



CONFESSIONS

OF

COUNTRY QUARTERS:

BEING

Some Passages in the Life

OF

SOMERSET CAVENDISH COBB, ESQ.

Late Captain in the 120th Foot (Camberwell Rangers.)

BY

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AUTHOR OF "HARDNESS," "THE ARK AND THE DELUGE," ETC. ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

"Oh, ladies, beware of a gay young knight,
That loves, and then rides away."

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CHAPTER I.

THE PART OF THE LIONS OF WAR—INSTRUCTION
FOR THE FLOOR—WIT ON OMISSION—PRO-
FESSOR MYSTIFICATION—HABITS AND PRACTICE
OF THE FRENCH KINGS—LEARNING AND KNOW-

LEDGE.

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CHAPTER I.

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FOR THE SAXONS—SINS OF OMISSION—PRO-
POSED METAMORPHOSIS—HABITS AND PRACTICES
OF THE FRENCH EAGLES—LEARNING AND KNOW-
LEDGE.

TIME with me passed now in a dream. Somehow or other I generally found myself at Beauchamp Hall four or five times in the week, and the expiry of Johnny's leave rather increased than diminished the number of visits. Occasionally we had company

at home. One fine afternoon, Jenkins, Boyd, and Nugent did us the honour of paying us a visit in a curiously constructed dog-cart, the property of the Welsh grenadier, which the serjeant-major of the regiment pronounced a "very officer-like gig."

We were enabled to spread our hospitable board with great dignity and *éclat*, for Ravenswood was perpetually whipping the adjacent streams and the Naiads that dwelt therein, and the consequence was an affluence of trout, which, being scientifically dressed under my directions, "au bleu," always produced a great effect, that manner not having made much progress in the cuisine of Derbyshire. Beauchamp Hall supplied us with game, fruit, vegetables, and a trifle of poultry. The omelettes of my dressing were lighter

than sunbeams, and I had corrupted Johnny's young mind so far as to teach him how to prepare a devil, so irresistible, that it would have seduced Adam straight, without the intervention of Eve.

A soldier's wife can always compose a species of hodge-podge, or mutton-broth, which, between ourselves, is a much better thing than that glutinous, medicinal, amorphous, chaotic, opaque, semifluid, muddy mixture, that Mrs. Park Lane calls "abattis d'oie," and her cook "giblet soup," and my reclaimed savage, Doddy, boiled potatoes, with a skill that must have come to him in direct male descent, or apostolical succession from St. Patrick.

Worthy Saxon reader, you do not know how to boil potatoes. Hear the words of a

Celt, and be wise. "Plaze yer honour," said Doddy, upon being subjected to the question, "first and foremost, when the praties is half done, I poor aff the hot wather altogether, empty the pot of it, and then fill up again with could, that strikes the heat into the very hearts of them. Then bile 'em up again till they be done, and then poor off all the wather, and let them stand in the pot before the fire to stame, by which manes they get crisp and maly; faith! and they're beautiful when they're crackin' their jackets."

If potatoes are not properly boiled in all parts of the British empire after this, all that I can say is, that it is no fault of mine.

Deodatus, the divinely bestowed, with that

easy and affable way of making himself at home that belongs to his country and class, had already insinuated himself into an agreeable footing of quiet intimacy in the servants' hall at Lady Elizabeth's, where he heard a good deal of domestic news, which he considered it his duty to communicate to me; and this day, as I was issuing to him a certain hospitable order respecting a double supply of potatoes, accompanied with my customary threat of wringing his neck if they were not properly done, which violent operation he firmly believed I was fully capable of performing, he informed me, that three days ago the Lady Elizabeth, being then dining off roast neck of mutton, did, in the presence of the butler and footman, declare to Edith, that she felt her mind

perfectly at ease about Johnny, when he was in the care of a personage so highly gifted, and so much to be trusted, as Captain Cobb; whereunto the young lady, with what the John above-mentioned alleged was a blush (at which the housemaids giggled), assented. Which small intelligence so affected my weak nerves, that I forgot to order any salad, and was much reproached in consequence.

“A man that knowingly and wilfully, having a roast fowl for dinner, omits salad,” said Ravensworth, with awful solemnity, “must be, for the time being, devoid of all moral sense of the fitness of things; and, as brother officers and fellow-sufferers, at morning parade we wish Cobb a speedy convalescence.”

“You know nothing about it,” said Johnny, stoutly. “Salad is not good for the health on some days of the week, and this is one of them.”

“You’re quite right, Waldgrave,” said Jenkins, of the Hundred Hills; “a subaltern should always back his captain through thick and thin, and I don’t want any salad, though if there had happened to have been any leeks in the neighbourhood——”

“Leeks!” interrupted Boyd, scornfully, “who ever heard of a Christian eating leeks?”

“I’ll tell you what,” thundered the grandson of Cadwallader——

“Tell Waldgrave that story about the 87th,” interrupted Boyd, adroitly; for right

well knew that astute Ulsterian how to divert the dire wrath of the Achilles of Plinlimmon, who was one of that class whose practices are described by Byron, when he says—

“The wits watched every loophole for their art,
To introduce a bon-mot head and ears.”

“Did you never hear it?” asked Jenkins of Johnny.

“Not that I know of,” said Johnny to Jenkins.

“Of course he never did,” said I; for I wanted to hear how Jenkins would get on with an Irish story.

“Well,” said the narrator, “at Barossa, the 87th became engaged with a body of French, so numerous that they flattered themselves that this solitary English regi-

ment would never close with them, and stood their ground so stoutly, that, before they broke, the 87th actually got within such a distance as brought the bayonets into play, or rather the butt end, for that is the arm the soldier really uses at close quarters; and so, in the *mêlée*, the eagle was captured, and the corps have been called the Eagle Catchers ever since; and they got the eagle on the colours, and appointments, and buttons, before and behind; wherever an eagle could be stuck, there it was, till the corps looked more like a walking aviary than a regiment of Foot Christians. And some time after, when additional honours were heaped on them, and they were given the Prince of Wales's plume, there was no place to put it at all. They were debating it

one day at mess, everybody talking different degrees of nonsense, when a jolly young ensign, recently taken alive in Munster, shouted out from the bottom of the table—

‘I’ll tell ye what we’ll do with the plume, Curnel,—we’ll stick it in the aigle’s tail, and make a paycock of him.’”

“Upon my word, you get on very well with an Irish story, Jenkins,” said I. “I suppose the Cimbric blood assimilates with Celtic eloquence. I’ll tell you a French one on the same subject. You must know, that in the French service the eagle itself is the point of honour—they care nothing about the colour—and so, whenever a French regiment finds itself getting into trouble, they unscrew the eagle, and somebody carries it away in his pocket. Well, on one occasion,

a French regiment in the Russian campaign got into an awful mess, was driven in with the loss of half its men, and, to all appearance, of its eagle. The emperor was as mad as a hatter; it was the beginning of the end, and he had not been used to reverses. The next morning the unfortunate regiment was paraded in close column, other regiments all round to see it disgraced. The emperor, with his hands behind his back, looking thunder-clouds and hurricanes; the staff as grave ^{as} us if the offending regiment was about to be improved off the face of the earth. The parade was called to attention, and the scene began.

