaine, evasively, "because she spoke from honest conviction."

“Honest?” echoed Rose sadly—“honest?—ah, Louis! I know you are thinking disparagingly of Charles’s convictions, when you speak so of his mother’s.”

Trudaine smiled and shook his head; but she took no notice of the gesture of denial—only stood looking earnestly and wistfully into his face. Her eyes began to fill; she suddenly threw her arms round his neck, and whispered to him. “Oh, Louis, Louis! how I wish I could teach you to see Charles with my eyes!”

He felt her tears on his cheek as she spoke, and tried to reassure her.

“You shall teach me, Rose—you shall indeed. Come, come! we must keep up our spirits, or how are you to look your best to-morrow.”

He unclasped her arms, and led her gently to a chair. At the same moment, there was a knock at the door, and Rose’s maid appeared, anxious to consult her mistress on some of the preparations for the wedding ceremony. No interruption could have been more welcome just at that time. It obliged Rose to think of present trifles, and it gave her brother an excuse for retiring to his study.

He sat down by his desk, doubting and heavy-

hearted, and placed the letter from the Academy of Sciences open before him.

Passing over all the complimentary expressions which it contained, his eye rested only on these lines at the end:—"During the first three years of your Professorship, you will be required to reside in or near Paris nine months out of the year, for the purpose of delivering lectures, and superintending experiments from time to time in the laboratories." The letter in which these lines occurred offered him such a position as in his modest self-distrust he had never dreamed of before: the lines themselves contained the promise of such vast facilities for carrying on his favourite experiments, as he could never hope to command in his own little study, with his own limited means; and yet, there he now sat, doubting whether he should accept or reject the tempting honours and advantages that were offered to him—doubting for his sister's sake!

"Nine months of the year in Paris," he said to himself, sadly, "and Rose is to pass her married life at Lyons. Oh! if I could clear my heart of its dread on her account—if I could free my mind of its forebodings for her future—how gladly I would answer this letter by accepting the trust it offers me!"

He paused for a few minutes and reflected. The thoughts that were in him marked their ominous course in the growing paleness of his cheek, in the dimness that stole over his eyes. "If this cleaving distrust from which I cannot free myself should be in very truth the mute prophecy of evil to come—to come, I know not when—if it be so (which God forbid), how soon she may want a friend, a protector near at hand, a ready refuge in the time of her trouble! Where shall she then find protection or refuge? With that passionate woman? With her husband's kindred and friends?"

He shuddered as the thought crossed his mind, and, opening a blank sheet of paper, dipped his pen in the ink. "Be all to her, Louis, that I have been," he murmured to himself, repeating his mother's last words, and beginning the letter while he uttered them. It was soon completed. It expressed, in the most respectful terms, his gratitude for the offer made to him, and his inability to accept it, in consequence of domestic circumstances which it was needless to explain. The letter was directed, sealed: it only remained for him to place it in the post-bag, lying near at hand. At this last decisive act he hesitated. He had told Lomaque, and he had firmly believed him-

self, that he had conquered all ambitions for his sister's sake. He knew now, for the first time, that he had only lulled them to rest—he knew that the letter from Paris had aroused them. His answer was written, his hand was on the post-bag, and at that moment the whole struggle had to be risked over again—risked when he was most unfit for it! He was not a man under any ordinary circumstances to procrastinate, but he procrastinated now.

“Night brings counsel: I will wait till to-morrow,” he said to himself, and put the letter of refusal in his pocket, and hastily quitted the laboratory.

CHAPTER II.

INEXORABLY the important morrow came: irretrievably, for good or for evil, the momentous marriage-vow was pronounced. Charles Danville and Rose Trudaine were now man and wife. The prophecy of the magnificent sunset overnight had not proved false. It was a cloudless day on the marriage morning. The nuptial ceremonies had proceeded

smoothly throughout, and had even satisfied Madame Danville. She returned with the wedding-party to Trudaine's house, all smiles and serenity. To the bride she was graciousness itself. "Good girl," said the old lady, following Rose into a corner, and patting her approvingly on the cheek with her fan, "Good girl! you have looked well this morning—you have done credit to my son's taste. Indeed, you have pleased me, child! Now go up stairs, and get on your travelling-dress, and count on my maternal affection as long as you make Charles happy.

It had been arranged that the bride and bridegroom should pass their honeymoon in Brittany, and then return to Danville's estate near Lyons. The parting was hurried over, as all such partings should be. The carriage had driven off—Trudaine, after lingering long to look after it, had returned hastily to the house—the very dust of the whirling wheels had all dispersed—there was absolutely nothing to see—and yet, there stood Monsieur Lomaque at the outer gate; idly, as if he was an independent man—calmly, as if no such responsibilities as the calling of Madame Danville's coach, and the escorting of Madame Danville back to Lyons, could possibly rest on his shoulders.

Idly and calmly, slowly rubbing his hands one over the other, slowly nodding his head in the direction by which the bride and bridegroom had departed, stood the eccentric land-steward at the outer gate. On a sudden, the sound of footsteps approaching from the house seemed to arouse him. Once more he looked out into the road, as if he expected still to see the carriage of the newly married couple. "Poor girl!—ah, poor girl!" said Monsieur Lomaque softly to himself, turning round to ascertain who was coming from the house.

It was only the postman with a letter in his hand, and the post-bag crumpled up under his arm.

"Any fresh news from Paris, friend?" asked Lomaque.

"Very bad, monsieur," answered the postman. "Camille Desmoulins has appealed to the people in the Palais Royal—there are fears of a riot."

"Only a riot!" repeated Lomaque, sarcastically. "Oh, what a brave government not to be afraid of anything worse! Any letters?" he added, hastily dropping the subject.

"None *to* the house," said the postman—"only one *from* it, given me by Monsieur Trudaine.

Hardly worth while," he added, twirling the letter in his hand, "to put it into the bag, is it?"

Lomaque looked over his shoulder as he spoke, and saw that the letter was directed to the President of the Academy of Sciences, Paris.

"I wonder whether he accepts the place or refuses it?" thought the land-steward, nodding to the post-man, and continuing on his way back to the house.

At the door, he met Trudaine, who said to him rather hastily, "You are going back to Lyons with Madame Danville, I suppose?"

"This very day," answered Lomaque.

"If you should hear of a convenient bachelor-lodging at Lyons, or near it," continued the other, dropping his voice and speaking more rapidly than before, "you would be doing me a favour if you would let me know about it."

Lomaque assented; but before he could add a question which was on the tip of his tongue, Trudaine had vanished in the interior of the house.

"A bachelor-lodging!" repeated the land-steward, standing alone on the door-step. "At or near Lyons! Aha! Monsieur Trudaine, I put your bachelor-lodging and your talk to me last night together, and I make out a sum-total which is, I think, pretty near

the mark. You have refused that Paris appointment, my friend; and I fancy I can guess why."

He paused thoughtfully, and shook his head with ominous frowns and bitings of his lips.

"All clear enough in that sky," he continued, after a while, looking up at the lustrous mid-day heaven. "All clear enough there; but I think I see a little cloud rising in a certain household firmament already—a little cloud which hides much, and which I for one shall watch carefully."

PART SECOND.—CHAPTER I.

FIVE years have elapsed since Monsieur Lomaque stood thoughtfully at the gate of Trudaine's house, looking after the carriage of the bride and bridegroom, and seriously reflecting on the events of the future. Great changes have passed over that domestic firmament in which he prophetically discerned the little warning cloud. Greater changes have passed over the firmament of France.

What was Revolt five years ago, is Revolution now — revolution which has engulfed thrones and principalities and powers; which has set up crownless, inhereditary kings and counsellors of its own, and has bloodily torn them down again by dozens; which has raged and raged on unrestrainedly in fierce earnest, until but one king can still govern and control it for a little while. That King is named Terror, and seventeen hundred and ninety-four is the year of his reign.

Monsieur Lomaque, land-steward no longer, sits alone in an official-looking room in one of the official

buildings of Paris. It is another July evening, as fine as that evening when he and Trudaine sat talking together on the bench overlooking the Seine. The window of the room is wide open, and a faint, pleasant breeze is beginning to flow through it. But Lomaque breathes uneasily, as if still oppressed by the sultry mid-day heat; and there are signs of perplexity and trouble in his face as he looks down absently now and then into the street.

The times he lives in are enough of themselves to sadden any man's face. In the Reign of Terror no living being in all the city of Paris can rise in the morning and be certain of escaping the spy, the denunciation, the arrest, or the guillotine, before night. Such times are trying enough to oppress any man's spirits; but Lomaque is not thinking of them or caring for them now. Out of a mass of papers which lie before him on his old writing-table, he has just taken up and read one, which has carried his thoughts back to the past, and to the changes which have taken place since he stood alone on the door-step of Trudaine's house, pondering on what might happen.

More rapidly, even than he had foreboded, those changes had occurred. In less time even than he had anticipated, the sad emergency for which Rose's

brother had prepared, as for a barely possible calamity, overtook Trudaine, and called for all the patience, the courage, the self-sacrifice, which he had to give for his sister's sake. By slow gradations downward, from bad to worse, her husband's character manifested itself less and less disguisedly almost day by day. Occasional slights ending in habitual neglect; careless estrangement turning to cool enmity; small insults which ripened evilly to great injuries—these were the pitiless signs which showed her that she had risked all and lost all while still a young woman—these were the unmerited afflictions which found her helpless, and would have left her helpless, but for the ever-present comfort and support of her brother's self-denying love. From the first, Trudaine had devoted himself to meet such trials as now assailed him; and, like a man, he met them, in defiance alike of persecution from the mother and of insult from the son.

The hard task was only lightened when, as time advanced, public trouble began to mingle itself with private grief. Then absorbing political necessities came as a relief to domestic misery. Then it grew to be the one purpose and pursuit of Danville's life cunningly to shape his course so that he might move

safely onward with the advancing revolutionary tide—he cared not whither, as long as he kept his possessions safe and his life out of danger.—His mother, inflexibly true to her old-world convictions through all peril, might entreat and upbraid, might talk of honour, and courage, and sincerity—he heeded her not, or heeded only to laugh. As he had taken the false way with his wife, so he was now bent on taking it with the world.

The years passed on: destroying changes swept hurricane-like over the old governing system of France; and still Danville shifted successfully with the shifting times. The first days of the Terror approached; in public and in private—in high places and in low—each man now suspected his brother. Crafty as Danville was, even he fell under suspicion at last, at head-quarters in Paris, principally on his mother's account. This was his first political failure, and, in a moment of thoughtless rage and disappointment, he wreaked the irritation caused by it on Lomaque. Suspected himself, he in turn suspected the land-steward. His mother fomented the suspicion—Lomaque was dismissed.

In the old times the victim would have been ruined—in the new times he was simply rendered

eligible for a political vocation in life. Lomaque was poor, quick-witted, secret, not scrupulous. He was a good patriot, he had good patriot friends, plenty of ambition, a subtle, cat-like courage, nothing to dread—and he went to Paris. There were plenty of small chances there for men of his calibre. He waited for one of them. It came; he made the most of it; attracted favourably the notice of the terrible Fouquier-Tinville; and won his way to a place in the office of the Secret Police.

Meanwhile, Danville's anger cooled down: he recovered the use of that cunning sense which had hitherto served him well, and sent to recall the discarded servant. It was too late. Lomaque was already in a position to set him at defiance—nay, to put his neck, perhaps, under the blade of the guillotine. Worse than this, anonymous letters reached him, warning him to lose no time in proving his patriotism by some indisputable sacrifice, and in silencing his mother, whose imprudent sincerity was likely ere long to cost her her life. Danville knew her well enough to know that there was but one way of saving her, and thereby saving himself. She had always refused to emigrate; but he now insisted that she should seize the first opportunity he could pro-

cure for her of quitting France until calmer times arrived.

Probably she would have risked her own life ten times over rather than have obeyed him ; but she had not the courage to risk her son's too ; and she yielded for his sake. Partly by secret influence, partly by unblushing fraud, Danville procured for her such papers and permits as would enable her to leave France by way of Marseilles. Even then she refused to depart, until she knew what her son's plans were for the future. He showed her a letter which he was about to despatch to Robespierre himself, vindicating his suspected patriotism, and indignantly demanding to be allowed to prove it by filling some office, no matter how small, under the redoubtable triumvirate which then governed, or more properly terrified, France. The sight of this document reassured Madame Danville. She bade her son farewell, and departed at last, with one trusty servant, for Marseilles.

Danville's intention in sending his letter to Paris, had been simply to save himself by patriotic bluster. He was thunder-struck at receiving a reply, taking him at his word, and summoning him to the capital to accept employment there under the then existing

government. There was no choice but to obey. So to Paris he journeyed ; taking his wife with him into the very jaws of danger. He was then at open enmity with Trudaine ; and the more anxious and alarmed he could make the brother feel on the sister's account, the better he was pleased. True to his trust and his love, through all dangers as through all persecutions, Trudaine followed them ; and the street of their sojourn at Paris, in the perilous days of the Terror, was the street of his sojourn too.

Danville had been astonished at the acceptance of his proffered services—he was still more amazed when he found that the post selected for him was one of the superintendent's places in that very office of Secret Police in which Lomaque was employed as Agent. Robespierre and his colleagues had taken the measure of their man—he had money enough, and local importance enough, to be worth studying. They knew where he was to be distrusted, and how he might be made useful. The affairs of the Secret Police were the sort of affairs which an unscrupulously cunning man was fitted to help on ; and the faithful exercise of that cunning in the service of the state was ensured by the presence of Lomaque in the office. The discarded servant was just the right sort of

spy to watch the suspected master. Thus it happened that, in the office of the Secret Police of Paris, and under the Reign of Terror, Lomaque's old master was, nominally, his master still—the superintendent to whom he was ceremonially accountable, in public—the suspected man, whose slightest words and deeds he was officially set to watch, in private.

Ever sadder and darker grew the face of Lomaque as he now pondered alone over the changes and misfortunes of the past five years. A neighbouring church-clock striking the hour of seven aroused him from his meditations. He arranged the confused mass of papers before him—looked towards the door as if expecting some one to enter—then, finding himself still alone, recurred to the one special paper which had first suggested his long train of gloomy thoughts. The few lines it contained were signed in cipher, and ran thus :—

“You are aware that your superintendent, Danville, obtained leave of absence, last week, to attend to some affairs of his at Lyons, and that he is not expected back just yet for a day or two. While he is away, push on the affair of Trudaine. Collect all

the evidence, and hold yourself in readiness to act on it at a moment's notice. Don't leave the office till you have heard from me again. If you have a copy of the Private Instructions respecting Danville, which you wrote for me, send it to my house. I wish to refresh my memory. Your original letter is burnt."

Here the note abruptly terminated. As he folded it up, and put it in his pocket, Lomaque sighed. This was a very rare expression of feeling with him. He leaned back in his chair, and beat his nails impatiently on the table. Suddenly there was a faint little tap at the room door, and eight or ten men—evidently familiars of the new French Inquisition—quietly entered, and ranged themselves against the wall.

Lomaque nodded to two of them. "Picard and Magloire, go and sit down at that desk. I shall want you after the rest are gone." Saying this, Lomaque handed certain sealed and docketed papers to the other men waiting in the room, who received them in silence, bowed, and went out. Innocent spectators might have thought them clerks taking bills of lading from a merchant. Who could have

imagined that the giving and receiving of Denunciations, Arrest Orders, and Death Warrants, — the providing of its doomed human meal for the all-devouring guillotine — could have been managed so coolly and quietly, with such unruffled calmness of official routine!

“ Now,” said Lomaque, turning to the two men at the desk, as the door closed, “ have you got those notes about you?” (They answered in the affirmative). “ Picard, you have the first particulars of this affair of Trudaine : so you must begin reading. I have sent in the reports ; but we may as well go over the evidence again from the commencement, to make sure that nothing has been left out. If any corrections are to be made, now is the time to make them. Read, Picard, and lose as little time as you possibly can.”

Thus admonished, Picard drew some long slips of paper from his pocket, and began reading from them as follows :—

“ Minutes of evidence collected concerning Louis Trudaine, suspected, on the denunciation of Citizen Superintendent Danville, of hostility to the sacred cause of liberty, and of disaffection to the sovereignty

of the people. (1.) The suspected person is placed under secret observation, and these facts are elicited:—He is twice seen passing at night from his own house to a house in the Rue de Cléry. On the first night he carries with him money,—on the second, papers. He returns without either. These particulars have been obtained through a citizen engaged to help Trudaine in housekeeping (one of the sort called Servants in the days of the Tyrants). This man is a good patriot, who can be trusted to watch Trudaine's actions. (2.) The inmates of the house in the Rue de Cléry are numerous, and in some cases not so well known to the government as could be wished. It is found difficult to gain certain information about the person or persons visited by Trudaine without having recourse to an arrest. (3.) An arrest is thought premature at this preliminary stage of the proceedings, being likely to stop the development of conspiracy, and give warning to the guilty to fly. Order thereupon given to watch and wait for the present. (4.) Citizen-Superintendent Danville quits Paris for a short time. The office of watching Trudaine is then taken out of the hands of the undersigned, and is confided to his comrade, Magloire.—Signed, PICARD. Countersigned, LOMAQUE.”