“ ‘Soldats—qu’avez vous fait,’ said Napoleon, in a deep, sepulchral tone, with a grim and ominous solemnity. ‘Où sont mes aigles?’

“‘Tiens, sire,’ said a mad wag of a *porte-étendard*, jumping out of the ranks, and putting his hand in his pocket; ‘On a perdu le bâton, mais voici le coucou;’ and he produced the missing eagle. You may suppose that there was not much more said about lost eagles in the French camp that day, except in the facetious line.”

“It was well for them to have anything to laugh at, poor creatures,” said Jenkins.

“Trust a Frenchman for that,” said Ravenswood. “France is one great national antic, the aberration of creation, and till its mind reaches adolescence, there will be little peace in Europe. She conquers nations as boys rob orchards, and with the same keen sense of the fun of the thing.”

“And the Gaul in Ireland kicks at Eng-

land," said I, "as boys bar out, and with the same perception of ultimate benefit."

I said this to try whether either Boyd or Nugent would show fight; they both spluttered a little, but did not know what to say. I think they were both too young to have acquired the intrepidity of visage and hardihood of assertion requisite on such an occasion. Boyd, indeed, being a northern, held most probably the opinion generally prevalent (and with the most perfect justice) in the province of Ulster, that the welfare of that part of the Green Isle (which, it being the leader and prime mover in all advance or progress, involved the welfare of the whole island) was systematically and suicidally sacrificed by the English government, to the supposed politi-

cal expediency of conciliating those who were determined and solemnly pledged not to be conciliated; and, moreover, Boyd had not a drop of Celtic blood in his veins, being of Scotch origin.

He always wore mourning on the 18th of August, being the day on which, as he alleged, his relative, Lord Kilmarnock, was executed on Tower Hill in 1746. I don't know anything about his family tree, but I observe that the thistle, when it once appears in that character, grows with a very remarkable luxuriance, and I do not believe a word of the relationship any more than I did of Nugent's fabulous descent from Radulphus Fitzlongespé de Nugent, who, in conjunction with Hugh de Lacy (an ominous conjunction of most unheavenly

bodies), roasted alive, and I dare say, eat the monks of Killballybedam, in the days of King Henry II., of blessed and vigorous memory.

“What do you know about Gauls?” asked Jenkins, who perhaps thought their younger brothers the Cimbri might come in for their turn next. “You never had a liberal education.”

“By Jove! no one ever had a more liberal education,” retorted I. “I learned as much as ever I pleased, and no more.”

“What is learning?” asked Ravenswood.

Nobody answered, for nobody knew; so he answered it himself, as he had intended. “Learning is the rent paid by man for occupying nature; the title of the

mind to the estates of thought; the crutch upon which man hobbles through the fields of knowledge."

"Phoo," said the eater of leeks, "that's all your mumble jumble of big words. What's the difference between learning and knowledge?"

"The difference between flower and fruit," replied Ravenswood, filling his glass, with a look at Johnny, to which that infant Bacchus replied by filling his, and swallowing a huge mouthful of fine full-flavoured military sherry; "fools are always learning, but never knowing."

"Faith, they *must be* fools if they're always learning," said Boyd; "after one's learned to take care one isn't cheated, and to make the most of everything one has,

and to do without what one hasn't, I don't see the use of bothering one's brains about the motions of the stars or the bowels of the earth. I'd rather know what the price of consols will be this day month than where the planet Jupiter will be. I'd rather know how to make a good beefsteak pie than be able to chatter 'about the crust of the planet we inhabit,' as the wise men say, instead of calling a spade a spade, and saying the world."

"You'd see some sense in geology, my boy," said Johnny, "if it taught you that what you thought worthless stone was valuable ore."

"Deed I would not," returned the Hiberno-Scot, "for I haven't an acre of land in the world."

“Perhaps if you made the discovery on some other man’s land, you might make a valuable purchase,” suggested Ravenswood; “he sees twice who sees first.”

“There’s some sense in that,” replied the prudent youth, and the conversation turned to the last race ball and the beauties that adorned it, which would hardly be interesting to the general reader, but thence it appeared that our young gentlemen had already arrived at the usual military practice I have elsewhere alluded to, of considering the fair ones, who composed the society of the town in which they are quartered, as a bevy of *Odalesques à la Vrai Bréton*.

CHAPTER II.

BAD INTENTIONS AND GOOD FORTUNE—VALUE RECEIVED—THE SCAFFOLD AND THE THRONE—THE SHADOW OF A SPECTRE—IT GLIDES ACROSS THE PATH—THE WHISPER OF INSTINCT—THE VOICE OF WARNING.

I WAS always aware that Edith had a strong taste and, I thought, a very correct taste, for poetry; and I conjectured from that, that she secretly and surreptitiously wrote it herself. I tried to extract some information on the subject from Johnny, but even my unrivalled skill in turning brains

inside out failed there; the fact being, that my careful tuition of that "ingenuous puer" had made him, on many subjects, almost a match for myself. I then tried to bribe him to steal me some, upon which he had the hardihood to turn upon me and say, that the receiver was worse than the thief,—a mode of learning wisdom from the mouths of babes and sucklings that I consider highly detrimental to military discipline, and threatened to begin reading his reports as orderly officer, which rather alarmed him, but did not produce the desired effect.

I was, however, agreeably surprised at finding with what facility I obtained, by fair means, that which had been denied to foul; for, a few days after this, happening

to arrive at Beauchamp Hall earlier than usual, I caught Edith in the act of huddling a number of very suspicious-looking papers into a desk, and immediately set up a piteous whine of entreaty for one, only one, any one, however small. Edith laughed.

“I suppose you will have one in the end, so I may as well give it at once with a good grace,” said she, selecting one—and a good long one, too, and giving it me, with the shadow of a tremor and the sketch of a blush; “of course, you will not be too severe a critic?”

I did not think there was much danger of that; “*Bis dat qui cito dat*,” a golden maxim for those who have anything to give, which I very rarely have, and therefore devote myself principally to receiving.

I certainly valued this little gift of Edith's ten times as much as if she had made difficulties, and "thereby enhanced its value," as the traders in conversation in wise maxims say, and say stupidly. No one begs without feeling humbled; and how humiliation is to produce gratitude, is a question that my philosophy is unequal to solving. The subject on which Edith's muse occupied herself was the accession of the Virgin Queen, and what I freely received I give freely.

"NOVEMBER 15, 1558.

"November's darksome sunlight stole, in chill, and
mist, and gloom,
O'er Hatfield's ancient battlements, and in a mourn-
ful room,
Where, girt with guards, yet served on knee, in
mockery of state,
Like to a bird of wild wood caged, a fair haired
maiden sate.

She watched the clouds that drifted darkly o'er the
darkling sky.

High place have ye, yet little peace, she murmured,
even as I—

She watched the leaves that winter's winds were
whirling here and there—

Like me, said she, are ye the sports of every breath
of air.

She watched the birds with songless throat, drooped
head, and draggled wing,

And sighed, Ye hapless birds, like me, to God ye
cannot sing.

Then suddenly a flash of light across her spirit
passed,

As if a coming Destiny, a glorious future cast,

The shadow of a starry gleam, that like an angel
stole

Across the troubled mirror of her desolated soul.

Then raised she up that bright young head all calmly
and serenely,

Then drew she up that slight young form all daunt-
lessly and queenly,

Then lighted up that bright young eye in pride of
high command,

Then stretched she out that white young arm, as if
within her hand

She held a nation's sceptre ; then suddenly it sank—
A closing gate, a shooting bolt, came like a fetter's
clank.

Well knew that princess-prisoner by what a slender
thread,

Held by no friendly hand, there hung the axe above
her head.

Fast fly the unreal visions, her dreary fate that
mock,

Sweep past in grim procession the headsman and the
block—

The spectre of a mother, with the phantom of a
crown—

The horror of a sister's brow black with a lethal
frown.

Sweep past the holy martyrs in unsepulchred array—

Names written in eternity; but whither marshal
they ?

Must she alone upon the earth, in inexperienced
youth,

Give answer to that question of all questions—

‘What is truth?’

And write the answer in her blood, and write

perchance in vain,

And to its dregs the fiery cup of death untimely

drink?

No wonder, then, the trembling hand, the sudden

painful start,

The never ceasing restlessness, the ever beating heart,

The sunken eye, the gathered brow, the blanched

and faded cheek,

The torture of uncertainty so eloquently speak.

The hand of Death was busy in her house, but what

it did,

For weal or woe, for hope or grief, was from that

maiden hid.

Fate raced with Death—a ghastly race; the nation

looked, and trembled.

What intertangled phantasms around her heart

assembled!

What felt that captive princess in her hour of fate
alone ?

One foot was on the scaffold set, the other—on the
throne.

Hark! on the moonlit clouds of night there comes a
doubtful roll,

Is it the distant thunder?—is it the death-bell's toll?
St. Paul's deep note it is, nought else can match that
ponderous bell ;

That shifting night wind on its wings may bear a
royal knell ;

It crept all solemnly around, like to a nation's
moan,

Spread far and near, o'er all the land, that choral
undertone,

Heavily booming, peal on peal, on many a slumber
broke,

And many a heart to freedom from a nameless
terror woke.

But who shall say what felt that maid, when through
their ancient gate

Came bearing empire or death the messengers of fate!

The trappings of past state they bore—the livery of
woe;

But a measured joy was in every eye, as every knee
bent low.

They bent the knee, they bowed the head; upon that
captive's sight

Came flashing free with royalty a flood of golden
light.

She gazed upon each bended knee, upon each humbled
head,

She felt the hand that grasped the dart was num-
bered with the dead.

She looked upon each humbled front, each reveren-
tial mien;

Her heart waxed high, for then she knew—they
knelt before the Queen."

"I have always felt," said Edith, re-
flectively, "for that period of Queen
Elizabeth's life which immediately preceded
Mary's death, the awful uncertainty, and

the terrible sight of two sisters placed in such a position that the one might sentence the other to execution. But I am afraid that her conduct immediately after her accession goes far to remove any sympathy — it was so insincere, such a want of straightforwardness.”

Edith was arranging her hair at a little looking-glass in the top of her work-box all this time, which attracted my notice to the shape of her head, which appeared to have a peculiar development towards the back, growing apparently broader as it receded. I had my own doubts about its being classic, though her profile certainly was; but it gave me an impression, I do not know why, of being a good honest English head.

“I have my doubts as to whether she *could* have acted otherwise,” said I; “she could not have gotten on at all without *one* bishop to crown her; and she had not one to spare.”

“She *ought* to have deceived nobody,” said Edith, mildly but firmly; “the end does not justify the means.”

“A popish insurrection before she was established in power,” persisted I, “might have been successful; and what would have been the consequence of that?”

“Consequences are in other and better hands than ours, Captain Cobb,” replied Edith, gravely; “but our conduct is in our own, and for that we are responsible.”

I thought it now expedient to hold my tongue. If Queen Elizabeth, *ruff*, *far-*

thingale, stomacher and all, had risen bodily from her long repose and entered the room, and offered me the honour of knighthood, I would not have quarrelled with Edith for her; but I could not help thinking that she was most alarmingly conscientious. I wonder what she would have done in the same position. I think she would have done—the bishops and peers, as Queen Elizabeth did.

At this moment Lady Elizabeth entered the room. “I have just received a letter from Mr. Wharton,” said she; “they are coming here next week.”

I do not know what it was sent a sharp, I had almost said pang, certainly a curious and disagreeable sensation through me at this announcement. Nina was

nothing to me, she had not attempted to lure or fascinate me in any shape or way, but still I felt a sort of antipathy (yet unmixed with animosity) such as one may feel with respect to a serpent, however richly hued, glittering, graceful, and even harmless the animal may be. For a moment Edith's eye caught mine, and I fancied I saw in it the same nameless terror darkening the disturbed glance, which just flashed upon me and was gone; but a moment afterwards she looked at me again, and from that time forward, till an unhappy misapprehension occurred, we understood one another by the eye.

“I am always glad to have Nina here,” said Lady Elizabeth; “she makes a house so gay; she is so cheerful and open-hearted.”

"She is very clever," said Edith, coldly.

"She brings a sort of sunshine with her," said the mother.

"She is an excellent musician," rejoined the daughter.

"And is so attentive to her father," quoth the matron.

"She has very pleasing manners," said the maiden; and it was not difficult to perceive that there was a small trifle of difference of opinion between the two.

Lady Elizabeth was, I believe, a very shrewd judge of character, but of course Edith and I were right in our estimate.

"I really do, to a certain extent, like Nina," said Edith to me after her mother was gone; "she is very agreeable, even good-natured; but I have still a nameless

dread of her. I think, once her vanity or her jealousy is touched, she is capable of almost anything; yet I ought not to say that, for I certainly cannot justify it, but still it is my impression."

"Those instinctive impressions are very apt to be correct," said I; "in this case I share it with you; you may rely upon it when minds were served out for the day that Nina was born on, hers got entangled with a cat's, and if you take my advice you will keep a bright look out upon her about Johnny."

"Do you know," replied Edith, "that was just what I was thinking of. I so dread Johnny's getting into any affair of the sort."

Faint shadows of Clementina Mullins,

Mary Anne O'Malley, and others, the pets of the army and widows of the 120th, floated before my eyes for a moment, and I thought how astounded Edith would be if I gave her a glimpse into the confessions of country quarters; but I had no time for that sort of thing, I had a job of my own in hand, for it was not merely about Johnny that I wished a bright look out to be kept upon Miss Nina's proceedings.

"You will find her dangerous," said I; "for with all that pretty manner of hers, she is by no means scrupulous as to what she says or does when she has an object in view, and she has the pertinacity of a limpet."

"I don't think she can produce much effect upon Johnny," said Edith, musingly.

“Don't be too sure of that,” returned I; “any woman can make any man do what she pleases if she goes the right way about it, and Nina knows the right way as well as any woman in Europe or out of it, and will use any means.”

“Well,” said Edith, hesitatingly, “I think she sometimes does suffer her imagination to overpower her memory; at all events, I shall not forget your caution.”