Having read so far, the police-agent placed his papers on the writing-table, waited a moment for orders, and, receiving none, went out. No change came over the sadness and perplexity of Lomaque's face. He still beat his nails anxiously on the writing-table, and did not even look at the second agent, as he ordered the man to read his report. Magloire produced some slips of paper precisely similar to Picard's, and read from them in the same rapid, business-like, unmodulated tones:—

“Affair of Trudaine. Minutes continued. Citizen-Agent Magloire having been appointed to continue the surveillance of Trudaine, reports the discovery of additional facts of importance. (1.) Appearances make it probable that Trudaine meditates a third secret visit to the house in the Rue de Cléry. The proper measures are taken for observing him closely, and the result is the implication of another person discovered to be connected with the supposed conspiracy. This person is the sister of Trudaine, and the wife of Citizen-Superintendent Danville.”

“Poor, lost creature!—ah, poor lost creature!” muttered Lomaque to himself, sighing again, and

shifting uneasily from side to side, in his mangy old leathern arm-chair. Apparently, Magloire was not accustomed to sighs, interruptions, and expressions of regret, from the usually imperturbable chief agent. He looked up from his papers with a stare of wonder. "Go on, Magloire!" cried Lomaque with a sudden outburst of irritability. "Why the devil don't you go on?"—"All ready, citizen," returned Magloire submissively, and proceeded:—

"(2.) It is at Trudaine's house that the woman Danville's connexion with her brother's secret designs is ascertained, through the vigilance of the before-mentioned patriot-citizen. The interview of the two suspected persons is private; their conversation is carried on in whispers. Little can be overheard; but that little suffices to prove that Trudaine's sister is perfectly aware of his intention to proceed for the third time to the house in the Rue de Cléry. It is further discovered that she awaits his return, and that she then goes back privately to her own house. (3.) Meanwhile, the strictest measures are taken for watching the house in the Rue de Cléry. It is discovered that Trudaine's visits are paid to a man and woman known to the landlord and lodgers by the

name of Dubois. They live on the fourth floor. It is impossible, at the time of the discovery, to enter this room, or to see the citizen and citoyenne Dubois, without producing an undesirable disturbance in the house and neighbourhood. A police-agent is left to watch the place, while search and arrest-orders are applied for. The granting of these is accidentally delayed. When they are ultimately obtained, it is discovered that the man and woman are both missing. They have not hitherto been traced. (4.) The landlord of the house is immediately arrested, as well as the police-agent appointed to watch the premises. The landlord protests that he knows nothing of his tenants. It is suspected, however, that he has been tampered with, as also that Trudaine's papers, delivered to the citizen and citoyenne Dubois, are forged passports. With these and with money, it may not be impossible that they have already succeeded in escaping from France. The proper measures have been taken for stopping them, if they have not yet passed the frontiers. No further report in relation to them has yet been received. (5.) Trudaine and his sister are under perpetual surveillance; and the undersigned holds himself ready for further orders.—Signed, MAGLOIRE. Countersigned, LOMAQUE.”

Having finished reading his notes, Magloire placed them on the writing-table. He was evidently a favoured man in the office, and he presumed upon his position; for he ventured to make a remark, instead of leaving the room in silence, like his predecessor Picard.

“When citizen Danville returns to Paris,” he began, “he will be rather astonished to find that in denouncing his wife’s brother, he has also unconsciously denounced his wife.”

Lomaque looked up quickly, with that old weakness in his eyes which affected them in such a strangely irregular manner on certain occasions. Magloire knew what this symptom meant, and would have become confused, if he had not been a police agent. As it was, he quietly backed a step or two from the table, and held his tongue.

“Friend Magloire,” said Lomaque, winking mildly, “your last remark looks to me like a question in disguise. I put questions constantly to others,—I never answer questions myself. You want to know, citizen, what our superintendent’s secret motive is for denouncing his wife’s brother? Suppose you try and find that out for yourself. It will be famous practice for you, friend Magloire—famous practice after office hours.”

“Any further orders?” inquired Magloire, sulkily.

“None in relation to the reports,” returned Lomaque. “I find nothing to alter or add on a revised hearing. But I shall have a little note ready for you immediately. Sit down at the other desk, friend Magloire; I am very fond of you when you are not inquisitive,—pray sit down.”

While addressing this polite invitation to the agent in his softest voice, Lomaque produced his pocket-book, and drew from it a little note, which he opened and read through attentively. It was headed, “Private Instructions relative to Superintendent Danville,” and proceeded thus:—

“The undersigned can confidently assert, from long domestic experience in Danville’s household, that his motive for denouncing his wife’s brother is purely a personal one, and is not in the most remote degree connected with politics. Briefly, the facts are these:—Louis Trudaine, from the first, opposed his sister’s marriage with Danville; distrusting the latter’s temper and disposition. The marriage, however, took place, and the brother resigned himself to await results,—taking the precaution of living in the same neighbourhood as his sister, to interpose, if need be, between the crimes which the husband might com-

mit, and the sufferings which the wife might endure. The results soon exceeded his worst anticipations, and called for the interposition for which he had prepared himself. He is a man of inflexible firmness, patience, and integrity, and he makes the protection and consolation of his sister the business of his life. He gives his brother-in-law no pretext for openly quarrelling with him. He is neither to be deceived, irritated, nor tired out, and he is Danville's superior every way,—in conduct, temper, and capacity. Under these circumstances, it is unnecessary to say that his brother-in-law's enmity towards him is of the most implacable kind, and equally unnecessary to hint at the perfectly plain motive of the denunciation.

“ As to the suspicious circumstances affecting not Trudaine only, but his sister as well, the undersigned regrets his inability, thus far, to offer either explanation or suggestion. At this preliminary stage, the affair seems involved in impenetrable mystery.”

Lomaque read these lines through, down to his own signature at the end. They were the duplicate Secret Instructions demanded from him in the paper which he had been looking over before the entrance of the two police agents. Slowly and, as it seemed,

unwillingly, he folded the note up in a fresh sheet of paper, and was preparing to seal it when a tap at the door stopped him. "Come in," he cried, irritably, and a man in travelling costume, covered with dust, entered, quietly whispered a word or two in his ear, and then went out. Lomaque started at the whisper, and, opening his note again, hastily wrote under his signature:—"I have just heard that Danville has hastened his return to Paris, and may be expected back to-night." Having traced these lines, he closed, sealed, and directed the letter, and gave it to Magloire. The police-agent looked at the address as he left the room—it was "To Citizen Robespierre, Rue Saint-Honoré."

Left alone again, Lomaque rose, and walked restlessly backwards and forwards, biting his nails.

"Danville comes back to-night," he said to himself, "and the crisis comes with him. Trudaine a conspirator! Sister Rose (as he used to call her) a conspirator! Bah! conspiracy can hardly be the answer to the riddle this time. What is?"

He took a turn or two in silence—then stopped at the open window, looking out on what little glimpse the street afforded him of the sunset sky.

"This time five years," he said, "Trudaine was

talking to me on that bench overlooking the river ; and Sister Rose was keeping poor hatchet-faced old Lomaque's cup of coffee hot for him ! Now, I am officially bound to suspect them both ; perhaps to arrest them ; perhaps—I wish this job had fallen into other hands. I don't want it—I don't want it at any price !”

He returned to the writing-table and sat down to his papers with the dogged air of a man determined to drive away vexing thoughts by dint of sheer hard work. For more than an hour he laboured on resolutely, munching a bit of dry bread from time to time. Then he paused a little, and began to think again. Gradually the summer twilight faded, and the room grew dark.

“ Perhaps we shall tide over to-night, after all—who knows ?” said Lomaque, ringing his hand-bell for lights. They were brought in ; and with them ominously returned the police-agent Magloire with a small sealed packet. It contained an arrest-order and a tiny three-cornered note, looking more like a love-letter or a lady's invitation to a party than anything else. Lomaque opened the note eagerly and read these lines, neatly written, and signed with Robespierre's initials—M. R.—formed elegantly in cipher :—

“ Arrest Trudaine and his sister to-night. On second thoughts I am not sure, if Danville comes back in time to be present, that it may not be all the better. He is unprepared for his wife’s arrest. Watch him closely when it takes place, and report privately to me. I am afraid he is a vicious man; and of all things I abhor Vice.”

“ Any more work for me to-night?” asked Magloire, with a yawn.

“ Only an arrest,” replied Lomaque. “ Collect our men, and when you’re ready, get a coach at the door.”

“ We were just going to supper,” grumbled Magloire to himself, as he went out. “ The devil seize the Aristocrats! They’re all in such a hurry to get to the guillotine that they won’t even give a man time to eat his victuals in peace!”

“ There’s no choice now,” muttered Lomaque, angrily thrusting the arrest-order and the three-cornered note into his pocket. “ His father was the saving of me; he himself welcomed me like an equal; his sister treated me like a gentleman, as the phrase went in those days; and now—”

He stopped and wiped his forehead—then unlocked his desk, produced a bottle of brandy, and

poured himself out a glass of the liquor, which he drank by sips, slowly.

“I wonder whether other men get softer-hearted as they grow older?” he said. “I seem to do so at any rate. Courage! courage! what must be, must. If I risked my head to do it, I couldn’t stop this arrest. Not a man in the office but would be ready to execute it, if I wasn’t.”

Here the rumble of carriage-wheels sounded outside.

“There’s the coach!” exclaimed Lomaque, locking up the brandy-bottle, and taking his hat. “After all, as this arrest is to be made, it’s as well for them that I should make it.”

Consoling himself as he best could with this reflection, Chief Police-Agent Lomaque blew out the candles, and quitted the room.

CHAPTER II.

IGNORANT of the change in her husband’s plans, which was to bring him back to Paris a day before the time that had been fixed for his return, Sister Rose had

left her solitary home to spend the evening with her brother. They had sat talking together long after sunset, and had let the darkness steal on them insensibly, as people will who are only occupied with quiet familiar conversation. Thus it happened, by a curious coincidence, that just as Lomaque was blowing out his candles at the office, Rose was lighting the reading-lamp at her brother's lodgings.

Five years of disappointment and sorrow had sadly changed her to outward view. Her face looked thinner and longer; the once delicate red and white of her complexion was gone; her figure had wasted under the influence of some weakness which already made her stoop a little when she walked. Her manner had lost its maiden shyness only to become unnaturally quiet and subdued. Of all the charms which had so fatally, yet so innocently, allured her heartless husband, but one remained—the winning gentleness of her voice. It might be touched now and then with a note of sadness; but the soft attraction of its even, natural tone still remained. In the marring of all other harmonies, this one harmony had been preserved unchanged! Her brother, though his face was care-worn, and his manner sadder than of old, looked less altered from his former self. It is

the most fragile material which soonest shows the flaw. The world's idol, Beauty, holds its frailest tenure of existence in the one Temple where we most love to worship it.

“And so you think, Louis, that our perilous undertaking has really ended well by this time?” said Rose, anxiously, as she lit the lamp and placed the glass shade over it. “What a relief it is only to hear you say you think we have succeeded at last!”

“I said I hoped, Rose,” replied her brother.

“Well, even hoped is a great word from you, Louis—a great word from any one in this fearful city, and in these days of Terror.”

She stopped suddenly, seeing her brother raise his hand in warning. They looked at each other in silence, and listened. The sound of footsteps going slowly past the house—ceasing for a moment just beyond it—then going on again—came through the open window. There was nothing else, out of doors or in, to disturb the silence of the night—the deadly silence of Terror which, for months past, had hung over Paris. It was a significant sign of the times, that even a passing footstep, sounding a little strangely at night, was subject for suspicion, both to brother and sister—so common a subject that they suspended

their conversation as a matter of course, without exchanging a word of explanation, until the tramp of the strange footsteps had died away.

“Louis,” continued Rose, dropping her voice to a whisper, after nothing more was audible, “when may I trust our secret to my husband?”

“Not yet!” rejoined Trudaine earnestly. “Not a word, not a hint of it, till I give you leave. Remember, Rose, you promised silence from the first. Everything depends on your holding that promise sacred till I release you from it.”

“I will hold it sacred; I will indeed, at all hazards, under all provocations,” she answered.

“That is quite enough to reassure me—and now, love, let us change the subject. Even these walls may have ears, and the closed door yonder may be no protection.” He looked towards it uneasily while he spoke. “By-the-by, I have come round to your way of thinking, Rose, about that new servant of mine—there is something false in his face. I wish I had been as quick to detect it as you were.”

Rose glanced at him affrightedly. “Has he done anything suspicious? Have you caught him watching you? Tell me the worst, Louis.”

“Hush! hush! my dear, not so loud. Don’t

alarm yourself; he has done nothing suspicious."

"Turn him off—pray, pray turn him off, before it is too late!"

"And be denounced by him, in revenge, the first night he goes to his Section. You forget that servants and masters are equal now. I am not supposed to keep a servant at all. I have a citizen living with me who lays me under domestic obligations, for which I make a pecuniary acknowledgment. No! no! if I do anything, I must try if I can't entrap him into giving me warning. But we have got to another unpleasant subject already—suppose I change the topic again? You will find a little book on that table there, in the corner—tell me what you think of it."

The book was a copy of Corneille's *Cid*, prettily bound in blue morocco. Rose was enthusiastic in her praises. "I found it in a bookseller's shop, yesterday," said her brother, "and bought it as a present for you. Corneille is not an author to compromise any one, even in these times. Don't you remember saying the other day, that you felt ashamed of knowing but little of our greatest dramatist?" Rose remembered well, and smiled almost as happily as in the old times over her present. "There are

some good engravings at the beginning of each act," continued Trudaine, directing her attention rather earnestly to the illustrations, and then suddenly leaving her side when he saw that she became interested in looking at them.

He went to the window—listened—then drew aside the curtain, and looked up and down the street. No living soul was in sight. "I must have been mistaken," he thought, returning hastily to his sister; "but I certainly fancied I was followed in my walk to-day by a spy."

"I wonder," asked Rose, still busy over her book, "I wonder, Louis, whether my husband would let me go with you to see *Le Cid* the next time it is acted?"

"No!" cried a voice at the door; "not if you went on your knees to ask him?"

Rose turned round with a scream. There stood her husband on the threshold, scowling at her, with his hat on, and his hands thrust doggedly into his pockets. Trudaine's servant announced him, with an insolent smile, during the pause that followed the discovery. "Citizen-superintendent Danville, to visit the citoyenne, his wife," said the fellow, making a mock bow to his master.

Rose looked at her brother, then advanced a few paces towards the door. "This is a surprise," she said faintly; "has anything happened? We—we didn't expect you."—Her voice failed her, as she saw her husband advancing, pale to his very lips with suppressed anger.

"How dare you come here, after what I told you?" he asked in quick low tones.

She shrank at his voice almost as if he had struck her. The blood flew into her brother's face as he noticed the action, but he controlled himself, and, taking her hand, led her in silence to a chair.

"I forbid you to sit down in his house," said Danville, advancing still; "I order you to come back with me! Do you hear? I order you."

He was approaching nearer to her, when he caught Trudaine's eye fixed on him, and stopped. Rose started up, and placed herself between them.

"Oh, Charles! Charles!" she said to her husband, "be friends with Louis to-night, and be kind again to me—I have a claim to ask that much of you, though you may not think it!"

He turned away from her, and laughed contemptuously. She tried to speak again, but Trudaine touched her on the arm, and gave her a warning look.

“Signals!” exclaimed Danville; “secret signals between you!”

His eye, as he glanced suspiciously at his wife, fell on Trudaine’s gift-book, which she still held unconsciously.

“What book is that?” he asked.

“Only a play of Corneille’s,” answered Rose; “Louis has just made me a present of it.”

At this avowal, Danville’s suppressed anger burst beyond all control.

“Give it him back!” he cried, in a voice of fury. “You shall take no presents from him; the venom of the household spy soils everything he touches. Give it him back!” She hesitated. “You won’t?” He tore the book from her with an oath—threw it on the floor, and set his foot on it.

“Oh, Louis! Louis! for God’s sake remember!”

Trudaine was stepping forward as the book fell to the floor. At the same moment his sister threw her arms round him. He stopped, turning from fiery red to ghastly pale.

“No! no! Louis,” she said, clasping him closer; “not after five years’ patience. No—No!”

He gently detached her arms.

“ You are right, love. Don’t be afraid, it is all over now.”

Saying that, he put her from him, and in silence took up the book from the floor.

“ Won’t *that* offend you even?” said Danville, with an insolent smile. “ You have a wonderful temper — any other man would have called me out!”

Trudaine looked back at him steadily; and, taking out his handkerchief, passed it over the soiled cover of the book.

“ If I could wipe the stain of your blood off my conscience as easily as I can wipe the stain of your boot off this book,” he said quietly, “ you should not live another hour. Don’t cry, Rose,” he continued, turning again to his sister; “ I will take care of your book for you until you can keep it yourself.”

“ You will do this! you will do that!” cried Danville, growing more and more exasperated, and letting his anger get the better even of his cunning now. “ Talk less confidently of the future—you don’t know what it has in store for you. Govern your tongue when you are in my presence; a day may come when you will want my help—my help, do you hear that?”

Trudaine turned his face from his sister, as if he feared to let her see it when those words were spoken.

“The man who followed me to-day was a spy—Danville’s spy!” That thought flashed across his mind, but he gave it no utterance. There was an instant’s pause of silence; and through it there came heavily on the still night-air the rumbling of distant wheels. The sound advanced nearer and nearer—advanced, and ceased under the window.

Danville hurried to it, and looked out eagerly.