It was not very long before I learned what abundant reason I had for endeavouring to instil into Edith's mind a wholesome distrust of Nina, though when I took my leave that day I looked upon it merely as a rational precaution, which became necessary from the uncertainty of Nina's views, and the impossibility of calculating

what she would do. That she would never be content till she had some flirtation, intrigue, or manœuvre, to excite her, I felt convinced, far from being certain that I might not be the object of it myself, a destination of which I was by no means ambitious.

CHAPTER III.

EXCURSIONS AMONG THE STARS—THE COMET IN
WHITE MUSLIN—SOUNDING THE ALARM—LAISSEZ
ALLER—DEODATUS IN HIS GLORY—CORRESPOND-
ENCE—FASHION AND MATRIMONY—LOVE AND
MATRIMONY—DEODATUS ON COURTSHIP—ANA-
LOGIES AND CONTRASTS.

THE more I reflected upon Nina's appear-
ance upon the scene, as I strolled slowly
homewards, the less I liked it. It was a
beautiful starlight night, and, on any other
occasion, I should have derived a good deal
of innocent gratification from inspecting
the heavens,—wishing myself in the planet

Venus, wondering what the devil a parallax was, and whether any of the stars were really double, and where all the light came from, and what became of it when it was used up.

I do not know but what I might have hit off some very profound theory as to the present inhabitants of the moon, and what number of centuries it would take for the maggots and shellfish therein at present residing, to modulate through mud into limestone, thence into clay, and therefrom into asparagus, or whatever edible herb suits the lunar capacity to form fitting nutriment for the man (or the coming man) that is traditionally said to reside there.

No such visions were vouchsafed to me

this night. The stars were unpropitious. Cassiopeia—the lady in her chair—took form, and feature, and aspect of Nina meaning mischief; there was no luck in the odd number to be found in the belt of Orion; even my old friends the Pointers indicated no good; the Great Bear would not wag his tail; nor could I discover the sweet influence of the Pleiades, and clouds hid the Pole Star, the cynosure of my wishes, as which star I pictured to myself Edith, and Nina as a comet, and repeated the lines,—

“The hour arrived, and it became,
A shapeless mass of wandering flame,
A pathless comet, and a curse,
The menace of the universe.”

In short, I was afflicted with a Ninaphobia,

that dim, uncomfortable presentiment of something coming, and that not pleasant, which I suppose we all have occasionally, and which, *en passant*, I may remark, I treated that night with blue pill, and recommend the treatment to all my friends.

o However, this is anticipating. I walked on, and finding no comfort in the stars, betook myself to the earth again. The first point that I considered was, what course I should pursue with regard to Johnny, whether I should caution him about the probable machinations of that glittering young mischief-maker, or leave to his own sagacity to find her out himself. The first seemed the safest; but, on the other hand, I believe there are instances on record of the best advice, given in the best

spirit, not being received precisely as it was meant, and even of its not having produced the desired effect.

On the other hand, if I left him to find her out himself, it was not perfectly clear that his unaided sagacity would be equal to the task. Johnny had a sort of innate reverence for woman, which even the 120th regiment (Camberwell Rangers) had not succeeded in dislodging from that loyal citadel his heart, and which, unfortunately, sometimes extended itself to objects not quite worthy of it.

He was thoroughly unsuspecting by nature. Experience had not as yet taught him caution, and he was no match for a manœuvring angel in white muslin. I thought that, upon the whole, he might as

well be on his guard, and that, by cautioning him in rather a quizzing manner, I might accomplish that purpose without arousing his jealousy about advice.

The next consideration was a serious one. I felt pretty sure that Nina, if baffled by Johnny, would speedily detect my hand in the matter, and, I had very little doubt, would forthwith proceed to return the compliment in kind; and what amount of mischief she might do me with Edith heaven only knew. True, that young lady already distrusted her, but who could tell how soon Nina might induce her to distrust me, or what she might not persuade her to believe when she had effected that object. I know how easy it is for a designing woman to poison the mind of another against a man

by simply telling her stories about him that *cannot* be repeated to him, and consequently cannot be contradicted, disproved, or explained by him, and I had very little doubt but that in case any delicate operation of that sort became expedient, Nina would tell her story in that fine liberal style of narration that produces the greatest possible effect with the smallest expenditure of facts, an accomplishment which I have in some instances observed to flourish in great luxuriance among the more voluble portion of the fairer sex, fostered, I suppose, by their exemption from the jurisdiction of the court of twelve paces, "that remarkable and exclusively Christian practice," as Ravenswood used to call it, "of appealing to the judgment of the devil."

However, I speedily arrived at the conclusion that it was no use thinking; I could not foresee what even a day might bring forth, far less a month; events, as they arose, must be met as best might be; and if a sharp eye, a clear head, a true heart, and clean hands, were to be of no avail against a woman's tongue, it might be an aberration of Providence, but it *should* be no fault of mine.

As I approached our dwelling-place, my Leporello, Deodatus, ever on the watch, surrounded and bejumped upon by all the dogs in the place, with whom he fraternised, pounced upon me with some letters. One of Doddy's greatest enjoyments was, whenever letters arrived for me in my absence, to lie in wait till I returned, that

he might have the dignified gratification of presenting me with those missives, which seemed to have some mystic value in his eyes, that communicated itself to him, the bearer thereof. I think the receipt of a letter addressed to himself would have thrown him into convulsions of delight, a feeling which I rarely myself experience, a certain proportion of mine consisting of bills, a character from which Doddy's correspondence would probably have been exempted by the limited nature of his credit. "Plase yer honner here they are; one, two, three," said he, spreading them out upon the plate, which he considered it genteel to substitute for the silver salver upon which Ambrose used to present letters to Lady Elizabeth and Edith, an article which

formed no part of my camp furniture, to Doddy's great discomfiture, who always, upon such occasions, possessed himself of some plate or other, and, I believe, would rather have presented the letters to me on the shovel than with his naked hand.

“One, two, three—(down, Towzer!)—I thought you might like to see them afore you went in to the gentlemen—(get out wid ye, Billy)—maybe there's saycrets in them—(lave off bitin' me feet, ye cannibal, Neptune! the curse of Cromwell on ye!—be asy now!)” and he looked wistfully at his clothes, longing, I believe, that he was, for the time, clad in his original rags, that he might have a roll on the grass with the dogs. The first letter that I read was from my lady mother, then disporting herself with

aquatics in the Isle of Wight, that great playground for the players at sailors:—

“MY DEAR SOMERSET,

“I *really wish* you would write a little oftener, as I am sure you must have time; for you can have none of that horrid duty you had in Ireland; or if you could contrive to get even a fortnight's leave, I should be *so glad* if you would come here. *Lady Mesopotamia is here*, surrounded by her usual train of hangers-on, but, of course, very agreeable to me, and I should like you to take this opportunity of making *a friend of her*;—(Make a friend of that terrible woman, that incarnation of grandeur, Lady Mesopotamia! ejaculated I, in horror. I should as soon have thought of nudging the Pope,

or pinching the Queen)—which you know you never can do in London, where *friendships* do not grow indigenously. She sails constantly with *your friend Lord Huddleston*, who has persuaded her to put that confidence in him by a solemn promise that the moment there is any *real* danger *he will take the helm himself*.

“The society is on the pleasantest footing, some of the best families, and a great number of *smart men*. You would be amused, *entre nous*, in your sly, sarcastic way, by the *costume of the ladies*. Some of them wear a sort of refined imitation of those great rough things the men call pea-jackets, or pilot-coats; those worn by our friends are, of course, made of velvet, trimmed with fur and lined with blue silk,

and profusely braided. One I remarked, becoming, indeed, but I should hardly think suited to the sea, of a *rich puce-coloured satin*, lined with rose-coloured silk, and trimmed with lace; pretty, though perhaps eccentric; but the lady who wore it is a bride. Others, again, wear a singular sort of pelisse, which I cannot describe more accurately than as a brown holland dressing-gown; it looks odd, but is worn by people of the highest distinction, and I dare say is *very serviceable* in bad weather, whilst those who do not wear the ordinary sailor's hat, the '*wide-awake*,' they call it, have a sort of thing like the head of a cab, of green or blue silk, which I think *remarkably unbecoming*, and, indeed, is commonly called an '*ugly*,' I think, very

justly. Mrs. Wallingford is here with her two daughters. *Fifty thousand each*, and I really think it is time you should *begin to think of settling in life*. Give my best regards to the Waldgraves, and believe me,

“My dear Somerset,

“Your most affectionate mother,

“CAROLINE CAVENDISH COBB.”

“P.S. Lord Fitzhammersmith has been here some time, and been *very* attentive to Adeline. I like him *very much indeed*; he is a most *superior young man*, and, I am sure, a *very rising one*.”

If he rises to the hook, I suppose that will do, said I to myself.

I believe the Isle of Wight might have

slipped its moorings in the Solent, and commenced investigating the bed of the Atlantic, before I would have left Carlton. Mrs. Wallingford and her two rich daughters were abominations in my eyes. What on earth did I want with fifty thousand pounds? I hoped that Lady Caroline did not intend this as a hint for me; at all events, if she did I would not take it, so I crumpled up the letter in very virtuous dudgeon, and proceeded to open another, which bore Hawkins's well-known handwriting. It ran thus:—

“DEAR COBB,

“As usual in perplexity, I come to you for advice (it's a common practice, and a very sensible one, said I to myself, only I

wish they'd remember the fee). I am on my beam ends, and do not clearly understand how to right myself. My conscience reproaches me. (Unless I know much less of Hawkins than I suppose myself to know, thought I, he must be very far gone in love to discover that he has a conscience.) I feel that I paid much more attention to Ellen O'Reilly than circumstances warranted (I don't clearly see what circumstances had to say to the matter, thought I); and I think it possible she may have attached more weight to some things that I said than I intended at the time. Still I cannot deny, that much was said which was hardly fair, if more was not meant; and what I want to put to you, is, whether you do not think that, as a man of honour

(Phew! ejaculated I; here's this accomplished hypocrite wants to take credit for doing, as a man of honour, what he's dying to do upon any terms. A man of honour, indeed! here's a mash of laurels and orange flowers. Well, I dare say I may have deceived myself sometimes. Let's see what he has to say for himself). Much was said (I dare say) that was hardly fair if more was not meant (devil doubt it); and what I wish to put to you is (Is it?) whether you do not think that as a man of honour (Oh, indeed!) I have any other course to pursue than to offer to that young lady the only reparation (that's a capital word—reparation, it'll do for anything, from a wink to a wedding ring), the only reparation in my power—

my hand, with a heart of which she's already possessed of the greater part. (Well, I'm glad he's found it out, but he's taken his time about it.) I believe I shall best consult my own character, and my own happiness, by so doing; but I wished before taking such a decided step, to have the benefit of your judgment. Of course I know that to enjoin secrecy and discretion to you would be superfluous (of course, it would be about as sensible as to request a duck to swim), but pray let me have your opinion as soon as possible. I can do nothing here. I cannot collect my thoughts or direct my attention to anything. The trout laugh at me, the snipe make game of me, and my subaltern will keep bothering me about the fashionable news. I wish I

was richer, but I cannot help that; at all events, my income is more than Mr. O'Reilly's living, so there will be no fault in that respect. I hope the world goes well with you; so believe me,

“ My dear Cobb,

“ Your most sincere friend,

“ JAMES HAWKINS.”

Well, James, my boy, you're fairly landed, thought I. I'm sure I wish I was; however, it will be time enough to answer you to-morrow. And so I entered the house. It was, however, later than I had supposed, and the two others had gone to bed. I thought I had better do so too, but as I left the little room we had christened with the military designation of the mess-room, I stopped for a moment.

I stopped, literally because a particular form of answering Hawkins' letter occurred at that moment to my mind (I may observe, *en passant*, that, like most first impulses, it was the true one, and that I followed it subsequently, and not without success), but Doddy, who it seems had set me like a setter into the room, and lay watching like a lurcher till I came out again, interrupted my momentary pause otherwise.

"Will I fetch your cigar-case, your honour?" said he, nowise doubting that it was that weed imported by Raleigh, that soother of sorrows (and muddler of brains), that occupied my thoughts; and as this young unskilful suggester of sin put the thought into my head, I nodded assent, and away he scuttled and scrambled to fetch me that

Pandora's box, which I always say is a sort of thing that I by no means want or require, but never like being entirely without.

“Who gave you those flowers?” asked I, when he returned, observing that his button-hole was profusely adorned with flowers that I was convinced he had not picked up in the fields.

“Miss Maria,” replied he, with the semblance of a blush, that astonished me more than a flash of lightning would have done.

“And pray who is Miss Maria?” asked I.

“Sure, she's Miss Edith's lady's maid,” answered he, rather shyly.

“And how do you persuade her to give you flowers?”

"I plays tricks for her, sir, and does her odd jobs for her."

"What do you mean by playing tricks?" asked I.

"Well, sir, I mane tachin' the dogs to beg," returned he; "puttin' walnut-shells on the cat, standin' on my head, and the like."

"And what are the odd jobs you do for her?" asked I, rather interested in Doddy's characteristic courtship.

"Makin' little baskets for her, sir," he answered; "gatherin' groundsel for her canary, coaxin' the cook out of goodies for her, and them sort of things."

"You may go to bed, now," said I, rather struck with the peculiar analogy which had just been brought to light between master

and man. I wonder, thought I, if I were to stand upon my head—well, perhaps it might not produce the desired result.

It is a great point to distinguish oneself, certainly, in certain eyes, but the mode differs in different cases.

CHAPTER IV.

SOUNDING THE ALARM—THE DOMINION OVER THE
 EARTH—THE GREAT CASE OF BULL V. BRAIN—
 NOTICE OF EJECTION—THE FEAR AND THE
 DREAD—“A MAN’S A MAN FOR A’ THAT”—
 TRUST AND DISTRUST—MODEL CORRESPONDENCE
 THE DESCENT OF THE DESTROYER—THE MARK
 OF HIS HAND.

“JOHNNY, my boy,” said I, when I came down to breakfast, “look out for squalls, be promptly wise, prepare for cavalry, keep your weather eye open,—you never were in such imminent danger before, since the creation of cats; ‘latet anguis in

herba'—there is a snake in the grass—there is a lion in the path—there is a scorpion among the flowers, and a blight upon the blast."