“I have not hastened my return without reason. I wouldn’t have missed this arrest for anything!” thought he, peering into the night.

The stars were out; but there was no moon. He could not recognise either the coach or the persons who got out of it; and he turned again into the interior of the room. His wife had sunk into a chair—her brother was locking up in a cabinet the book which he had promised to take care of for her. The dead silence made the noise of slowly ascending footsteps on the stairs painfully audible. At last the door opened softly.

“Citizen Danville, health and fraternity!” said Lomaque, appearing in the doorway, followed by his

agents. "Citizen Louis Trudaine?" he continued, beginning with the usual form.

Rose started out of her chair; but her brother's hand was on her lips before she could speak.

"My name is Louis Trudaine," he answered.

"Charles!" cried his sister, breaking from him and appealing to her husband, "who are these men? What are they here for?"

He gave her no answer.

"Louis Trudaine," said Lomaque, slowly drawing the order from his pocket, "in the name of the Republic, I arrest you."

"Rose, come back," cried Trudaine.

It was too late; she had broken from him, and in the recklessness of terror had seized her husband by the arm.

"Save him!" she cried. "Save him, by all you hold dearest in the world! You are that man's superior, Charles—order him from the room!"

Danville roughly shook her hand off his arm.

"Lomaque is doing his duty. Yes," he added, with a glance of malicious triumph at Trudaine—"Yes, doing his duty. Look at me as you please—your looks won't move me. I denounced you! I admit it—I glory in it! I have rid myself of an

enemy, and the State of a bad citizen. Remember your secret visits to the house in the Rue de Cléry!"

His wife uttered a cry of horror. She seized his arm again with both hands—frail, trembling hands—that seemed suddenly nerved with all the strength of a man's.

"Come here—come here! I must and will speak to you!"

She dragged him by main force a few paces back, towards an unoccupied corner of the room. With deathly cheeks and wild eyes she raised herself on tiptoe, and put her lips to her husband's ear. At that instant, Trudaine called to her:

"Rose, if you speak I am lost!"

She stopped at the sound of his voice, dropped her hold on her husband's arm, and faced her brother, shuddering.

"Rose," he continued, "you have promised, and your promise is sacred. If you prize your honour, if you love me, come here—come here, and be silent."

He held out his hand. She ran to him; and, laying her head on his bosom, burst into a passion of tears.

Danville turned uneasily towards the police-agents.

“Remove your prisoner,” he said. “You have done your duty here.”

“Only half of it,” retorted Lomaque, eyeing him attentively. “Rose Danville”——

“My wife!” exclaimed the other. “What about my wife?”

“Rose Danville,” continued Lomaque, impassibly, “you are included in the arrest of Louis Trudaine.”

Rose raised her head quickly from her brother’s breast. His firmness had deserted him—he was trembling. She heard him whispering to himself, “Rose, too! Oh, my God! I was not prepared for that.” She heard these words, and dashed the tears from her eyes, and kissed him, saying—

“I am glad of it, Louis. We risked all together—we shall now suffer together. I am glad of it!”

Danville looked incredulously at Lomaque, after the first shock of astonishment was over.

“Impossible!” he exclaimed. “I never denounced my wife. There is some mistake: you have exceeded your orders.”

“Silence!” retorted Lomaque, imperiously. “Silence, citizen, and respect to a decree of the Republic!”

“You blackguard! show me the arrest-order!”

said Danville. "Who has dared to denounce my wife?"

"You have!" said Lomaque, turning on him with a grin of contempt. "You!—and blackguard back in your teeth! You, in denouncing her brother! Aha! we work hard in our office: we don't waste time in calling names—we make discoveries. If Trudaine is guilty, your wife is implicated in his guilt. We know it; and we arrest her."

"I resist the arrest," cried Danville. "I am the authority here. Who opposes me?"

The impassible chief-agent made no answer. Some new noise in the street struck his quick ear. He ran to the window, and looked out eagerly.

"Who opposes me?" reiterated Danville.

"Hark!" exclaimed Lomaque, raising his hand. "Silence, and listen!"

The heavy dull tramp of men marching together became audible as he spoke. Voices humming low and in unison the Marseillaise hymn, joined solemnly with the heavy regular footfalls. Soon the flare of torchlight began to glimmer redder and redder under the dim starlight sky.

"Do you hear that? Do you see the advancing torchlight?" cried Lomaque, pointing exultingly

into the street. "Respect to the national hymn, and to the man who holds in the hollow of his hand the destinies of all France! Hat off, citizen Danville! Robespierre is in the street. His body-guard, the Hard-hitters, are lighting him on his way to the Jacobin club!—Who shall oppose you, did you say? Your master and mine; the man whose signature is at the bottom of this order—the man who, with a scratch of his pen, can send both our heads rolling together into the sack of the guillotine! Shall I call to him as he passes the house? Shall I tell him that Superintendent Danville resists me in making an arrest? Shall I? Shall I?" And in the immensity of his contempt, Lomaque seemed absolutely to rise in stature, as he thrust the arrest-order under Danville's eyes, and pointed to the signature with the head of his stick.

Rose looked round in terror, as Lomaque spoke his last words—looked round, and saw her husband recoil before the signature on the arrest-order, as if the guillotine itself had suddenly arisen before him. Her brother felt her shrinking back in his arms, and trembled for the preservation of her self-control if the terror and suspense of the arrest lasted any longer.

“Courage, Rose; courage!” he said. “You have behaved nobly: you must not fail now. No, no! Not a word more. Not a word till I am able to think clearly again, and to decide what is best. Courage, love: our lives depend on it. Citizen,” he continued, addressing himself to Lomaque, “proceed with your duty—we are ready.”

The heavy marching footsteps outside were striking louder and louder on the ground; the chanting voices were every moment swelling in volume; the dark street was flaming again with the brightening torchlight, as Lomaque, under pretext of giving Trudaine his hat, came close to him, and, turning his back towards Danville, whispered, “I have not forgotten the eve of the wedding and the bench on the river-bank.”

Before Trudaine could answer, he had taken Rose’s cloak and hood from one of his assistants, and was helping her on with it. Danville, still pale and trembling, advanced a step when he saw these preparations for departure, and addressed a word or two to his wife; but he spoke in low tones, and the fast-advancing march of feet and sullen low roar of singing outside drowned his voice. An oath burst

from his lips, and he struck his fist, in impotent fury on a table near him.

“The seals are set on everything in this room and in the bedroom,” said Magloire, approaching Lomaque, who nodded, and signed to him to bring up the other police-agents at the door.

“Ready,” cried Magloire, coming forward immediately with his men, and raising his voice to make himself heard, “Where to?”

Robespierre and his Hard-hitters were passing the house. The smoke of the torchlight was rolling in at the window; the tramping footsteps struck heavier and heavier on the ground; the low sullen roar of the Marseillaise was swelling to its loudest, as Lomaque referred for a moment to his arrest-order, and then answered—

“To the prison of St Lazare!”

CHAPTER III.

THE head-gaoler of St Lazare stood in the outer hall of the prison, two days after the arrest at Trudaine's lodgings, smoking his morning pipe. Looking to-

wards the court-yard gate, he saw the wicket opened, and a privileged man let in, whom he soon recognised as the chief-agent of the second section of Secret Police. "Why, friend Lomaque," cried the gaoler, advancing towards the court-yard, "what brings you here this morning, business or pleasure?"

"Pleasure, this time, citizen. I have an idle hour or two to spare for a walk. I find myself passing the prison, and I can't resist calling in to see how my friend the head-gaoler is getting on." Lomaque spoke in a surprisingly brisk and airy manner. His eyes were suffering under a violent fit of weakness and winking; but he smiled, notwithstanding, with an air of the most inveterate cheerfulness. Those old enemies of his, who always distrusted him most when his eyes were most affected, would have certainly disbelieved every word of the friendly speech he had just made, and would have assumed it as a matter of fact that his visit to the head-gaoler had some specially underhand business at the bottom of it.

"How am I getting on?" said the gaoler, shaking his head. "Overworked, friend—overworked. No idle hours in our department. Even the guillotine is getting too slow for us!"

“ Sent off your batch of prisoners for trial this morning?” asked Lomaque, with an appearance of perfect unconcern.

“ No; they’re just going,” answered the other. “ Come and have a look at them.” He spoke as if the prisoners were a collection of pictures on view, or a set of dresses just made up. Lomaque nodded his head, still with his air of happy holiday carelessness. The gaoler led the way to an inner hall; and, pointing lazily with his pipe-stem, said: “ Our morning batch, citizen, just ready for the baking.”

In one corner of the hall were huddled together more than thirty men and women of all ranks and ages; some staring round them with looks of blank despair; some laughing and gossiping recklessly. Near them lounged a guard of “ Patriots,” smoking, spitting, and swearing. Between the patriots and the prisoners sat, on a rickety stool, the second gaoler—a humpbacked man, with an immense red moustachio—finishing his breakfast of broad beans, which he scooped out of a basin with his knife, and washed down with copious draughts of wine from the bottle. Carelessly as Lomaque looked at the shocking scene before him, his quick eyes contrived to take note of every prisoner’s face, and to descry in

a few minutes Trudaine and his sister standing together at the back of the group.

“Now then, Apollo!” cried the head-gaoler, addressing his subordinate by a facetious prison nickname, “don’t be all day starting that trumpery batch of yours! And harkye, friend, I have leave of absence, on business, at my Section this afternoon. So it will be your duty to read the list for the guillotine, and chalk the prisoners’ doors before the cart comes to-morrow morning. ’Ware the bottle, Apollo, to-day; ’ware the bottle, for fear of accidents with the death-list to-morrow.”

“Thirsty July weather, this,—eh, citizen?” said Lomaque, leaving the head-gaoler, and patting the hunchback in the friendliest manner on the shoulder. “Why, how you have got your batch huddled up together this morning! Shall I help you to shove them into marching order? My time is quite at your disposal. This is a holiday morning with me!”

“Ha! ha! ha! what a jolly dog he is on his holiday morning!” exclaimed the head-gaoler, as Lomaque—apparently taking leave of his natural character altogether in the exhilaration of an hour’s unexpected leisure—began pushing and pulling the prisoners into rank, with humorous mock apologies,

at which, not the officials only, but many of the victims themselves—reckless victims of a reckless tyranny—laughed heartily. Persevering to the last in his practical jest, Lomaque contrived to get close to Trudaine for a minute, and to give him one significant look before he seized him by the shoulders, like the rest. “Now, then, rear-guard,” cried Lomaque, pushing Trudaine on. “Close the line of march, and mind you keep step with your young woman there. Pluck up your spirits, citoyenne! one gets used to everything in this world, even to the guillotine!”

While he was speaking and pushing at the same time, Trudaine felt a piece of paper slip quickly between his neck and his cravat. “Courage!” he whispered, pressing his sister’s hand, as he saw her shuddering under the assumed brutality of Lomaque’s joke.

Surrounded by the guard of “Patriots,” the procession of prisoners moved slowly into the outer court-yard, on its way to the revolutionary tribunal, the humpbacked gaoler bringing up the rear. Lomaque was about to follow at some little distance, but the head-gaoler hospitably expostulated. “What a hurry you’re in!” said he. “Now that incorrigible

drinker, my second in command, has gone off with his batch, I don't mind asking you to step in and have a drop of wine."

"Thank you," answered Lomaque; "but I have rather a fancy for hearing the trial this morning. Suppose I come back afterwards? What time do you go to your Section? At two o'clock, eh? Good! I shall try if I can't get here soon after one." With these words he nodded and went out. The brilliant sunlight in the court-yard made him wink faster than ever. Had any of his old enemies been with him, they would have whispered within themselves—"If you mean to come back at all, citizen Lomaque, it will not be soon after one!"

On his way through the streets, the chief-agent met one or two police-office friends, who delayed his progress; so that when he arrived at the revolutionary tribunal, the trials of the day were just about to begin.

The principal article of furniture in the Hall of Justice was a long clumsy deal table covered with green baize. At the head of this table sat the president and his court, with their hats on, backed by a heterogeneous collection of patriots officially connected in various ways with the proceedings that were to take

place. Below the front of the table, a railed-off space, with a gallery beyond, was appropriated to the general public—mostly represented, as to the gallery, on this occasion, by women, all sitting together on forms, knitting, shirt-mending, and baby-linen-making, as coolly as if they were at home. Parallel with the side of the table farthest from the great door of entrance, was a low platform railed off, on which the prisoners, surrounded by their guard, were now assembled to await their trial. The sun shone in brightly from a high window, and a hum of ceaseless talking pervaded the hall cheerfully, as Lomaque entered it. He was a privileged man here, as at the prison; and he made his way in by a private door, so as to pass the prisoners' platform, and to walk round it, before he got to a place behind the president's chair. Trudaine, standing with his sister on the outermost limits of the group, nodded significantly as Lomaque looked up at him for an instant. He had contrived, on his way to the tribunal, to get an opportunity of reading the paper which the chief-agent had slipped into his cravat. It contained these lines:—

“ I have just discovered who the citizen and citoyenne Dubois are. There is no chance for you but to

confess everything. By that means you may inculpate a certain citizen holding authority, and may make it his interest, if he loves his own life, to save yours and your sister's."

Arrived at the back of the president's chair, Lomaque recognised his two trusty subordinates, Magloire and Picard, waiting among the assembled patriot officials, to give their evidence. Beyond them, leaning against the wall, addressed by no one, and speaking to no one, stood the superintendent Danville. Doubt and suspense were written in every line of his face; the fretfulness of an uneasy mind expressed itself in his slightest gestures—even in his manner of passing a handkerchief from time to time over his face, on which the perspiration was gathering thick and fast already.

"Silence!" cried the usher of the court for the time being—a hoarse-voiced man in top-boots, with a huge sabre buckled to his side, and a bludgeon in his hand. "Silence for the citizen-president!" he reiterated, striking his bludgeon on the table.

The president rose and proclaimed that the sitting for the day had begun, then sat down again.

The momentary silence which followed was interrupted by a sudden confusion among the prisoners

on the platform. Two of the guards sprang in among them. There was the thump of a heavy fall—a scream of terror from some of the female prisoners—then another dead silence, broken by one of the guards, who walked across the hall with a bloody knife in his hand, and laid it on the table. “Citizen-president,” he said, “I have to report that one of the prisoners has just stabbed himself.” There was a murmuring exclamation—“Is that all?” among the women-spectators, as they resumed their work. Suicide at the bar of justice was no uncommon occurrence under the Reign of Terror.

“Name?” asked the president, quietly taking up his pen and opening a book.

“Martigné,” answered the humpbacked gaoler, coming forward to the table.

“Description?”

“Ex-royalist coachmaker to the tyrant Capet.”

“Accusation?”

“Conspiracy in prison.”

The president nodded, and entered in the book—
“Martigné, coachmaker. Accused of conspiring in prison. Anticipated course of law by suicide. Action accepted as sufficient confession of guilt. Goods confiscated. 1st Thermidor, year two of the Republic.”

“Silence!” cried the man with the bludgeon, as the president dropped a little sand on the entry, and signing to the gaoler that he might remove the dead body, closed the book.

“Any special cases this morning?” resumed the president, looking round at the group behind him.

“There is one,” said Lomaque, making his way to the back of the official chair. “Will it be convenient to you, citizen, to take the case of Louis Trudaine and Rose Danville first? Two of my men are detained here as witnesses, and their time is valuable to the Republic.”

“The president marked a list of names before him, and handed it to the crier or usher, placing the figures one and two against Louis Trudaine and Rose Danville.

While Lomaque was backing again to his former place behind the chair, Danville approached and whispered to him—“There is a rumour that secret information has reached you about the citizen and citoyenne Dubois. Is it true? Do you know who they are?”

“Yes,” answered Lomaque; “but I have superior orders to keep the information to myself just at present.”

The eagerness with which Danville put his question, and the disappointment he showed on getting no satisfactory answer to it, were of a nature to satisfy the observant chief agent that his superintendent was really as ignorant as he appeared to be on the subject of the man and woman Dubois. That one mystery, at any rate, was still, for Danville, a mystery unrevealed.

“Louis Trudaine! Rose Danville!” shouted the crier, with another rap of his bludgeon.

The two came forward, at the appeal, to the front railing of the platform. The first sight of her judges, the first shock on confronting the pitiless curiosity of the audience, seemed to overwhelm Rose. She turned from deadly pale to crimson, then to pale again, and hid her face on her brother's shoulder. How fast she heard his heart throbbing! How the tears filled her eyes as she felt that his fear was all for her!

“Now!” said the president, writing down their names. “Denounced by whom?”

Magloire and Picard stepped forward to the table. The first answered—“By citizen-superintendent Danville.”

The reply made a great stir and sensation among both prisoners and audience.*

“Accused of what?” pursued the president.

“The male prisoner, of conspiracy against the Republic; the female prisoner, of criminal knowledge of the same.”

“Produce your proofs in answer to this order.”

Picard and Magloire opened their minutes of evidence, and read to the president the same particulars which they had formerly read to Lomaque in the secret police office.

“Good,” said the president, when they had done; “we need trouble ourselves with nothing more than the identifying of the citizen and citoyenne Dubois, which, of course, you are prepared for. Have you heard the evidence,” he continued, turning to the prisoners; while Picard and Magloire consulted together in whispers, looking perplexedly towards the chief-agent, who stood silent behind them. “Have you heard the evidence, prisoners? Do you wish to say anything? If you do, remember that the time of this tribunal is precious, and that you will not be suffered to waste it.”