"Suppose you try and speak sense," said Ravenswood; "and let us know what the matter really is. Is Clementina Mullins going to prosecute him for breach of promise, or is she come here to carry him off bodily to Merrion Square, and matrimony, and whiskey-punch?"

"Clementina Mullins, of the wandering eye, sits in the middle of her web, in Merrion Square, like the blue poplin spider that she is, with great dragoon flies entangled in her meshes," replied I; "but Johnny, my boy, if you have got such a thing as a heart, as I know you have,—"

you curly-pated young prism of the light that lies in ladies' eyes,—it will be stormed in front, and turned in flank, and sacked in rear, before you are a month older."

"Poor Johnny," said Ravenswood, "you must form square, and take the attack on your bayonets, like a hedgehog; however, never mind; a square of infantry is the triumph of science over brute force."

"Force—fiddlestick!" replied Johnny; "triumph of science over force,—don't you call file-firing force?"

"Who made the firelocks to fire from?" retorted Ravenswood; "did a mad bull make the locks, or a runaway horse the barrels? Can a crocodile retire and fire by alternate wings,—or a rhinoceros advance in double column of sub-divisions?"

Human skill on foot sets the horse and his rider at defiance."

"Pooh!" said Johnny; "it isn't skill; it's cool shooting and cold steel."

"It is a gift to man, Johnny," said I; "it's as old as Adam—it's the dominion given to man in the first chapter of Genesis."

"It's the manual and platoon exercise," persisted the impracticable Johnny; "and Adam knew no more about that than he did of the Midland Counties Railway; and I'll be hanged if it is a gift,—it's the fruit of two month's drill, as I know to my cost."

"What's the biggest beast on the face of the earth, Johnny?" asked I.

"Ducrow!" answered that bitter young satirist.

“I mean animal?” said I.

“The elephant, to be sure,” replied he, “unless you call the whale an animal!”

“Perhaps I might,” replied I; “but we won’t dispute that point; we’ll take the elephant for the present.”

“How far do you think a rifle ball will go into an elephant?”

“Not very far, I should suppose,” replied Johnny, brightening up with an interest in the subject. “How the deuce do they manage to shoot them?”

“I’ll tell you,” said I. “When the elephant sees the hunter standing, perhaps all alone, with no arms but just his rifle, and the brute means mischief, he comes towards the man with his trunk up in the air, trumpeting, and looking like a great

mountain that would crush everything by mere weight. It would take a light six-pounder to make any impression on him then; but, nevertheless, he has man and man's skill to deal with, and he has not many minutes to live. In the front of the elephant's skull, a little above the eyes, there is an orifice in the bone about the size of our hand, and there the brain has no protection, except the skin; well, he does not show this place now, nor any other vulnerable point, for he has his head up in the air; and you would suppose there could only be one issue to this single combat; but, nevertheless, the hunter knows what that issue will certainly be, and he stands there as cool as an iceberg, for he knows that it is the instinct of the

beast at the moment of attack to lower his head, and when he does so he's booked; and accordingly, just as the elephant is, to all appearance, about to crush the man, down goes his head, thereby showing the soft place—crack! goes the rifle—and the great unwieldy mass rolls over, for the ball is in his brain.”

“It takes coolness, skill, and courage, to do that, nevertheless,” said Ravenswood; “no flinching allowed, and no mistake.”

“A man must be a man to assert his preeminence over brutes,” replied I.

“I have heard it asserted,” said Ravenswood, “that it is considered among burglars that the most ferocious house-dog will not attack a perfectly naked man.”

“Yes,” I answered; “it is the fear and

the dread that operates then; there are not more than three or four animals that will, unless under peculiar circumstances, attack a man or stand his attack voluntarily. The lion and the tiger wont, unless when they are mad with hunger, or have already tasted human blood."

"No," said Ravenswood, "none of the cat tribe will."

"There is one that will," said I; "so Johnny, be on your guard, for you will have soon to deal with the cat of all cats, the queen of the cats is coming to Beauchamp Hall."

"Who?" asked Johnny.

"Nina Wharton."

"Who?" asked Ravenswood, and turned as pale as death.

“Mr. and Miss Wharton,” replied I, in some surprise.

Ravenswood made no answer, but soon after left the room, and I commenced eating my breakfast, lecturing Johnny, and otherwise doing my duty to myself and my neighbour.

“What makes you take such a dislike to Nina, Cobb?” asked Johnny; “I’m sure she is always very friendly towards you, and always speaks well of you; it’s very ungrateful on your part.”

“Johnny, my boy,” I replied, “a cat may be a most respectable cat, and a terrier may be a most respectable terrier, but you can seldom bring them together without a breach of the peace; I should be very happy to adore Nina, providing that she would never come within ten miles of me.”

“What harm she does you I cannot for the life of me make out,” said he; “you never had a repulse from her, indeed, you were hardly civil to her yourself at the rectory.”

“Did you ever see a live shell, Johnny?” asked I.

“To be sure I have,” replied he.

“I don’t believe that you ever did,” I returned; “but that’s a trifle; you see a live shell, and it’s as quiet as a lamb, but you know that the fuse is burning away, and that sooner or later that shell will explode, and then there’ll be Old Nick to pay, and no pitch hot; now, Johnny, as certain as I am that that shell will explode, so certain am I that sooner or later Nina Wharton will do me some great mischief.”

“ I didn’t know that you were such a fool,” replied Johnny, innocently opening his eyes to their full extent, and looking as if he thought some variety of mild lunacy had seized upon his military pastor and master ; “ why should she do you any harm?—in the first place, she hasn’t the wish ; in the second place, she hasn’t the power.”

“ How do you know she hasn’t the power?” asked I.

“ Because I know she hasn’t,” returned Johnny.

“ Can you count the sands of the sea, Johnny, or limit a woman’s tongue, Johnny? Will the Ethiop change his skin, Johnny, or the leopard his spots, Johnny?”

“ I don’t see what harm she can do you,”

persisted he; "if she does talk about you, she can say nothing against you."

"It's very easy to *say* things against one," said I, significantly; "nothing easier."

"I don't know that," replied the youth, flushing with honest indignation; "I have seen more of you in all times and places than ever Nina would if she lived to be as old as Methuselah, and I should be puzzled to find anything to say against you."

"Thank you for your good opinion, Johnny," returned I, rather flattered, to say the truth, at this little bit of spontaneous combustion on Johnny's part; "but, Johnny, though I do not say that I have ever detected Nina in a falsehood, I don't think that it is off the cards her resorting to a little rhetorical artifice if it so suited her."

"I don't think that is fair by her," answered Johnny, gravely; "you admit that you know of no falsehood on her part and yet you attribute untruth to her; that's not like you, Cobb."

"I admit that I do not *know* that she is not to be believed, but I know that she is a manœuvrer, and a girl that manœuvres in small things will lie when she comes to matters that she cares about. A manœuvre is nothing but a practical lie, in civil life at least, for in our trade manœuvres are uncommonly practical realities, and sometimes very alarming ones too."

"Well, I think her manœuvres are very pretty," said unsophisticated Johnny.

"You would not think so if they were directed against yourself," returned I;

“but however, that’s not *your* danger; it will be quite the other way.”

I thought I had given Johnny enough advice for the present, and so left him alone, though I had not quite succeeded in reconciling my experience of the past with his expectation for the future. I then proceeded to answer Hawkins, a task which was much facilitated by the circumstance of my being perfectly aware of how he wished to be advised. Perhaps the reader would like to see my letter; it will not occupy much of his valuable time:—

“MY DEAR HAWKINS,

“When in doubt, win the trick.

“Yours sincerely,

“SOMERSET CAVENDISH COBB.”

The answer to my lady mother was, of course, of a more suitable length. I rather think she would have considered anything very short as rather vulgar, and would have been horrified at the manifestation of any such worse than false doctrine, heresy, and schism on my part.

“MY DEAR MOTHER,

“Nothing would give me greater pleasure than joining the brilliant circle which you describe as assembled at Cowes (excepting, perhaps, quizzing their dresses), but, unhappily (the hypocrite that I was), the stern call of duty confines me to the bleak rocks of Derbyshire. I am sure, however, that I should feel dreadfully alarmed at the presence of Lady Mesopotamia, though I

am fully sensible of the advantage that it would be to me to be on a footing of intimacy with that august personage. It would give me the greatest pleasure to be a witness of Huddleston's heroism and seamanship in case of danger, providing I could survey the scene from the shore, or, at all events, from the deck of another yacht. I am sure that we ought to be grateful, above all things, to Fitzhammer-smith for his attentions to Adeline; it must cost him no end of labour, considering his lameness and his bad cough, besides the mortification of his most tender glances going astray in that squint he has. I hope Adeline *likes him extremely, too*; as our philosophical neighbours say, *tous les goûts sont respectables*. I shall duly deliver your

message to the Waldgraves, who are kindness itself to me. Lady Elizabeth often tells me of the magnificent entertainments at which you and she used to meet in the time of the Regency, when Fashion was the fourth estate of the realm; days which, I fear, are fled for ever. Edith is very much improved; indeed, I think her rather a nice girl. If I remember right, she was a bit of a favourite of yours. Will you tell Adeline that I have taught my horse to dance beautifully. If I can manage to get away for a few days, I shall hasten to join you at Cowes. Give my love to Adeline and Gundreda, and believe me, my dear mother,

“Your most affectionate and dutiful son,

“SOMERSET CAVENDISH COBB.”

“ P.S. I have not seen either of the Miss Wallingfords (and what was more, as I resolved at the time, had not the slightest idea of ever seeing them, having made up my mind to leave them to the serious young nobleman for whom their excellent and highly-principled mother, daughter of Sir Timothy Dumble, Bart. and brewer, destined them)—and can, therefore, form no opinion as to what I might think of them; but I shall give your wishes respecting my settling in life my best consideration; indeed, I have been thinking about the subject a good deal of late, and am rather of your opinion respecting its expediency.”

Having completed, and duly sealed and directed these documents, I committed them to the charge of Doddy, who grinned

from ear to ear on seeing the name of Hawkins on the cover of one of them.

“It’ll be a great comfort to him, sir, to hear from you in that lone place, and he in love, too, poor gentleman. I wonder will he get lave to marry her,” added he, *sotto voce*, as he trotted away.

I suppose he’s got his own leave, thought I, as I watched Doddy proceeding, after the manner of his nation, to execute the mission entrusted to his charge; that is to say, stopping to peep at something here, to talk to somebody there, to ask a question of one, and to perform an antic for another, instead of simply, as an ordinary Saxon would have done, going to put the letters in the post-office. I have no doubt, when he got there he inquired of the postmistress whether she

thought they would go safe, whether she knew Captain Hawkins, or Lady Caroline Cobb; and as she probably did not, gave her whatever information he could think of, or invent on the subject, together with a sketch of the rise and fall of the family of MacCarthy, the death of the great chieftain of that name, a sketch of the glories of O'Toole, and some insight into the habits of Hugh O'Neil.

Johnny went over to Beauchamp Hall, and I saw him no more that day. Ravenswood had, as I have already said, disappeared immediately after breakfast, and had not re-appeared when dinner-time arrived. Now all three of us were irregular in our habits of returning to dinner. Johnny constantly going home, without knowing

whether he would dine at Carlton or at Beauchamp Hall; the same applying to me—and Ravenswood often taking long and solitary rambles, and not returning till eight or nine o'clock, having got something to eat, somehow or other, at some time of the day. In consequence of all this, waiting for one another would have been endless, to say nothing of unprofitable and irritating, and we had come to the agreement, that whenever seven o'clock arrived, whoever were present should sit to dinner, without reference to the absent; and, accordingly, when dinner was ready I sat down without troubling my head about either of my friends. A solitary dinner does not commonly last very long, and it was yet early in the evening when I prepared to sally

forth for a walk, to which exercise there was every temptation in that neighbourhood, from the great beauty and variety of the scenery, but had hardly got a hundred yards from the house, when I perceived a crowd approaching, evidently in a state of great excitement, and bearing something on what seemed a door. As they were clearly directing their steps towards our quarters I returned, and found that the burden was the inanimate body of Ravenswood.

He had been found in a deep glen, that was known by the name of Hawkdale, a scene of remarkable beauty, about three miles off, lying on his side, as if he had dropped from a stone seat upon which he had been sitting. There was no appearance

of violence, or of any struggle, nothing to induce any belief that this visitation was other than a fit of some kind; his limbs were flexible, but remained in any position in which they were placed; his eyes were open, seemingly fixed upon some object, yet, to all appearance, unconscious; his countenance was florid, indeed almost flushed; and when laid on the bed he seemed neither to hear, see, nor feel.

I was exceedingly alarmed at this, not having any very lively faith in the village surgeon who attended us, for whom, however, I sent immediately; but, before he arrived, any immediate demand for his services was passed; for, after lying motionless and insensible for about ten minutes, Ravenswood suddenly heaved a deep sigh,

looked inquiringly around him, and asked,
“Is she gone?”

“Who?” returned I.

“How long have I been here?” inquired
he, coming more and more to himself.

“Only a few minutes,” replied I.

“How did I get here?”

“The country people brought you in,”
said I, sitting down by the bed-side.

“From Hawkdale?” asked he.

I nodded.

“Oh, my God! my God!” said he, turning
from me.

On the arrival of the surgeon, there was
little more to be done, except to persuade
him to undress and go to bed, which accom-
plished we left him to himself.

CHAPTER V.

THE POISONED ARROW—THE BAITED HOOK—ORATORY IN UNDRESS—JOHNNY IN ORDER OF BATTLE—THE POULTRY IN DANGER—THE SPIRIT OF HELIOGABALUS—THE STAGES OF CREATION—THE MAGNET IN THE MIND—THE PAST AND THE PRESENT—THE RACE WITH THE THUNDERSTORM.

STRANGE thoughts kept hovering over me that night. Ravenswood's manifest agitation at hearing Nina's name at breakfast had not escaped me; his immediate appeal to that soother of trouble—solitude, and his mysterious illness, now began to connect

themselves in my mind with his prolonged and unaccountable leave of absence, and I could not help a vague suspicion that he had been one of Nina's victims, though I had no means of conjecturing how, or where, or when.