“I demand permission to speak for myself and for my sister,” answered Trudaine. “My object is to save the time of the tribunal by making a confession.”

The faint whispering, audible among the women spectators a moment before, ceased instantaneously as he pronounced the word confession. In the breathless silence, his low quiet tones penetrated to the remotest corners of the hall; while, suppressing externally all evidences of the death-agony of hope within him, he continued his address in these words:—

“ I confess my secret visits to the house in the Rue de Cléry. I confess that the persons whom I went to see are the persons pointed at in the evidence. And, lastly, I confess that my object in communicating with them as I did, was to supply them with the means of leaving France. If I had acted from political motives to the political prejudice of the existing government, I admit that I should be guilty of that conspiracy against the Republic with which I am charged. But no political purpose animated, no political necessity urged me, in performing the action which has brought me to the bar of this tribunal. The persons whom I aided in leaving France were without political influence or political connexions. I acted solely from private motives of humanity towards them and towards others—motives which a good republican may feel, and yet not turn traitor to the welfare of his country.”

“Are you ready to inform the court, next, who the man and woman Dubois really are?” inquired the president, impatiently.

“I am ready,” answered Trudaine. “But first I desire to say one word in reference to my sister, charged here at the bar with me.” His voice grew less steady, and, for the first time, his colour began to change, as Rose lifted her face from his shoulder and looked up at him eagerly, “I implore the tribunal to consider my sister as innocent of all active participation in what is charged against me as a crime—” he went on. “Having spoken with candour about myself, I have some claim to be believed when I speak of her; when I assert that she neither did help me nor could help me. If there be blame, it is mine only; if punishment, it is I alone who should suffer.”

He stopped suddenly and grew confused. It was easy to guard himself from the peril of looking at Rose, but he could not escape the hard trial to his self-possession of hearing her, if she spoke. Just as he pronounced the last sentence, she raised her face again from his shoulder, and eagerly whispered to him:

“No, no, Louis! Not that sacrifice, after all the

others—not that, though you should force me into speaking to them myself!”

She abruptly quitted her hold of him, and fronted the whole court in an instant. The railing in front of her shook with the quivering of her arms and hands as she held by it to support herself! Her hair lay tangled on her shoulders; her face had assumed a strange fixedness; her gentle blue eyes, so soft and tender at all other times, were lit up wildly. A low hum of murmured curiosity and admiration broke from the women of the audience. Some rose eagerly from the benches, others cried,

“Listen, listen! she is going to speak!”

She did speak. Silvery and pure the sweet voice, sweeter than ever in sadness, stole its way through the gross sounds—through the coarse humming and the hissing whispers.

“My lord the president”—began the poor girl, firmly. Her next words were drowned in a volley of hisses from the women.

“Ah! aristocrat, aristocrat! None of your accursed titles here!” was their shrill cry at her. She fronted that cry, she fronted the fierce gestures which accompanied it, with the steady light still in her eyes, with the strange rigidity still fastened on her

face. She would have spoken again through the uproar and execration, but her brother's voice overpowered her.

“ Citizen-president,” he cried, “ I have not concluded. I demand leave to complete my confession. I implore the tribunal to attach no importance to what my sister says. The trouble and terror of this day have shaken her intellects. She is not responsible for her words—I assert it solemnly, in the face of the whole court !”

The blood flew up into his white face as he made the asseveration. Even at that supreme moment the great heart of the man reproached him for yielding himself to a deception, though the motive of it was to save his sister's life.

“ Let her speak ! let her speak !” exclaimed the women, as Rose, without moving, without looking at her brother, without seeming even to have heard what he said, made a second attempt to address her judges, in spite of Trudaine's interposition.

“ Silence !” shouted the man with the bludgeon. “ Silence, you women ! the citizen-president is going to speak.”

“ The prisoner Trudaine has the ear of the court,” said the president, “ and may continue his confession.

If the female prisoner wishes to speak, she may be heard afterwards. I enjoin both the accused persons to make short work of it with their addresses to me, or they will make their case worse instead of better. I command silence among the audience, and if I am not obeyed, I will clear the hall. Now, prisoner Trudaine, I invite you to proceed. No more about your sister; let her speak for herself. Your business and ours is with the man and woman Dubois now. Are you, or are you not, ready to tell the court who they are?"

"I repeat that I am ready," answered Trudaine. "The citizen Dubois is a servant. The woman Dubois is the mother of the man who denounces me—superintendent Danville."

A low, murmuring, rushing sound of hundreds of exclaiming voices, all speaking, half-suppressedly, at the same moment, followed the delivery of the answer. No officer of the court attempted to control the outburst of astonishment. The infection of it spread to the persons on the platform, to the crier himself, to the judges of the tribunal, lounging, but the moment before, so carelessly silent in their chairs. When the noise was at length quelled, it was sub-

dued in the most instantaneous manner by one man, who shouted from the throng behind the president's chair,

“Clear the way there! Superintendent Danville is taken ill!”

A vehement whispering and contending of many voices interrupting each other, followed; then a swaying among the assembly of official people; then a great stillness; then the sudden appearance of Danville, alone, at the table.

The look of him, as he turned his ghastly face towards the audience, silenced and steadied them in an instant, just as they were on the point of falling into fresh confusion. Everyone stretched forward eagerly to hear what he would say. His lips moved; but the few words that fell from them were inaudible, except to the persons who happened to be close by him. Having spoken, he left the table supported by a police-agent, who was seen to lead him towards the private door of the court, and, consequently, also towards the prisoner's platform. He stopped, however, half-way, quickly turned his face from the prisoners, and pointing towards the public door at the opposite side of the hall, caused himself to be led out into the air by that direction. When

he had gone, the president, addressing himself partly to Trudaine and partly to the audience, said,—

“The citizen-superintendent Danville has been overcome by the heat in the court. He has retired (by my desire, under the care of a police-agent) to recover in the open air; pledging himself to me to come back and throw a new light on the extraordinary and suspicious statement which the prisoner has just made. Until the return of citizen Danville, I order the accused, Trudaine, to suspend any further acknowledgment of complicity which he may have to address to me. This matter must be cleared up before other matters are entered on. Meanwhile, in order that the time of the tribunal may not be wasted, I authorize the female prisoner to take this opportunity of making any statement concerning herself which she may wish to address to the judges.”

“Silence him!” “Remove him out of court!” “Gag him!” “Guillotine him!” These cries rose from the audience the moment the president had done speaking. They were all directed at Trudaine, who had made a last desperate effort to persuade his sister to keep silence, and had been detected in the attempt by the spectators.

“If the prisoner speaks another word to his sister,

remove him," said the president, addressing the guard round the platform.

"Good! we shall hear her at last. Silence! silence!" exclaimed the women, settling themselves comfortably on their benches, and preparing to resume their work.

"Rose Danville, the court is waiting to hear you," said the president, crossing his legs and leaning back luxuriously in his large arm-chair.

Amid all the noise and confusion of the last few minutes, Rose had stood ever in the same attitude, with that strangely fixed expression never altering on her face but once. When her husband made his way to the side of the table, and stood there prominently alone, her lips trembled a little, and a faint shade of colour passed swiftly over her cheeks. Even that slight change had vanished now—she was paler, stiller, more widely altered from her former self than ever, as she faced the president and said these words:—

"I wish to follow my brother's example, and make my confession, as he has made his. I would rather he had spoken for me; but he is too generous to say any words except such as he thinks may save me from sharing his punishment. I refuse to be saved,

unless he is saved with me. Where he goes when he leaves this place, I will go; what he suffers, I will suffer; if he is to die, I believe God will grant me the strength to die resignedly with him!"

She paused for a moment, and half turned towards Trudaine—then checked herself instantly, and went on:—"This is what I now wish to say, as to my share in the offence charged against my brother:—some time ago, he told me one day that he had seen my husband's mother in Paris disguised as a poor woman; that he had spoken to her, and forced her to acknowledge herself. Up to this time we had all felt certain that she had left France, because she held old-fashioned opinions, which it is dangerous for people to hold now—had left France before we came to Paris. She told my brother that she had indeed gone (with an old tried servant of the family to help and protect her) as far as Marseilles; and that, finding unforeseen difficulty there in getting farther, she had taken it as a warning from Providence not to desert her son, of whom she was very passionately fond, and from whom she had been most unwilling to depart. Instead of waiting in exile for quieter times, she determined to go and hide herself in Paris, knowing her son was going there too. She assumed

the name of her old and faithful servant, who declined to the last to leave her unprotected; and she proposed to live in the strictest secrecy and retirement, watching, unknown, the career of her son, and ready at a moment's notice to disclose herself to him, when the settlement of public affairs might reunite her safely to her beloved child. My brother thought this plan full of danger, both for herself, for her son, and for the honest old man who was risking his head for his mistress's sake. I thought so too; and in an evil hour I said to Louis, 'Will you try in secret to get my husband's mother away, and see that her faithful servant makes her really leave France this time?' I wrongly asked my brother to do this for a selfish reason of my own—a reason connected with my married life, which has not been a happy one. I had not succeeded in gaining my husband's affection, and was not treated kindly by him. My brother, who has always loved me far more dearly I am afraid than I have ever deserved; my brother increased his kindness to me, seeing me treated unkindly by my husband. This made ill-blood between them. My thought, when I asked my brother to do for me what I have said, was, that if we two in secret saved my husband's mother, without danger

to him, from imperilling herself and her son, we should, when the time came for speaking of what we had done, appear to my husband in a new and better light. I should have shown how well I deserved his love, and Louis would have shown how well he deserved his brother-in-law's gratitude; and so we should have made home happy at last, and all three have lived together affectionately. This was my thought; and when I told it to my brother, and asked him if there would be much risk, out of his kindness and indulgence towards me he said 'No!' He had so used me to accept sacrifices for my happiness, that I let him endanger himself to help me in my little household plan. I repent this bitterly now; I ask his pardon with my whole heart. If he is acquitted, I will try to show myself worthier of his love. If he is found guilty, I too will go to the scaffold, and die with my brother, who risked his life for my sake."

She ceased as quietly as she had begun, and turned once more to her brother.

As she looked away from the court and looked at him, a few tears came into her eyes, and something of the old softness of form and gentleness of expression seemed to return to her face. He let her take his hand, but he seemed purposely to avoid meeting

the anxious gaze she fixed on him. His head sunk on his breast; he drew his breath heavily; his countenance darkened and grew distorted, as if he were suffering some sharp pang of physical pain. He bent down a little, and, leaning his elbow on the rail before him, covered his face with his hand; and so quelled the rising agony, so forced back the scalding tears to his heart. The audience had heard Rose in silence, and they preserved the same tranquillity when she had done. This was a rare tribute to a prisoner from the people of the Reign of Terror.

The president looked round at his colleagues, and shook his head suspiciously.

“This statement of the female prisoner’s complicates the matter very seriously,” said he. “Is there anybody in court,” he added, looking at the persons behind his chair, “who knows where the mother of Superintendent Danville and the servant are now?”

Lomaque came forward at the appeal, and placed himself by the table.

“Why, citizen agent!” continued the president, looking hard at him, “are you overcome by the heat too?”

“The fit seemed to take him, citizen president, when the female prisoner had made an end of her

statement," explained Magloire, pressing forward officiously.

Lomaque gave his subordinate a look which sent the man back directly to the shelter of the official group; then said, in lower tones than were customary with him,

"I have received information relative to the mother of Superintendent Danville and the servant, and am ready to answer any questions that may be put to me."

"Where are they now?" asked the president.

"She and the servant are known to have crossed the frontier, and are supposed to be on their way to Cologne. But, since they have entered Germany, their whereabouts is necessarily a matter of uncertainty to the republican authorities."

"Have you any information relative to the conduct of the old servant while he was in Paris?"

"I have information enough to prove that he was not an object for political suspicion. He seems to have been simply animated by servile zeal for the woman's interests; to have performed for her all the menial offices of a servant in private; and to have misled the neighbours by affected equality with her in public."

“Have you any reason to believe that Superintendent Danville was privy to his mother’s first attempt at escaping from France?”

“I infer it from what the female prisoner has said, and for other reasons which it would be irregular to detail before the tribunal. The proofs can no doubt be obtained, if I am allowed time to communicate with the authorities at Lyons and Marseilles.”

At this moment Danville re-entered the court, and, advancing to the table, placed himself close by the chief-agent’s side. They looked each other steadily in the face for an instant.

“He has recovered from the shock of Trudaine’s answer,” thought Lomaque, retiring. “His hand trembles, his face is pale, but I can see regained self-possession in his eye, and I dread the consequences already.”

“Citizen president,” began Danville, “I demand to know if anything has transpired affecting my honour and patriotism in my absence?”

He spoke apparently with the most perfect calmness, but he looked nobody in the face. His eyes were fixed steadily on the green baize of the table beneath him.

“The female prisoner has made a statement, referring principally to herself and her brother,” answered the president, “but incidentally mentioning a previous attempt on your mother’s part to break existing laws by emigrating from France. This portion of the confession contains in it some elements of suspicion which seriously affect you”—

“They shall be suspicions no longer—at my own peril I will change them to certainties!” exclaimed Danville, extending his arm theatrically and looking up for the first time. “Citizen president, I avow it with the fearless frankness of a good patriot; I was privy to my mother’s first attempt at escaping from France.”

Hisses and cries of execration followed this confession. He winced under them at first; but recovered his self-possession before silence was restored.

“Citizens, you have heard the confession of my fault,” he resumed, turning with desperate assurance towards the audience; “now hear the atonement I have made for it at the altar of my country.”

He waited at the end of that sentence, until the secretary to the tribunal had done writing it down in the report-book of the court.

“Transcribe faithfully to the letter!” cried Danville, pointing solemnly to the open page of the volume. “Life and death hang on my words.”

The secretary took a fresh dip of ink, and nodded to show that he was ready. Danville went on:

“In these times of glory and trial for France,” he proceeded, pitching his voice to a tone of deep emotion, “what are all good citizens most sacredly bound to do? To immolate their dearest private affections and interests before their public duties! On the first attempt of my mother to violate the laws against emigration, by escaping from France, I failed in making the heroic sacrifice which inexorable patriotism demanded of me. My situation was more terrible than the situation of Brutus sitting in judgment on his own sons. I had not the Roman fortitude to rise equal to it. I erred, citizens—erred as Coriolanus did, when his august mother pleaded with him for the safety of Rome! For that error I deserved to be purged out of the republican community; but I escaped my merited punishment,—nay, I even rose to the honour of holding an office under the government. Time passed; and again my mother attempted an escape from France. Again, inevitable fate brought my civic virtue to the test.

How did I meet this second supremest trial? By an atonement for past weakness, terrible as the trial itself! Citizens, you will shudder; but you will applaud while you tremble. Citizens, look! and while you look, remember well the evidence given at the opening of this case. Yonder stands the enemy of his country, who intrigued to help my mother to escape; here stands the patriot son, whose voice was the first, the only voice, to denounce him for the crime!" As he spoke, he pointed to Trudaine, then struck himself on the breast, then folded his arms, and looked sternly at the benches occupied by the spectators.

"Do you assert," exclaimed the president, "that at the time when you denounced Trudaine, you knew him to be intriguing to aid your mother's escape?"

"I assert it," answered Danville.

The pen which the president held, dropped from his hand at that reply; his colleagues started and looked at each other in blank silence.

A murmur of "Monster! monster!" began with the prisoners on the platform, and spread instantly to the audience, who echoed and echoed it again; the fiercest woman-republican on the benches joined cause at last with the haughtiest woman-aristocrat on

the platform. Even in that sphere of direst discords, in that age of sharpest enmities, the one touch of nature preserved its old eternal virtue, and roused the mother-instinct which makes the whole world kin!

Of the few persons in the court who at once foresaw the effect of Danville's answer on the proceedings of the tribunal, Lomaque was one. His sallow face whitened as he looked towards the prisoners' platform.

"They are lost," he murmured to himself, moving out of the group in which he had hitherto stood. "Lost! The lie which has saved that villain's head leaves them without the shadow of a hope. No need to stop for the sentence—Danville's infamous presence of mind has given them up to the guillotine!" Pronouncing these words, he went out hurriedly by a door near the platform, which led to the prisoners' waiting-room.

Rose's head sank again on her brother's shoulder. She shuddered, and leaned back faintly on the arm which he extended to support her. One of the female prisoners tried to help Trudaine in speaking consolingly to her; but the consummation of her husband's perfidy seemed to have paralyzed her at heart. She murmured once in her brother's ear, "Louis! I am

resigned to die—nothing but death is left for me after the degradation of having loved that man.” She said those words and closed her eyes wearily, and spoke no more.

“One other question, and you may retire,” resumed the president, addressing Danville. “Were you cognizant of your wife’s connexion with her brother’s conspiracy?”

Danville reflected for a moment, remembered that there were witnesses in court who could speak to his language and behaviour on the evening of his wife’s arrest, and resolved this time to tell the truth.

“I was not aware of it,” he answered. “Testimony in my favour can be called which will prove that when my wife’s complicity was discovered I was absent from Paris.”

Heartlessly self-possessed as he was, the public reception of his last reply had shaken his nerve. He now spoke in low tones, turning his back on the spectators, and fixing his eyes again on the green baize of the table at which he stood.

“Prisoners! have you any objection to make, any evidence to call, invalidating the statement by which citizen Danville has cleared himself of suspicion?” inquired the president.

“ He has cleared himself by the most execrable of all falsehoods,” answered Trudaine. “ If his mother could be traced and brought here, her testimony would prove it.”

“ Can you produce any other evidence in support of your allegation?” asked the president.

“ I cannot.”

“ Citizen-superintendent Danville, you are at liberty to retire. Your statement will be laid before the authority to whom you are officially responsible. Either you merit a civic crown for more than Roman virtue, or”—— Having got thus far, the president stopped abruptly, as if unwilling to commit himself too soon to an opinion, and merely repeated,—“ You may retire.”

Danville left the court immediately, going out again by the public door. He was followed by murmurs from the women’s benches, which soon ceased, however, when the president was observed to close his note-book, and turn round towards his colleagues. “ The sentence!” was the general whisper now. “ Hush, hush—the sentence!”

After a consultation of a few minutes with the persons behind him, the president rose, and spoke the momentous words :—

“Louis Trudaine and Rose Danville, the revolutionary tribunal, having heard the charge against you, and having weighed the value of what you have said in answer to it, decides that you are both guilty, and condemns you to the penalty of death.”

Having delivered the sentence in those terms, he sat down again, and placed a mark against the two first condemned names on the list of prisoners. Immediately afterwards the next case was called on, and the curiosity of the audience was stimulated by a new trial.

CHAPTER IV.

THE waiting-room of the revolutionary tribunal was a grim, bare place, with a dirty stone floor, and benches running round the walls. The windows were high and barred; and at the outer door, leading into the street, two sentinels kept watch. On entering this comfortless retreat from the court, Lomaque found it perfectly empty. Solitude was just then welcome to him. He remained in the waiting-room, walking slowly from end to end over the filthy pavement, talking eagerly and incessantly to himself.

After a while, the door communicating with the tribunal opened, and the humpbacked gaoler made his appearance, leading in Trudaine and Rose.

“You will have to wait here,” said the little man, “till the rest of them have been tried and sentenced; and then you will all go back to prison in a lump. Ha, citizen!” he continued, observing Lomaque at the other end of the hall, and bustling up to him. “Here still, eh? If you were going to stop much longer, I should ask a favour of you.”

“I am in no hurry,” said Lomaque, with a glance at the two prisoners.

“Good!” cried the hunchback, drawing his hand across his mouth; “I am parched with thirst, and dying to moisten my throat at the wine-shop over the way. Just mind that man and woman while I’m gone, will you? It’s the merest form—there’s a guard outside, the windows are barred, the tribunal is within hail. Do you mind obliging me?”

“On the contrary, I am glad of the opportunity.”

“That’s a good fellow—and, remember, if I am asked for, you must say I was obliged to quit the court for a few minutes, and left you in charge.”

With these words, the humpbacked gaoler ran off to the wine-shop.

He had scarcely disappeared before Trudaine crossed the room, and caught Lomaque by the arm.

“Save her,” he whispered; “there is an opportunity—save her!” His face was flushed—his eyes wandered—his breath on the chief-agent’s cheek, while he spoke, felt scorching hot. “Save her!” he repeated, shaking Lomaque by the arm, and dragging him towards the door. “Remember all you owe to my father—remember our talk on that bench by the river—remember what you said to me yourself on the night of the arrest—don’t wait to think—save her, and leave me without a word! If I die alone, I can die as a man should—if she goes to the scaffold by my side, my heart will fail me—I shall die the death of a coward! I have lived for her life—let me die for it, and I die happy!”

He tried to say more, but the violence of his agitation forbade it. He could only shake the arm he held again and again, and point to the bench on which Rose sat—her head sunk on her bosom, her hands crossed listlessly on her lap.

“There are two armed sentinels outside—the windows are barred—you are without weapons—and even if you had them, there is a guard-house within hail on one side of you, and the tribunal on the other.

Escape from this room is impossible," answered Lomaque.

"Impossible!" repeated the other furiously. "You traitor! you coward! can you look at her sitting there helpless—her very life ebbing away already with every minute that passes, and tell me coolly that escape is impossible?"

In the frenzy of his grief and despair, he lifted his disengaged hand threateningly while he spoke. Lomaque caught him by the wrist, and drew him towards a window open at the top.

"You are not in your right senses," said the chief-agent firmly; "anxiety and apprehension on your sister's account have shaken your mind. Try to compose yourself, and listen to me. I have something important to say"—— (Trudaine looked at him incredulously.) "Important," continued Lomaque, "as affecting your sister's interests at this terrible crisis."

That last appeal had an instantaneous effect. Trudaine's outstretched hand dropped to his side, and a sudden change passed over his expression.

"Give me a moment," he said faintly; and, turning away, leaned against the wall, and pressed his burning forehead on the chill, damp stone. He did not raise

his head again till he had mastered himself, and could say quietly, "Speak—I am fit to hear you, and sufficiently in my senses to ask your forgiveness for what I said just now."

"When I left the tribunal and entered this room," Lomaque began in a whisper, "there was no thought in my mind that could be turned to good account, either for your sister or for you. I was fit for nothing but to deplore the failure of the confession which I came to St Lazare to suggest to you as your best plan of defence. Since then, an idea has struck me, which may be useful—an idea so desperate, so uncertain—involving a proposal so absolutely dependent, as to its successful execution, on the merest chance, that I refuse to confide it to you except on one condition."

"Mention the condition! I submit to it beforehand."

"Give me your word of honour that you will not mention what I am about to say to your sister until I grant you permission to speak. Promise me that when you see her shrinking before the terrors of death to-night, you will have self-restraint enough to abstain from breathing a word of hope to her. I ask this, because there are ten—twenty—fifty chances to one that there is no hope."

“I have no choice but to promise,” answered Trudaine.

Lomaque produced his pocket-book and pencil before he spoke again.

“I will enter into particulars as soon as I have asked a strange question of you,” he said. “You have been a great experimenter in chemistry in your time—is your mind calm enough at such a trying moment as this to answer a question which is connected with chemistry in a very humble way? You seem astonished. Let me put the question at once. Is there any liquid, or powder, or combination of more than one ingredient known, which will remove writing from paper, and leave no stain behind?”

“Certainly! But is that all the question? Is there no greater difficulty?”

“None. Write the prescription, whatever it may be, on that leaf,” said the other, giving him the pocket-book. “Write it down, with plain directions for use.” Trudaine obeyed. “This is the first step,” continued Lomaque, putting the book in his pocket, “towards the accomplishment of my purpose—my uncertain purpose, remember! Now listen; I am going to put my own head in danger for the chance of saving yours and your sister’s by tampering with

the death-list. Don't interrupt me! If I can save one, I can save the other. Not a word about gratitude! Wait till you know the extent of your obligation. I tell you plainly, at the outset, there is a motive of despair, as well as a motive of pity, at the bottom of the action in which I am now about to engage. Silence! I insist on it. Our time is short: it is for me to speak, and for you to listen. The president of the tribunal has put the death-mark against your names on the prison list of to-day. That list, when the trials are over, and it is marked to the end, will be called in this room before you are taken to St Lazare. It will then be sent to Robespierre, who will keep it, having a copy made of it the moment it is delivered, for circulation among his colleagues—St Just, and the rest. It is my business to make a duplicate of this copy in the first instance. The duplicate will be compared with the original, and possibly with the copy too, either by Robespierre himself, or by some one in whom he can place implicit trust, and will then be sent to St Lazare without passing through my hands again. It will be read in public the moment it is received, at the grating of the prison, and will afterwards be kept by the gaoler, who will refer to it as he goes round in the

evening with a piece of chalk, to mark the cell-doors of the prisoners destined for the guillotine to-morrow. That duty happens, to-day, to fall to the hunchback whom you saw speaking to me. He is a confirmed drinker, and I mean to tempt him with such wine as he rarely tastes. If—after the reading of the list in public, and before the marking of the cell-doors—I can get him to sit down to the bottle, I will answer for making him drunk, for getting the list out of his pocket, and for wiping your names out of it with the prescription you have just written for me. I shall write all the names, one under another, just irregularly enough in my duplicate to prevent the interval left by the erasure from being easily observed. If I succeed in this, your door will not be marked, and your names will not be called to-morrow morning when the tumbrils come for the guillotine. In the present confusion of prisoners pouring in every day for trial, and prisoners pouring out every day for execution, you will have the best possible chance of security against awkward inquiries, if you play your cards properly, for a good fortnight or ten days at least. In that time”——

“Well! well!” cried Trudaine eagerly.

Lomaque looked towards the tribunal door, and

lowered his voice to a fainter whisper before he continued: "In that time Robespierre's own head may fall into the sack! France is beginning to sicken under the Reign of Terror. Frenchmen of the Moderate faction, who have lain hidden for months in cellars and lofts, are beginning to steal out and deliberate by twos and threes together, under cover of the night. Robespierre has not ventured for weeks past to face the Convention committee. He only speaks among his own friends at the Jacobins. There are rumours of a terrible discovery made by Carnot, of a desperate resolution taken by Tallien. Men watching behind the scenes see that the last days of the Terror are at hand. If Robespierre is beaten in the approaching struggle, you are saved—for the new reign must be a Reign of Mercy. If he conquers, I have only put off the date of your death and your sister's, and have laid my own neck under the axe. Those are your chances—this is all I can do."

He paused, and Trudaine again endeavoured to speak such words as might show that he was not unworthy of the deadly risk which Lomaque was prepared to encounter. But once more the chief-agent peremptorily and irritably interposed.

"I tell you, for the third time," he said, "I will

listen to no expressions of gratitude from you, till I know when I deserve them. It is true that I recollect your father's timely kindness to me—true that I have not forgotten what passed, five years since, at your house by the river side. I remember everything, down to what you would consider the veriest trifle—that cup of coffee, for instance, which your sister kept hot for me. I told you then that you would think better of me some day. I know that you do now. But this is not all. You want to glorify me to my face for risking my life for you. I won't hear you, because my risk is of the paltriest kind. I am weary of my life. I can't look back to it with pleasure. I am too old to look forward to what is left of it with hope. There was something in that night at your house before the wedding—something in what you said, in what your sister did—which altered me. I have had my days of gloom and self-reproach, from time to time, since then. I have sickened at my slavery, and subjection, and duplicity, and cringing, first under one master, then under another. I have longed to look back at my life, and comfort myself with the sight of some good action, just as a frugal man comforts himself with the sight of his little savings laid by in an old

drawer. I can't do this, and I want to do it. The want takes me like a fit, at uncertain intervals,—suddenly, under the most incomprehensible influences. A glance up at the blue sky—starlight over the houses of this great city, when I look out at the night from my garret window—a child's voice coming suddenly, I don't know where from—the piping of my neighbour's linnet in his little cage—now one trifling thing, now another, wakes up that want in me in a moment. Rascal as I am, those few simple words your sister spoke to the judge went through and through me like a knife. Strange, in a man like me, isn't it? I am amazed at it myself. *My* life? Bah! I've let it out for hire to be kicked about by rascals from one dirty place to another, like a football! It's my whim to give it a last kick myself, and throw it away decently before it lodges on the dunghill for ever. Your sister kept a good cup of coffee hot for me, and I give her a bad life in return for the compliment. You want to thank me for it? What folly! Thank me when I have done something useful. Don't thank me for that!"

He snapped his fingers contemptuously as he spoke, and walked away to the outer door to receive the gaoler, who returned at that moment.

“Well,” inquired the hunchback, “has anybody asked for me?”

“No,” answered Lomaque; “not a soul has entered the room. What sort of wine did you get?”

“So-so! Good at a pinch, friend—good at a pinch.”

“Ah! you should go to my shop and try a certain cask, filled with a particular vintage!”

“What shop? Which vintage?”

“I can’t stop to tell you now; but we shall most likely meet again to-day. I expect to be at the prison this afternoon. Shall I ask for you? Good! I won’t forget!” With those farewell words he went out, and never so much as looked back at the prisoners before he closed the door behind him.

Trudaine returned to his sister, fearful lest his face should betray what had passed during the extraordinary interview between Lomaque and himself. But, whatever change there might be in his expression, Rose did not seem to notice it. She was still strangely inattentive to all outward things. That spirit of resignation, which is the courage of women in all great emergencies, seemed now to be the one animating spirit that fed the flame of life within her.

When her brother sat down by her, she only took his hand gently and said—"Let us stop together like this, Louis, till the time comes. I am not afraid of it, for I have nothing but you to make me love life, and you, too, are going to die. Do you remember the time when I used to grieve that I had never had a child to be some comfort to me? I was thinking a moment ago, how terrible it would have been now, if my wish had been granted. It is a blessing for me, in this great misery, that I am childless! Let us talk of old days, Louis, as long as we can—not of my husband, or my marriage—only of the old times, before I was a burden and a trouble to you."

CHAPTER V.

THE day wore on. By ones and twos and threes at a time, the condemned prisoners came from the tribunal, and collected in the waiting-room. At two o'clock all was ready for the calling over of the death-list. It was read and verified by an officer of

the court; and then the gaoler took his prisoners back to Saint Lazare.

Evening came. The prisoners' meal had been served; the duplicate of the death-list had been read in public at the grate; the cell-doors were all locked. From the day of their arrest, Rose and her brother, partly through the influence of a bribe, partly through Lomaque's intercession, had been confined together in one cell; and together they now awaited the dread event of the morrow.

To Rose that event was death—death, to the thought of which, at least, she was now resigned. To Trudaine the fast-nearing future was darkening hour by hour, with the uncertainty which is worse than death; with the faint, fearful, unpartaken suspense, which keeps the mind ever on the rack, and wears away the heart slowly. Through the long unsoled agony of that dreadful night, but one relief came to him. The tension of every nerve, the crushing weight of the one fatal oppression that clung to every thought, relaxed a little, when Rose's bodily powers began to sink under her mental exhaustion—when her sad dying talk of the happy times that were passed ceased softly, and she laid her head on his shoulder, and let the angel of

slumber take her yet for a little while, even though she lay already under the shadow of the angel of death.

The morning came, and the hot summer sunrise. What life was left in the terror-struck city awoke for the day faintly; and still the suspense of the long night remained unlightened. It was drawing near the hour when the tumbrils were to come for the victims doomed on the day before. Trudaine's ear could detect even the faintest sound in the echoing prison-region outside his cell. Soon, listening near the door, he heard voices disputing on the other side of it. Suddenly, the bolts were drawn back, the key turned in the lock, and he found himself standing face to face with the hunchback and one of the subordinate attendants on the prisoners.

"Look!" muttered this last man, sulkily, "there they are, safe in their cell, just as I said; but I tell you again they are not down in the list. What do you mean by bullying me about not chalking their door, last night, along with the rest? Catch me doing your work for you again, when you're too drunk to do it yourself!"

"Hold your tongue, and let me have another look at the list!" returned the hunchback, turning away

from the cell-door, and snatching a slip of paper from the other's hand. "The devil take me if I can make head or tail of it!" he exclaimed, scratching his head, after a careful examination of the list. "I could swear that I read over their names at the grate yesterday afternoon, with my own lips; and yet, look as long as I may, I certainly can't find them written down here. Give us a pinch, friend. Am I awake, or dreaming?—drunk or sober this morning?"

"Sober, I hope," said a quiet voice at his elbow. "I have just looked in to see how you are after yesterday."

"How I am, citizen Lomaque? Petrified with astonishment. You yourself took charge of that man and woman for me, in the waiting-room, yesterday morning; and as for myself, I could swear to having read their names at the grate yesterday afternoon. Yet this morning here are no such things as these said names to be found in the list! What do you think of that?"

"And what do you think," interrupted the ag-grieved subordinate, "of his having the impudence to bully me for being careless in chalking the doors, when he was too drunk to do it himself?—too drunk

to know his right hand from his left! If I wasn't the best-natured man in the world, I should report him to the head-gaoler."

"Quite right of you to excuse him, and quite wrong of him to bully you," said Lomaque, persuasively. "Take my advice," he continued confidentially to the hunchback, "and don't trust too implicitly to that slippery memory of yours, after our little drinking bout yesterday. You could not really have read their names at the grate, you know, or of course they would be down on the list. As for the waiting-room at the tribunal, a word in your ear: chief-agents of police know strange secrets. The president of the court condemns and pardons in public; but there is somebody else, with the power of ten thousand presidents, who now and then condemns and pardons in private. You can guess who. I say no more, except that I recommend you to keep your head on your shoulders, by troubling it about nothing but the list there in your hand. Stick to that literally, and no body can blame you. Make a fuss about mysteries that don't concern you, and"—

Lomaque stopped, and holding his hand edgewise, let it drop significantly over the hunchback's head. That action, and the hints which preceded it, seemed

to bewilder the little man more than ever. He stared perplexedly at Lomaque; uttered a word or two of rough apology to his subordinate, and rolling his misshapen head portentously, walked away with the death-list crumpled up nervously in his hand.

“I should like to have a sight of them, and see if they really are the same man and woman whom I looked after yesterday morning in the waiting-room,” said Lomaque, putting his hand on the cell-door, just as the deputy-gaoler was about to close it again.

“Look in, by all means,” said the man. “No doubt you will find that drunken booby as wrong in what he told you about them as he is about everything else.”

Lomaque made use of the privilege granted to him immediately. He saw Trudaine sitting with his sister in the corner of the cell farthest from the door, evidently for the purpose of preventing her from overhearing the conversation outside. There was an unsettled look, however, in her eyes, a slowly-heightening colour in her cheeks, which showed her to be at least vaguely aware that something unusual had been taking place in the corridor.

Lomaque beckoned to Trudaine to leave her; and whispered to him—“The prescription has worked

well. You are safe for to-day. Break the news to your sister as gently as you can. Danville"— He stopped and listened till he satisfied himself, by the sound of the deputy-gaoler's footsteps, that the man was lounging towards the farther end of the corridor. "Danville," he resumed, "after having mixed with the people outside the grate, yesterday, and having heard your names read, was arrested in the evening by secret order from Robespierre, and sent to the Temple. What charge will be laid to him, or when he will be brought to trial, it is impossible to say. I only know that he is arrested. Hush! don't talk now; my friend outside is coming back. Keep quiet—hope everything from the chances and changes of public affairs; and comfort yourself with the thought that you are both safe for to-day."

"And to-morrow?" whispered Trudaine.

"Don't think of to-morrow," returned Lomaque, turning away hurriedly to the door. "Let to-morrow take care of itself."

PART THIRD.—CHAPTER I.

ON a spring morning, in the year seventeen hundred and ninety-eight, the public conveyance then running between Chalons-sur-Marne and Paris set down one of its outside passengers at the first post-station beyond Meaux. The traveller, an old man, after looking about him hesitatingly for a moment or two, betook himself to a little inn opposite the post-house known by the sign of the Piebald Horse, and kept by the Widow Duval,—a woman who enjoyed and deserved the reputation of being the fastest talker and the best maker of *gibelotte* in the whole locality.

Although the traveller was carelessly noticed by the village idlers, and received without ceremony by the Widow Duval, he was by no means so ordinary and uninteresting a stranger as the rustics of the place were pleased to consider him. The time had been when this quiet, elderly, unobtrusive applicant for refreshment at the Piebald Horse was trusted with the darkest secrets of the Reign of Terror, and was admitted at all times and seasons to speak face to

face with Maximilien Robespierre himself. The Widow Duval and the hangers-on in front of the post-house would have been all astonished indeed, if any well-informed personage from the metropolis had been present to tell them that the modest old traveller, with the shabby little carpet-bag, was an ex-chief agent of the secret police of Paris!

Between three and four years had elapsed since Lomaque had exercised, for the last time, his official functions under the Reign of Terror. His shoulders had contracted an extra stoop, and his hair had all fallen off, except at the sides and back of his head. In some other respects, however, advancing age seemed to have improved rather than deteriorated him in personal appearance. His complexion looked healthier, his expression cheerfuller, his eyes brighter than they had ever been of late years. He walked, too, with a brisker step than the step of old times in the police-office; and his dress, although it certainly did not look like the costume of a man in affluent circumstances, was cleaner and far more neatly worn than ever it had been in the past days of his political employment at Paris.

He sat down alone in the inn-parlour, and occupied the time, while his hostess had gone to fetch

the half-bottle of wine that he ordered, in examining a dirty old card which he extricated from a mass of papers in his pocket-book, and which bore, written on it, these lines :—

“ When the troubles are over, do not forget those who remember you with eternal gratitude. Stop at the first post-station beyond Meaux, on the high road to Paris, and ask at the inn for citizen Maurice, whenever you wish to see us or to hear of us again.”

“ Pray,” inquired Lomaque, putting the card in his pocket when the Widow Duval brought in the wine, “ can you inform me whether a person named Maurice lives anywhere in this neighbourhood?”

“ Can I inform you?” repeated the voluble widow. “ Of course I can! Citizen Maurice, and the citoyenne, his amiable sister—who is not to be passed over because you don’t mention her, my honest man!—live within ten minutes’ walk of my house. A charming cottage, in a charming situation, inhabited by two charming people,—so quiet, so retiring, such excellent pay. I supply them with everything,—fowls, eggs, bread, butter, vegetables (not that they eat much of anything), wine (which they don’t drink half enough of to do them good); in short, I victual the dear little hermitage, and love the two amiable

recluses with all my heart. Ah! they have had their troubles, poor people, the sister especially, though they never talk about them. When they first came to live in our neighbourhood"—

"I beg pardon, citoyenne, but if you would only be so kind as to direct me"—

"Which is three—no, four—no, three years and a half ago—in short, just after the time when that Satan of a man, Robespierre, had his head cut off (and serve him right!), I said to my husband (who was on his last legs then, poor man!), 'She'll die,'—meaning the lady. She didn't though. My fowls, eggs, bread, butter, vegetables, and wine, carried her through,—always in combination with the anxious care of citizen Maurice. Yes, yes! let us be tenderly conscientious in giving credit where credit is due; let us never forget that the citizen Maurice contributed something to the cure of the interesting invalid, as well as the victuals and drink from the Piebald Horse. There she is now, the prettiest little woman in the prettiest little cottage"—

"Where? Will you be so obliging as to tell me where?"

"And in excellent health, except that she is subject now and then to nervous attacks, having

evidently, as I believe, been struck with some dreadful fright,—most likely during that accursed time of the Terror, for they came from Paris—you don't drink, honest man! Why don't you drink?—Very, very pretty in a pale way; figure perhaps too thin—let me pour it out for you—but an angel of gentleness, and attached in such a touching way to the citizen Maurice”——

“ Citizen hostess! will you, or will you not, tell me where they live?”

“ You droll little man! why did you not ask me that before, if you wanted to know? Finish your wine and come to the door. There's your change, and thank you for your custom though it isn't much. Come to the door, I say, and don't interrupt me! You're an old man,—can you see forty yards before you?—Yes, you can! Don't be peevish,—that never did anybody any good yet. Now look back, along the road where I am pointing. You see a large heap of stones? Good. On the other side of the heap of stones, there is a little path,—you can't see that, but you can remember what I tell you? Good. You go down the path till you get to a stream; down the stream till you get to a bridge; down the other bank of the stream (after crossing the bridge) till

you get to an old water-mill,—a jewel of a water-mill! famous for miles round; artists from the four quarters of the globe are always coming to sketch it! Ah! what, you are getting peevish again? You won't wait? Impatient old man, what a life your wife must lead, if you have got one! Remember the bridge! Ah! your poor wife and children, I pity them, your daughters especially. Pst! pst! Remember the bridge,—peevish old man, remember the bridge!”

Walking as fast as he could out of hearing of the Widow Duval's tongue, Lomaque took the path by the heap of stones which led out of the high-road, crossed the stream, and arrived at the old water-mill. Close by it stood a cottage,—a rough, simple building, with a strip of garden in front. Lomaque's observant eyes marked the graceful arrangement of the flower-beds and the delicate whiteness of the curtains that hung behind the badly-glazed narrow windows. “This must be the place,” he said to himself as he knocked at the door with his stick. “I can see the traces of her hand before I cross the threshold.”

The door was opened. “Pray, does the citizen Maurice?”—— Lomaque began, not seeing clearly, for the first moment, in the dark little passage.

Before he could say any more his hand was grasped, his carpet-bag was taken from him, and a well-known voice cried, "Welcome! a thousand thousand times welcome, at last! Citizen Maurice is not at home; but Louis Trudaine takes his place, and is overjoyed to see once more the best and dearest of his friends!"

"I hardly know you again. How you are altered for the better!" exclaimed Lomaque as they entered the parlour of the cottage.

"Remember that you see me after a long freedom from anxiety. Since I have lived here, I have gone to rest at night, and have not been afraid of the morning," replied Trudaine. He went out into the passage while he spoke, and called at the foot of the one flight of stairs which the cottage possessed, "Rose! Rose! come down! The friend whom you most wished to see has arrived at last!"

She answered the summons immediately. The frank friendly warmth of her greeting; her resolute determination, after the first inquiries were over, to help the guest to take off his upper coat with her own hands, so confused and delighted Lomaque, that he hardly knew which way to turn, or what to say.

"This is even more trying, in a pleasant way, to a lonely old fellow like me"—he was about to add,

“than the unexpected civility of the hot cup of coffee years ago;” but remembering what recollections even that trifling circumstance might recall, he checked himself.

“More trying than what?” asked Rose, leading him to a chair.

“Ah! I forget. I am in my dotage already!” he answered, confusedly. “I have not got used just yet to the pleasure of seeing your kind face again.”

It was indeed a pleasure to look at that face now, after Lomaque’s last experience of it. Three years of repose, though they had not restored to Rose those youthful attractions which she had lost for ever in the days of the Terror, had not passed without leaving kindly outward traces of their healing progress. Though the girlish roundness had not returned to her cheeks, or the girlish delicacy of colour to her complexion, her eyes had recovered much of their old softness, and her expression all of its old winning charm. What was left of latent sadness in her face, and of significant quietness in her manner, remained gently and harmlessly—remained rather to show what had been once than what was now.

When they were all seated, there was, however, something like a momentary return to the suspense

and anxiety of past days in their faces, as Trudaine, looking earnestly at Lomaque, asked—"Do you bring any news from Paris?"

"None," he replied; "but excellent news, instead, from Rouen. I have heard, accidentally, through the employer whom I have been serving since we parted, that your old house by the river side is to let again."

Rose started from her chair. "Oh! Louis, if we could only live there once more! My flower-garden?" she continued, turning to Lomaque.

"Cultivated throughout," he answered, "by the late proprietor."

"And the laboratory?" added her brother.

"Left standing," said Lomaque. "Here is a letter with all the particulars. You may depend upon them, for the writer is the person charged with the letting of the house."

Trudaine looked over the letter eagerly.

"The price is not beyond our means," he said. "After our three years' economy here, we can afford to give something for a great pleasure."

"Oh! what a day of happiness it will be when we go home again!" cried Rose. "Pray, write to your friend at once," she added, addressing Lomaque,

“and say we take the house, before any one else is beforehand with us!”

He nodded; and, folding up the letter mechanically in the old official form, made a note on it in the old official manner. Trudaine observed the action, and felt its association with past times of trouble and terror. His face grew grave again, as he said to Lomaque, “And is this good news really all the news of importance you have to tell us?”

Lomaque hesitated, and fidgeted in his chair. “What other news I have will well bear keeping,” he replied. “There are many questions I should like to ask first, about your sister and yourself. Do you mind allowing me to refer for a moment to the time when we last met?”

He addressed this inquiry to Rose, who answered in the negative; but her voice seemed to alter, even in saying the one word “No.” She turned her head away when she spoke; and Lomaque noticed that her hands trembled as she took up some work lying on a table near, and hurriedly occupied herself with it.

“We speak as little about that time as possible,” said Trudaine, looking significantly towards his

sister ; “ but we have some questions to ask you in our turn ; so the allusion, for this once, is inevitable. Your sudden disappearance at the very crisis of that terrible time of danger has not yet been fully explained to us. The one short note which you left behind you helped us to guess at what had happened rather than to understand it.”

“ I can easily explain it now,” answered Lomaque. “ The sudden overthrow of the Reign of Terror, which was salvation to you, was destruction to me. The new republican reign was a reign of mercy, except for the tail of Robespierre, as the phrase ran then. Every man who had been so wicked or so unfortunate as to be involved, even in the meanest capacity, with the machinery of the government of Terror, was threatened, and justly, with the fate of Robespierre. I, among others, fell under this menace of death. I deserved to die, and should have resigned myself to the guillotine, but for you. From the course taken by public events, I knew you would be saved ; and although your safety was the work of circumstances, still I had a hand in rendering it possible at the outset ; and a yearning came over me to behold you both free again with my own eyes—a selfish yearning to see, in you, a living, breathing,

real result of the one good impulse of my heart, which I could look back on with satisfaction. This desire gave me a new interest in life. I resolved to escape death if it were possible. For ten days I lay hidden in Paris. After that—thanks to certain scraps of useful knowledge which my experience in the office of secret police had given me—I succeeded in getting clear of Paris, and in making my way safely to Switzerland. The rest of my story is so short, and so soon told, that I may as well get it over at once. The one relation I knew of in the world to apply to, was a cousin of mine (whom I had never seen before), established as a silk-mercier at Berne. I threw myself on this man's mercy. He discovered that I was likely, with my business habits, to be of some use to him, and he took me into his house. I worked for what he pleased to give me; travelled about for him in Switzerland; deserved his confidence, and won it. Till within the last few months I remained with him; and only left my employment to enter, by my master's own desire, the house of his brother, established also as a silk-mercier, at Chalons-sur-Marne. In the counting-house of this merchant I am corresponding clerk; and am only able to come and see you now, by offering to

undertake a special business-mission, for my employer, at Paris. It is drudgery, at my time of life, after all I have gone through—but my hard work is innocent work. I am not obliged to cringe for every crown-piece I put in my pocket—not bound to denounce, deceive, and dog to death other men, before I can earn my bread, and scrape together money enough to bury me. I am ending a bad, base life harmlessly at last. It is a poor thing to do, but it is something done—and even that contents a man at my age. In short, I am happier than I used to be, or at least less ashamed when I look people like you in the face.”

“Hush! hush!” interrupted Rose, laying her hand on his arm. “I cannot allow you to talk of yourself in that way, even in jest.”

“I was speaking in earnest,” answered Lomaque, quietly; “but I won’t weary you with any more words about myself. My story is told.”

“All?” asked Trudaine. He looked searchingly, almost suspiciously, at Lomaque, as he put the question. “All?” he repeated. “Yours is a short story, indeed, my good friend! Perhaps you have forgotten some of it?”

Again Lomaque fidgeted and hesitated.

“Is it not a little hard on an old man to be always asking questions of him, and never answering one of his inquiries in return?” he said to Rose, very gaily as to manner, but rather uneasily as to look.

“He will not speak out till we two are alone,” thought Trudaine. “It is best to risk nothing, and to humour him.”

“Come, come,” he said aloud, “no grumbling. I admit that it is your turn to hear our story now; and I will do my best to gratify you. But before I begin,” he added, turning to his sister, “let me suggest, Rose, that if you have any household matters to settle up-stairs”——

“I know what you mean,” she interrupted, hurriedly taking up the work which, during the last few minutes, she had allowed to drop into her lap; “but I am stronger than you think; I can face the worst of our recollections composedly. Go on, Louis; pray go on—I am quite fit to stop and hear you.”

“You know what we suffered in the first days of our suspense, after the success of your stratagem,” said Trudaine, turning to Lomaque. “I think it was on the evening after we had seen you for the last time at St Lazare, that strange confused rumours of an impending convulsion in Paris first penetrated

within our prison walls. During the next few days, the faces of our gaolers were enough to show us that those rumours were true, and that the Reign of Terror was actually threatened with overthrow at the hands of the Moderate Party. We had hardly time to hope everything from this blessed change, before the tremendous news of Robespierre's attempted suicide, then of his condemnation and execution, reached us. The confusion produced in the prison was beyond all description. The accused who had been tried and the accused who had not been tried got mingled together. From the day of Robespierre's arrest, no orders came to the authorities, no death-lists reached the prison. The gaolers, terrified by rumours that the lowest accomplices of the tyrant would be held responsible, and be condemned with him, made no attempt to maintain order. Some of them—that humpbacked man among the rest—deserted their duties altogether. The disorganization was so complete, that when the commissioners from the new government came to St Lazare, some of us were actually half-starving from want of the bare necessaries of life. To inquire separately into our cases was found to be impossible. Sometimes the necessary papers were lost ; sometimes

what documents remained were incomprehensible to the new commissioners. They were obliged, at last, to make short work of it by calling us up before them in dozens. Tried or not tried, we had all been arrested by the tyrant, had all been accused of conspiracy against him, and were all ready to hail the new government as the salvation of France. In nine cases out of ten, our best claim to be discharged was derived from these circumstances. We were trusted by Tallien and the men of the Ninth Thermidor, because we had been suspected by Robespierre, Couthon, and St Just. Arrested informally, we were now liberated informally. When it came to my sister's turn and mine, we were not under examination five minutes. No such thing as a searching question was asked of us; I believe we might even have given our own names with perfect impunity. But I had previously instructed Rose that we were to assume our mother's maiden name—Maurice. As the citizen and citoyenne Maurice, accordingly, we passed out of prison—under the same name we have lived ever since in hiding here. Our past repose has depended, our future happiness will depend, on our escape from death being kept the profoundest secret among us three. For one all-sufficient reason, which

you can easily guess at, the brother and sister Maurice must still know nothing of Louis Trudaine and Rose Danville, except that they were two among the hundreds of victims guillotined during the Reign of Terror."

He spoke the last sentence with a faint smile, and with the air of a man trying, in spite of himself, to treat a grave subject lightly. His face clouded again, however, in a moment, when he looked towards his sister, as he ceased. Her work had once more dropped on her lap; her face was turned away so that he could not see it; but he knew by the trembling of her clasped hands, as they rested on her knee, and by the slight swelling of the veins on her neck which she could not hide from him, that her boasted strength of nerve had deserted her. Three years of repose had not yet enabled her to hear her marriage name uttered, or to be present when past times of deathly suffering and terror were referred to, without betraying the shock in her face and manner. Trudaine looked saddened, but in no way surprised by what he saw. Making a sign to Lomaque to say nothing, he rose and took up his sister's hood, which lay on a window-seat near him.

"Come, Rose," he said, "the sun is shining, the

sweet spring air is inviting us out. Let us have a quiet stroll along the banks of the stream. Why should we keep our good friend here cooped up in this narrow little room, when we have miles and miles of beautiful landscape to show him on the other side of the threshold? Come! it is high treason to Queen Nature to remain indoors on such a morning as this."

Without waiting for her to reply, he put on her hood, drew her arm through his, and led the way out. Lomaque's face grew grave as he followed them.

"I am glad I only showed the bright side of my budget of news in her presence," thought he. "She is not well at heart yet. I might have hurt her, poor thing! I might have hurt her again sadly, if I had not held my tongue!"

They walked for a little while down the banks of the stream, talking of indifferent matters; then returned to the cottage. By that time Rose had recovered her spirits, and could listen with interest and amusement to Lomaque's drily-humorous description of his life as a clerk at Chalons-sur-Marne. They parted for a little while at the cottage-door. Rose retired to the up-stairs room from which she

had been summoned by her brother. Trudaine and Lomaque returned to wander again along the banks of the stream.

With one accord, and without a word passing between them, they left the neighbourhood of the cottage hurriedly; then stopped on a sudden, and attentively looked each other in the face—looked in silence for an instant. Trudaine spoke first.

“I thank you for having spared her,” he began, abruptly. “She is not strong enough yet to bear hearing of a new misfortune, unless I break the tidings to her first.”

“You suspect me then of bringing bad news?” said Lomaque.

“I know you do. When I saw your first look at her, after we were all seated in the cottage-parlour, I knew it. Speak! without fear, without caution, without one useless word of preface. After three years of repose, if it pleases God to afflict us again, I can bear the trial calmly; and, if need be, can strengthen her to bear it calmly too. I say again, Lomaque, speak at once, and speak out! I know your news is bad, for I know beforehand that it is news of Danville.”

“You are right, my bad news is news of him.”

“He has discovered the secret of our escape from the guillotine?”——

“No—he has not a suspicion of it. He believes—as his mother, as every one does—that you were both executed the day after the Revolutionary Tribunal sentenced you to death.”

“Lomaque! you speak positively of that belief of his—but you cannot be certain of it.”

“I can, on the most indisputable, the most startling evidence—on the authority of Danville’s own act. You have asked me to speak out?”——

“I ask you again—I insist on it! Your news, Lomaque—your news, without another word of preface!”

“You shall have it without another word of preface. Danville is on the point of being married.”

As the answer was given they both stopped by the bank of the stream, and again looked each other in the face. There was a minute of dead silence between them. During that minute, the water bubbling by happily over its bed of pebbles, seemed strangely loud, the singing of birds in a little wood by the stream side strangely near and shrill, in both their ears. The light breeze, for all its mid-day warmth, touched their cheeks coldly; and the spring

sunlight pouring on their faces, felt as if it were glimmering on them through winter clouds.

“Let us walk on,” said Trudaine, in a low voice. “I was prepared for bad news, yet not for that. Are you certain of what you have just told me?”

“As certain as that the stream here is flowing by our side. Hear how I made the discovery, and you will doubt no longer. Before last week, I knew nothing of Danville, except that his arrest on suspicion by Robespierre’s order was, as events turned out, the saving of his life. He was imprisoned, as I told you, on the evening after he had heard your names read from the death-list at the prison-grate. He remained in confinement at the Temple, unnoticed in the political confusion out of doors, just as you remained unnoticed at St Lazare; and he profited precisely in the same manner that you profited by the timely insurrection which overthrew the Reign of Terror. I knew this, and I knew that he walked out of prison in the character of a persecuted victim of Robespierre’s—and for better than three years past, I knew no more. Now listen. Last week I happen to be waiting in the shop of my employer, citizen Clairfait, for some papers to take into the counting-house, when an old man enters with a sealed

parcel, which he hands to one of the shopmen, saying:

“ ‘Give that to citizen Clairfait.’

“ ‘Any name?’” says the shopman.

“ ‘The name is of no consequence,’ answers the old man; ‘but if you please you can give mine. Say the parcel came from citizen Dubois;’ and then he goes out. His name, in connexion with his elderly look, strikes me directly.

“ ‘Does that old fellow live at Chalons?’ I ask.

“ ‘No,’ says the shopman. ‘He is here in attendance on a customer of ours—an old ex-aristocrat named Danville. She is on a visit in our town.’

“I leave you to imagine how that reply startles and amazes me. The shopman can answer none of the other questions I put to him; but the next day I am asked to dinner by my employer (who, for his brother’s sake, shows me the utmost civility). On entering the room, I find his daughter just putting away a lavender-coloured silk scarf, on which she has been embroidering in silver what looks to me very like a crest and coat of arms.

“ ‘I don’t mind your seeing what I am about, citizen Lomaque,’ says she; ‘for I know my father can trust you. That scarf is sent back to us by the

purchaser, an ex-emigrant lady of the old aristocratic school, to have her family coat-of-arms embroidered on it.'

" 'Rather a dangerous commission even in these mercifully democratic times, is it not?' says I.

" 'The old lady, you must know,' says she, 'is as proud as Lucifer; and having got back safely to France in these days of moderate republicanism, thinks she may now indulge with impunity in all her old-fashioned notions. She has been an excellent customer of ours, so my father thought it best to humour her, without, however, trusting her commission to any of the work-room women to execute. We are not living under the Reign of Terror now, certainly; still there is nothing like being on the safe side.'

" 'Nothing,' I answer. 'Pray what is this ex-emigrant's name?'

" 'Danville,' replies the citoyenne Clairfait. 'She is going to appear in that fine scarf at her son's marriage.'

" 'Marriage,' I exclaim, perfectly thunderstruck.

" 'Yes,' says she. 'What is there so amazing in that? By all accounts, the son, poor man, deserves to make a lucky marriage this time. His first wife

was taken away from him in the Reign of Terror by the guillotine.'

“‘Who is he going to marry?’ I inquire, still breathless.

“‘The daughter of General Berthelin—an ex-
aristocrat by family, like the old lady, but by prin-
ciple as good a republican as ever lived—a hard-
drinking, loud-swearing, big-whiskered old soldier,
who snaps his fingers at his ancestors, and says we
are all descended from Adam, the first genuine sans-
culotte in the world.’

“In this way the citoyenne Clairfait gossips on all dinner-time, but says nothing more of any importance. I, with my old police-office habits, set to the next day, and try to make some discoveries for myself. The sum of what I find out is this: Danville’s mother is staying with General Berthelin’s sister and daughter at Chalons, and Danville himself is expected to arrive every day to escort them all three to Paris, where the marriage-contract is to be signed at the general’s house. Discovering this, and seeing that prompt action is now of the most vital importance, I undertake, as I told you, my employer’s commission for Paris; depart with all speed; and stop here on my way.—Wait! I have not done yet.

All the haste I can make is not haste enough to give me a good start of the wedding party. On my road here, the diligence by which I travel is passed by a carriage, posting along at full speed. I cannot see inside that carriage; but I look at the box-seat, and recognise on it the old man Dubois. He whirls by in a cloud of dust, but I am certain of him; and I say to myself, what I now say again to you, no time is to be lost!"

"No time *shall* be lost," answered Trudaine firmly. "Three years have passed," he continued, in a lower voice, speaking to himself rather than to Lomaque; "three years since the day when I led my sister out of the gates of the prison,—three years since I said in my heart, I will be patient, and will not seek to avenge myself. Our wrongs cry from earth to heaven; from man who inflicts to God who redresses. When the day of reckoning comes, let it be the day of His vengeance, not of mine. In my heart I said those words—I have been true to them—I have waited. The day has come, and the duty it demands of me shall be fulfilled."

There was a moment's silence before Lomaque spoke again. "Your sister?" he began hesitatingly.

“It is there only that my purpose falters,” said the other earnestly. “If it were but possible to spare her all knowledge of this last trial, and to leave the accomplishment of the terrible task to me alone?”

“I think it is possible,” interposed Lomaque. “Listen to what I advise. We must depart for Paris by the diligence to-morrow morning, and we must take your sister with us—to-morrow will be time enough: people don’t sign marriage-contracts on the evening after a long day’s journey. We must go then, and we must take your sister. Leave the care of her in Paris, and the responsibility of keeping her in ignorance of what you are doing, to me. Go to this General Berthelin’s house at a time when you know Danville is there (we can get that knowledge through the servants); confront him without a moment’s previous warning; confront him as a man risen from the dead; confront him before every soul in the room, though the room should be full of people—and leave the rest to the self-betrayal of a panic-stricken man. Say but three words, and *your* duty will be done; you may return to your sister, and may depart with her in safety to your old retreat at Rouen, or where else you please, on the

very day when you have put it out of her infamous husband's power to add another to the list of his crimes."

"You forget the suddenness of the journey to Paris," said Trudaine. "How are we to account for it without the risk of awakening my sister's suspicions?"

"Trust that to me," answered Lomaque. "Let us return to the cottage at once. No! not you," he added suddenly, as they turned to retrace their steps. "There is that in your face which would betray us. Leave me to go back alone—I will say that you have gone to give some orders at the inn. Let us separate immediately. You will recover your self-possession—you will get to look yourself again sooner, if you are left alone—I know enough of you to know that. We will not waste another minute in explanations, even minutes are precious to us on such a day as this. By the time you are fit to meet your sister again, I shall have had time to say all I wish to her, and shall be waiting at the cottage to tell you the result."

He looked at Trudaine, and his eyes seemed to brighten again with something of the old energy and sudden decision of the days when he was a man in

office under the Reign of Terror. "Leave it to me," he said; and, waving his hand, turned away quickly in the direction of the cottage.

Nearly an hour passed before Trudaine ventured to follow him. When he at length entered the path which led to the garden-gate, he saw his sister waiting at the cottage-door. Her face looked unusually animated; and she ran forward a step or two to meet him.

"Oh, Louis!" she said, "I have a confession to make, and I must beg you to hear it patiently to the end. You must know that our good Lomaque, though he came in tired from his walk, occupied himself the first thing, at my request, in writing the letter which is to secure to us our dear old home by the banks of the Seine. When he had done, he looked at me, and said, 'I should like to be present at your happy return to the house where I first saw you.' 'Oh, come, come with us!' I said directly. 'I am not an independent man,' he answered; 'I have a margin of time allowed me at Paris, certainly, but it is not long—if I were only my own master'—and then he stopped. Louis! I remembered all we owed to him; I remembered that there was no sacrifice we ought not to be too glad to make for his sake;

I felt the kindness of the wish he had expressed; and, perhaps, I was a little influenced by my own impatience to see once more my flower-garden and the rooms where we used to be so happy. So I said to him, 'I am sure Louis will agree with me, that our time is yours, and that we shall be only too glad to advance our departure so as to make travelling-leisure enough for you to come with us to Rouen. We should be worse than ungrateful'—— He stopped me. 'You have always been good to me,' he said, 'I must not impose on your kindness now. No! no! you have formalities to settle before you can leave this place.' 'Not one,' I said—for we have not, as you know, Louis? 'Why, here is your furniture to begin with,' he said. 'A few chairs and tables hired from the inn,' I answered; 'we have only to give the landlady our key, to leave a letter for the owner of the cottage, and then'—— He laughed. 'Why, to hear you talk, one would think you were as ready to travel as I am!' 'So we are,' I said, 'quite as ready, living in the way we do here.' He shook his head; but you will not shake yours, Louis, I am sure, now you have heard all my long story? You can't blame me, can you?"

Before Trudaine could answer, Lomaque looked out of the cottage window.

“I have just been telling my brother everything,” said Rose, turning round towards him.

“And what does he say?” asked Lomaque.

“He says what I say,” replied Rose, answering for her brother; “that our time is your time—the time of our best and dearest friend.”

“Shall it be done, then?” asked Lomaque, with a meaning look at Trudaine.

Rose glanced anxiously at her brother: his face was much graver than she had expected to see it, but his answer relieved her from all suspense.

“You were quite right, love, to speak as you did,” he said, gently. Then, turning to Lomaque, he added in a firmer voice, “It shall be done!”

CHAPTER II.

Two days after the travelling carriage described by Lomaque had passed the diligence on the road to Paris, Madame Danville sat in the drawing-room of

an apartment in the Rue de Grenelle, handsomely dressed for driving out. After consulting a large gold watch that hung at her side, and finding that it wanted a quarter of an hour only to two o'clock, she rang her hand-bell, and said to the maid-servant who answered the summons: "I have five minutes to spare. Send Dubois here with my chocolate."

The old man made his appearance with great alacrity. After handing the cup of chocolate to his mistress, he ventured to use the privilege of talking, to which his long and faithful services entitled him, and paid the old lady a compliment. "I am rejoiced to see madame looking so young and in such good spirits this morning," he said, with a low bow and a mild deferential smile.

"I think I have some reason for being in good spirits on the day when my son's marriage-contract is to be signed," said Madame Danville, with a gracious nod of the head. "Ha, Dubois, I shall live yet to see him with a patent of nobility in his hand. The mob has done its worst; the end of this infamous revolution is not far off; our order will have its turn again soon, and then who will have such a chance at court as my son? He is noble already through his mother; he will then be noble also

through his wife. Yes, yes, let that coarse-mannered, passionate, old soldier-father of hers be as unnaturally republican as he pleases, he has inherited a name which will help my son to a peerage! The Vicomte D'Anville (D with an apostrophe, Dubois, you understand)? The Vicomte D'Anville—how prettily it sounds!”

“Charmingly, madame—charmingly. Ah! this second marriage of my young master's begins under much better auspices than the first.”

The remark was an unfortunate one. Madame Danville frowned portentously, and rose in a great hurry from her chair.

“Are your wits failing you, you old fool?” she exclaimed, indignantly; “what do you mean by referring to such a subject as that, on this day of all others? You are always harping on those two wretched people who were guillotined, as if you thought I could have saved their lives. Were you not present when my son and I met, after the time of the Terror? Did you not hear my first words to him, when he told me of the catastrophe? Were they not:—‘Charles, I love you; but if I thought you had let those two unfortunates, who risked themselves to save me, die without risking your life in

return to save them, I would break my heart rather than ever look at you or speak to you again!’— Did I not say that? And did he not answer:— ‘Mother, my life was risked for them. I proved my devotion by exposing myself to arrest—I was imprisoned for my exertions,—and then I could do no more!’ Did you not stand by and hear him give that answer, overwhelmed while he spoke by generous emotion? Do you not know that he really was imprisoned in the Temple? Do you dare to think that we are to blame after that? I owe you much, Dubois, but if you are to take liberties with me——”

“Oh, madame! I beg pardon a thousand times. I was thoughtless—only thoughtless——”

“Silence! Is my coach at the door?—Very well. Get ready to accompany me. Your master will not have time to return here. He will meet me, for the signing of the contract, at General Berthelin’s house at two precisely.—Stop! Are there many people in the street? I can’t be stared at by the mob, as I go to my carriage.”

Dubois hobbled penitently to the window and looked out, while his mistress walked to the door.

‘The street is almost empty, madame,’ he said. “Only a man, with a woman on his arm, stopping

and admiring your carriage. They seem like decent people, as well as I can tell without my spectacles. Not mob, I should say, madame, certainly not mob!"

"Very well. Attend me down stairs; and bring some loose silver with you, in case those two decent people should be fit objects for charity. No orders for the coachman, except that he is to go straight to the general's house."

The party assembled at General Berthelin's to witness the signature of the marriage-contract, comprised, besides the persons immediately interested in the ceremony of the day, some young ladies, friends of the bride, and a few officers, who had been comrades of her father's in past years. The guests were distributed, rather unequally, in two handsome apartments opening into each other,—one called in the house the drawing-room, and the other the library. In the drawing-room were assembled the notary, with the contract ready, the bride, the young ladies, and the majority of General Berthelin's friends. In the library, the remainder of the military guests were amusing themselves at a billiard-table until the signing of the contract should take place; while

Danville and his future father-in-law walked up and down the room together; the first listening absently, the last talking with all his accustomed energy, and with more than his accustomed allowance of barrack-room expletives. The general had taken it into his head to explain some of the clauses in the marriage-contract to the bridegroom, who, though far better acquainted with their full scope and meaning than his father-in-law, was obliged to listen for civility's sake. While the old soldier was still in the midst of his long and confused harangue, a clock struck on the library mantelpiece.

“Two o'clock!” exclaimed Danville, glad of any pretext for interrupting the talk about the contract. “Two o'clock; and my mother not here yet! What can be delaying her?”

“Nothing,” cried the general. “When did you ever know a woman punctual, my lad? If we wait for your mother—and she's such a rabid aristocrat that she would never forgive us for not waiting—we shan't sign the contract yet this half-hour. Never mind! let's go on with what we were talking about. Where the devil was I when that cursed clock struck and interrupted us? Now then, Black Eyes, what's the matter?”

This last question was addressed to Mademoiselle Berthelin, who at that moment hastily entered the library from the drawing-room. She was a tall and rather masculine-looking girl, with superb black eyes, dark hair growing low on her forehead, and something of her father's decision and bluntness in her manner of speaking.

"A stranger in the other room, papa, who wants to see you. I suppose the servants showed him upstairs, thinking he was one of the guests. Ought I to have had him shown down again?"

"A nice question! How should I know? Wait till I have seen him, miss, and then I'll tell you." With these words the general turned on his heel, and went into the drawing-room.

His daughter would have followed him, but Danville caught her by the hand.

"Can you be hard-hearted enough to leave me here alone?" he asked.

"What is to become of all my bosom friends in the next room, you selfish man, if I stop here with you?" retorted mademoiselle, struggling to free herself.

"Call them in here," said Danville, gaily, making himself master of her other hand.

She laughed, and drew him away towards the drawing-room.

“Come!” she cried, “and let all the ladies see what a tyrant I am going to marry. Come and show them what an obstinate, unreasonable, wearisome”——

Her voice suddenly failed her; she shuddered, and turned faint. Danville’s hand had in one instant grown cold as death in hers: the momentary touch of his fingers, as she felt their grasp loosen, struck some mysterious chill through her from head to foot. She glanced round at him affrightedly; and saw his eyes looking straight into the drawing-room. They were fixed in a strange, unwavering, awful stare; while, from the rest of his face, all expression, all character, all recognisable play and movement of feature had utterly gone. It was a breathless, lifeless mask—a white blank. With a cry of terror, she looked where he seemed to be looking; and could see nothing but the stranger standing in the middle of the drawing-room. Before she could ask a question, before she could speak even a single word, her father came to her, caught Danville by the arm, and pushed her roughly back into the library.

“Go there, and take the women with you,” he said in a quick fierce whisper. “Into the library!” he continued, turning to the ladies, and raising his voice. “Into the library, all of you, along with my daughter.”

The women, terrified by his manner, obeyed him in the greatest confusion. As they hurried past him into the library, he signed to the notary to follow; and then closed the door of communication between the two rooms.

“Stop where you are!” he cried, addressing the old officers, who had risen from their chairs. “Stay, I insist on it! Whatever happens, Jacques Berthelin has done nothing to be ashamed of in the presence of his old friends and companions. You have seen the beginning, now stay and see the end.”

While he spoke, he walked into the middle of the room. He had never quitted his hold of Danville’s arm—step by step, they advanced together to the place where Trudaine was standing.

“You have come into my house, and asked me for my daughter in marriage—and I have given her to you,” said the general, addressing Danville quietly. “You told me that your first wife and her brother were guillotined three years ago in the time of

the Terror—and I believed you. Now, look at that man—look him straight in the face. He has announced himself to me as the brother of your wife, and he asserts that his sister is alive at this moment. One of you two has deceived me. Which is it?”

Danville tried to speak; but no sound passed his lips; tried to wrench his arm from the grasp that was on it, but could not stir the old soldier's steady hand.

“Are you afraid? are you a coward? Can't you look him in the face?” asked the general, tightening his hold sternly.

“Stop! stop!” interposed one of the old officers, coming forward. “Give him time. This may be a case of strange accidental resemblance; which would be enough, under the circumstances, to discompose any man. You will excuse me, citizen,” he continued, turning to Trudaine. “But you are a stranger; you have given us no proof of your identity.”

“There is the proof,” said Trudaine, pointing to Danville's face.

“Yes, yes,” pursued the other; “he looks pale and startled enough, certainly. But I say again—let us not be too hasty: there are strange cases on record of accidental resemblances, and this may be one of them!”

As he repeated those words, Danville looked at him with a faint, cringing gratitude stealing slowly over the blank terror of his face. He bowed his head, murmured something, and gesticulated confusedly with the hand that he was free to use.

“Look!” cried the old officer; “look, Berthelin, he denies the man’s identity.”

“Do you hear that?” said the general, appealing to Trudaine. “Have you proofs to confute him? If you have, produce them instantly.”

Before the answer could be given, the door leading into the drawing-room from the staircase was violently flung open, and Madame Danville—her hair in disorder, her face in its colourless terror looking like the very counterpart of her son’s—appeared on the threshold, with the old man Dubois and a group of amazed and startled servants behind her.

“For God’s sake don’t sign! for God’s sake come away!” she cried. “I have seen your wife—in the spirit, or in the flesh, I know not which—but I have seen her. Charles! Charles! as true as Heaven is above us, I have seen your wife!”

“You have seen her in the flesh, living and breathing as you see her brother yonder,” said a firm,

quiet voice from among the servants on the landing outside.

“Let that man enter, whoever he is!” cried the general.

Lomaque passed Madame Danville on the threshold. She trembled as he brushed by her; then, supporting herself by the wall, followed him a few paces into the room. She looked first at her son—after that, at Trudaine—after that, back again at her son. Something in her presence silenced everyone. There fell a sudden stillness over all the assembly—a stillness so deep, that the eager, frightened whispering, and sharp rustling of dresses among the women in the library became audible from the other side of the closed door.

“Charles!” she said, slowly advancing; why do you look?”—— She stopped, and fixed her eyes again on her son more earnestly than before; then turned them suddenly on Trudaine. “You are looking at my son, sir,” she said, “and I see contempt in your face. By what right do you insult a man whose grateful sense of his mother’s obligations to you, made him risk his life for the saving of yours and your sister’s? By what right have you kept the escape of my son’s wife from death by the

guillotine—an escape which, for all I know to the contrary, his generous exertions were instrumental in effecting—a secret from my son? By what right, I demand to know, has your treacherous secrecy placed us in such a position as we now stand in before the master of this house?”

An expression of sorrow and pity passed over Trudaine's face while she spoke. He retired a few steps, and gave her no answer. The general looked at him with eager curiosity; and, dropping his hold of Danville's arm, seemed about to speak; but Lomaque stepped forward at the same time, and held up his hand to claim attention.

“I think I shall express the wishes of citizen Trudaine,” he said, addressing Madame Danville, “if I recommend this lady not to press for too public an answer to her questions.”

“Pray who are you, sir, who take it on yourself to advise me?” she retorted haughtily. “I have nothing to say to you, except that I repeat those questions, and that I insist on their being answered.”

“Who is this man?” asked the general, addressing Trudaine, and pointing to Lomaque.

“A man unworthy of credit,” cried Danville, speaking audibly for the first time, and darting a

look of deadly hatred at Lomaque. "An agent of police under Robespierre."

"And in that capacity capable of answering questions which refer to the transactions of Robespierre's tribunals," remarked the ex-chief agent with his old official self-possession.

"True!" exclaimed the general; "the man is right—let him be heard."

"There is no help for it," said Lomaque, looking at Trudaine; "leave it to me—it is fittest that I should speak. I was present," he continued in a louder voice, "at the trial of citizen Trudaine and his sister. They were brought to the bar through the denunciation of citizen Danville. Till the confession of the male prisoner exposed the fact, I can answer for Danville's not being aware of the real nature of the offences charged against Trudaine and his sister. When it became known that they had been secretly helping this lady to escape from France, and when Danville's own head was consequently in danger, I myself heard him save it by a false assertion that he had been aware of Trudaine's conspiracy from the first"—

"Do you mean to say," interrupted the general, "that he proclaimed himself in open court, as hav-

ing knowingly denounced the man who was on trial for saving his mother?"

"I do," answered Lomaque. (A murmur of horror and indignation rose from all the strangers present, at that reply). "The reports of the Tribunal are existing to prove the truth of what I say," he went on. "As to the escape of citizen Trudaine and the wife of Danville from the guillotine, it was the work of political circumstances, which there are persons living to speak to if necessary; and of a little stratagem of mine, which need not be referred to now. And, last, with reference to the concealment which followed the escape, I beg to inform you that it was abandoned the moment we knew of what was going on here; and that it was only persevered in up to this time, as a natural measure of precaution on the part of citizen Trudaine. From a similar motive we now abstain from exposing his sister to the shock and the peril of being present here. What man with an atom of feeling would risk letting her even look again on such a husband as that?"

He glanced round him, and pointed to Danville, as he put the question. Before a word could be spoken by any one else in the room, a low wailing cry of "My mistress! my dear, dear mistress!"

directed all eyes first on the old man Dubois, then on Madame Danville.

She had been leaning against the wall, before Lomaque began to speak; but she stood perfectly upright now. She neither spoke nor moved. Not one of the light gaudy ribands, flaunting on her disordered head-dress, so much as trembled. The old servant Dubois was crouched on his knees at her side, kissing her cold right hand, chafing it in his, reiterating his faint mournful cry, "Oh! my mistress! my dear, dear mistress!" but she did not appear to know that he was near her. It was only when her son advanced a step or two towards her that she seemed to awaken suddenly from that death-trance of mental pain. Then she slowly raised the hand that was free, and waved him back from her. He stopped in obedience to the gesture, and endeavoured to speak. She waved her hand again, and the deathly stillness of her face began to grow troubled. Her lips moved a little—she spoke.

"Oblige me, sir, for the last time, by keeping silence. You and I have henceforth nothing to say to each other. I am the daughter of a race of nobles, and the widow of a man of honour. You are a traitor and a false witness; a thing from which all true men

and true women turn with contempt. I renounce you! Publicly, in the presence of these gentlemen, I say it—I have no son.”

She turned her back on him; and, bowing to the other persons in the room with the old formal courtesy of bygone times, walked slowly and steadily to the door. Stopping there, she looked back; and then the artificial courage of the moment failed her. With a faint suppressed cry she clutched at the hand of the old servant, who still kept faithfully at her side; he caught her in his arms, and her head sank on his shoulder.

“Help him!” cried the general to the servants near the door. “Help him to take her into the next room!”

The old man looked up suspiciously from his mistress to the persons who were assisting him to support her. With a strange sudden jealousy he shook his hand at them. “Home,” he cried, “she shall go home, and I will take care of her. Away! you there—nobody holds her head but Dubois. Down-stairs! down-stairs to her carriage! She has nobody but me now, and I say that she shall be taken home.”

As the door closed, General Berthelin approached Trudaine, who had stood silent and apart, from the

time when Lomaque first appeared in the drawing-room.

“ I wish to ask your pardon,” said the old soldier, “ because I have wronged you by a moment of unjust suspicion. For my daughter’s sake, I bitterly regret that we did not see each other long ago ; but I thank you, nevertheless, for coming here, even at the eleventh hour.”

While he was speaking, one of his friends came up, and touching him on the shoulder, said :

“ Berthelin, is that scoundrel to be allowed to go ?”

The general turned on his heel directly, and beckoned contemptuously to Danville to follow him to the door. When they were well out of earshot, he spoke these words :

“ You have been exposed as a villain by your brother-in-law, and renounced as a liar by your mother. They have done their duty by you, and now it only remains for me to do mine. When a man enters the house of another under false pretences, and compromises the reputation of his daughter, we old army men have a very expeditious way of making him answer for it. It is just three o’clock now ; at five you will find me and one of my friends ”——

He stopped, and looked round cautiously—then whispered the rest in Danville's ear—threw open the door, and pointed down stairs.

“Our work here is done,” said Lomaque, laying his hand on Trudaine's arm. “Let us give Danville time to get clear of the house, and then leave it too.”

“My sister! where is she?” asked Trudaine, eagerly.

“Make your mind easy about her. I will tell you more when we get out.”

“You will excuse me, I know,” said General Berthelin, speaking to all the persons present, with his hand on the library door, “if I leave you. I have bad news to break to my daughter, and private business after that to settle with a friend.”

He saluted the company, with his usual bluff nod of the head, and entered the library. A few minutes afterwards, Trudaine and Lomaque left the house.

“You will find your sister waiting for you in our apartment at the hotel,” said the latter. “She knows nothing, absolutely nothing, of what has passed.”

“But the recognition?” asked Trudaine, amazedly. “His mother saw her. Surely she?”—

“I managed it so that she should be seen, and

should not see. Our former experience of Danville suggested to me the propriety of making the experiment, and my old police-office practice came in useful in carrying it out. I saw the carriage standing at the door, and waited till the old lady came down. I walked your sister away as she got in, and walked her back again past the window as the carriage drove off. A moment did it, and it turned out as useful as I thought it would. Enough of that! Go back now to your sister. Keep indoors till the night-mail starts for Rouen. I have had two places taken for you on speculation. Go! resume possession of your old house, and leave me here to transact the business which my employer has intrusted to me, and to see how matters end with Danville and his mother. I will make time somehow to come and bid you good-bye at Rouen, though it should only be for a single day. Bah! no thanks. Give us your hand. I was ashamed to take it eight years ago—I can give it a hearty shake now! There is your way; here is mine. Leave me to my business in silks and satins, and go you back to your sister, and help her to pack up for the night-mail.”

CHAPTER III.

THREE more days have passed. It is evening. Rose, Trudaine, and Lomaque are seated together on the bench that overlooks the windings of the Seine. The old familiar scene spreads before them, beautiful as ever—unchanged, as if it was but yesterday since they had all looked on it for the last time.

They talk together seriously and in low voices. The same recollections fill their hearts—recollections which they refrain from acknowledging, but the influence of which each knows by instinct that the other partakes. Sometimes one leads the conversation, sometimes another; but whoever speaks, the topic chosen is always, as if by common consent, a topic connected with the future.

The evening darkens in, and Rose is the first to rise from the bench. A secret look of intelligence passes between her and her brother; and then she speaks to Lomaque.

“Will you follow me into the house,” she asks, “with as little delay as possible? I have something that I very much wish to show you.”

Her brother waits till she is out of hearing; then inquires anxiously what has happened at Paris since the night when he and Rose left it.

“Your sister is free,” Lomaque answers.

“The duel took place, then?”

“The same day. They were both to fire together. The second of his adversary asserts that he was paralyzed with terror: his own second declares that he was resolved, however he might have lived, to confront death courageously by offering his life at the first fire to the man whom he had injured. Which account is true, I know not. It is only certain that he did not discharge his pistol; that he fell by his antagonist’s first bullet; and that he never spoke afterwards.”

“And his mother?”

“It is hard to gain information. Her doors are closed; the old servant guards her with jealous care. A medical man is in constant attendance, and there are reports in the house that the illness from which she is suffering affects her mind more than her body. I could ascertain no more.”

After that answer they both remain silent for a little while—then rise from the bench and walk towards the house.

“Have you thought yet about preparing your sister to hear of all that has happened?” Lomaque asks, as he sees the lamplight glimmering in the parlour window.

“I shall wait to prepare her till we are settled again here—till the first holiday pleasure of our return has worn off, and the quiet realities of our every-day life of old have resumed their way,” answers Trudaine.

They enter the house. Rose beckons to Lomaque to sit down near her, and places pen and ink and an open letter before him.

“I have a last favour to ask of you,” she says, smiling.

“I hope it will not take long to grant,” he rejoins; “for I have only to-night to be with you. To-morrow morning, before you are up, I must be on my way back to Chalons.”

“Will you sign that letter?” she continues, still smiling, “and then give it to me to send to the post? It was dictated by Louis, and written by me, and it will be quite complete if you will put your name at the end of it.”

“I suppose I may read it?”

She nods, and Lomaque reads these lines:—

“CITIZEN,—I beg respectfully to apprise you, that the commission you intrusted to me at Paris has been performed.

“I have also to beg that you will accept my resignation of the place I hold in your counting-house. The kindness shown me by you and your brother before you, emboldens me to hope that you will learn with pleasure the motive of my withdrawal. Two friends of mine, who consider that they are under some obligations to me, are anxious that I should pass the rest of my days in the quiet and protection of their home. Troubles of former years have knit us together as closely as if we were all three members of one family. I need the repose of a happy fireside as much as any man, after the life I have led; and my friends assure me so earnestly that their whole hearts are set on establishing the old man’s easy chair by their hearth, that I cannot summon resolution enough to turn my back on them and their offer.

“Accept then, I beg of you, the resignation which this letter contains, and with it the assurance of my sincere gratitude and respect.

“To Citizen Clairfait, silk-mercier,
Chalons-sur-Marne.”

After reading these lines, Lomaque turned round to Trudaine and attempted to speak; but the words would not come at command. He looked up at Rose, and tried to smile; but his lip only trembled. She dipped the pen in the ink, and placed it in his hand. He bent his head down quickly over the paper, so that she could not see his face; but still he did not write his name. She put her hand caressingly on his shoulder, and whispered to him:—

“Come, come, humour ‘Sister Rose.’ She must have her own way now she is back again at home.”

He did not answer—his head sunk lower—he hesitated for an instant—then signed his name in faint, trembling characters at the end of the letter.

She drew it away from him gently. A few tear-drops lay on the paper. As she dried them with her handkerchief she looked at her brother.

“They are the last he shall ever shed, Louis: you and I will take care of that!”

EPILOGUE TO THE THIRD STORY.

I HAVE now related all that is eventful in the history of SISTER ROSE. To the last the three friends dwelt together happily in the cottage on the river bank. Mademoiselle Clairfait was fortunate enough to know them, before Death entered the little household and took away, in the fulness of time, the eldest of its members. She describes Lomaque, in her quaint foreign English, as “ a brave, big heart ;” generous, affectionate, and admirably free from the small obstinacies and prejudices of old age, except on one point :—he could never be induced to take his coffee, of an evening, from any other hand than the hand of Sister Rose.

I linger over these final particulars with a strange unwillingness to separate myself from them, and give my mind to other thoughts. Perhaps the persons and events that have occupied my attention for so many

nights past, have some peculiar interest for me that I cannot analyze. Perhaps the labour and time which this story has cost me, have specially endeared it to my sympathies now that I have succeeded in completing it. However that may be, I have need of some resolution to part at last with Sister Rose, and return, in the interests of my next and Fourth Story, to English ground.

I have experienced so much difficulty, let me add, in deciding on the choice of a new narrative out of my collection, that my wife has lost all patience, and has undertaken, on her own responsibility, to relieve me of my unreasonable perplexities. By her advice—given, as usual, without a moment's hesitation—I cannot do better than begin my second volume by telling the Story of *The Lady of Glenwith Grange*.

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