He had, as I have already said elsewhere, gone on leave in April, on what is facetiously and officially termed in the army "urgent private affairs," and I now began to suspect that his was really urgent; he had been suddenly taken seriously ill, though no one knew exactly what was the matter with him, the medical certificates, upon which his leave had been prolonged until he found us at Derby, simply stating that he laboured under a severe nervous affection which rendered the care and watchfulness of his own

family necessary, a statement which we charitably voted a mild formula for expressing delirium tremens; but when he joined he certainly was, as we all remarked, a changed man.

When I went to see him the next morning, he was perfectly collected; and excepting for a haggard look, and perhaps something approaching to wildness in his eye, no one would have supposed that he could have suffered the mysterious and alarming visitation of the night before. His first anxiety was as to whether he had *said* anything during his state of insensibility, and upon my being in a position to give him full assurance that he had been perfectly speechless from the time the country people found him, with the one exception

of the question, "Is she gone?" he seemed much relieved in his mind.

"It is a merciful providence," said he, not even under these circumstances losing his habitual peculiarities of expression, "that imposes silence when it withdraws consciousness,—that draws up the draw-bridge when the sentinel is no longer at his post, and closes the communication when it can no longer be guarded. Cobb," continued he, solemnly (alarming me exceedingly,) "I will trust you; most men do; they say that what is spoken to you will go down unspoken to your grave. I long for some one to trust, and God knows I can put little trust in woman, the natural confidant of man in his troubles. When you mentioned that name at breakfast yesterday morning,

I felt as if a burning shot had passed through my heart,—as if a mocking demon with a barbed dart had risen from the earth. And she so near. I wish I was at the uttermost end of the earth, and yet for the life of me I could not stir from this spot; it is a fascination, a delusion. One looks at the beauty and the bloom, the freshness and the fragrance, and thinks not of the serpent that lurks among the fruits. Cobb, never man loved woman as I loved Nina Wharton. If days of wretchedness and nights of sleeplessness; if the feeling, the burning feeling, that only one human creature in the wide world was aught to me, and all the rest mere dross and unreality; if the longing to die for her, the hoping to live for her, the craving to see her, the

yearning to hear her, the desire and the hope, and the despair and the devotion, from that first day that, blinded and mad, I felt that I was no longer my own master—no longer myself—no man, but a slave,—until that last black day that, deserted—nay, worse, jeered and scorned by her, I deemed myself abandoned of heaven, and turned over to the mockeries of hell; if all this was love, then I loved truly, and yet loved in vain. To no man on earth but you would I have said all this; but you will hear, and if you do not comfort will not betray. Yet I was not to blame. No man on earth could have suspected the falsehood and treachery that lurked under that deceitful loveliness. You smile; perhaps you have detected the claws of the syren. But

your eyes are sharper, and—pardon me—harder than mine.”

“I have had my suspicion,” replied I; “though sorry indeed I am to find that the confirmation is to come through the sufferings of a friend; but I never thoroughly trusted her.”

“Would that I had not!” groaned Ravenswood; “yet who could have failed to trust her? the thousand little ways that she had of indicating her preference,—the honied words, the tremulous but still repeated grasp of the hand; the eye, now fixed, and now cast down in such a sweet confusion,—who could have believed that these were but the baits to a hook as cold, and as sharp, and as hard, and as barbed as steel? and then, when she refused me,—the mockery of tell-

ing me that a short flirtation with an officer was not to be held as a promise of marriage! As if part of one's duty was to be tortured by one's friends, as well as butchered by one's enemies."

"I am afraid we are not all of us altogether blameless on that head ourselves," said I; "we, too, sometimes mix the trade of slayers of men with the recreation of lady-killing."

"I never did," said Ravenswood; "though I do not know now whether I shall not begin to try my hand; I am sure I have good excuse—that devil's justification—that he may accuse the more surely. I have had enough to drive me mad,—enough to haunt me to death. Havé you seen her yet?"

“She has not arrived yet,” answered I.

“How long does she remain at Beauchamp?”

“Three weeks or a month, I believe,” I answered; “but I am by no means sure.”

“As long as she can amuse herself,” said he, bitterly; “can catch fools to torture, flies to impale.”

“It will not be my fault if she subjects Johnny to that operation,” said I; “and I am by no means sure that she does not intend something of the sort.”

“Have you warned him of her character?” asked Ravenswood, eagerly; “does he know what he has to expect?—God forgive me for talking so of her.”

“I have warned him,” I replied; “though with what effect I do not exactly know; I

cannot persuade him to take the same view that I do, but his sister does, and perhaps sooner or later he will."

"Sooner or later he will," said the other; "but I should prefer sooner; however, I do not see any use in lying in bed all day;" a remark which I considered in the light of a hint to me to leave him to himself, which I did accordingly; and he soon afterwards joined me at breakfast—pale, indeed, and feeble, but apparently not otherwise the worse for his attack.

I believe a good deal of Ravenswood's energetic outburst of indignant eloquence arose from the circumstance of his being in bed at the time. I never saw a man whose tongue did not exhibit symptoms of liberation from constraint, sympathetic with the

freedom of the body from the restraint of clothes. The Duke of Wellington is short and sharp, because the normal state of a Field Marshal is to be buttoned up to the throat. I do not believe any one ever made a good speech in chain armour. The "helm and hauberk's gilded mail" cannot, in my opinion, conduce to elocution in the wearer, however the learning that celebrated ode, in which it appears together with the she-wolf of France, may, in the ingenuous (and exceedingly tiresome) youth who recites it to an admiring circle of friends and relations.

I think a good-sized blanket, with a skewer through it at the neck, would be a good working costume for the hustings. I know I never could have penned these con-

fessions in any other dress than a middle-aged dressing-gown and slippers; and I do not believe the stream of Ravenswood eloquence would have flowed half so free had he been properly dressed for morning parade at the time. We hear of native eloquence, which simply means eloquence in buff. Oratory holds a high place in the opinion of the Red Indian, who considers a few beads and feathers a reasonable allowance of clothing; but there is little thought of oratory in the mind of the Esquimaux who is covered with seal-skins.

We sent Johnny out to hold the parade, which that zealous young officer enlivened with the manual and platoon exercise, and I believe would have marched the company

past in slow and quick time, if, after the necessary points the bugler and the serjeant to command had been deducted, there had remained any men to march past; failing which, he formed line with his right resting on the pump, retired by echelon of sub-division upon the coal-shed; and having, by a masterly movement, changed front in his centre, charged in an oblique direction across the yard, and, firing a volley (of snappings) into an adjacent poultry-yard, whose inmates, two washer-women and an urchin, when the men came to the present, raised a shout of terror, in the idea, I believe, that a real volley was about to sweep them off the face of the earth,—retired and fired by successive sections, and closed a short but brilliant campaign

under the walls of the hen-house, where he dismissed the men. I dare say he enjoyed it very much; if so, it is lucky for him; tastes differ. Ravenswood looked wistfully at him once or twice, when he returned from his mimic razzia, as if he wished to say something to him, but thought it not advisable.

“Why, Johnny,” said I, “if you astonish the natives in that unceremonious manner, we shall be prosecuted as a nuisance.”

“Did you hear how those old fools jabbered and howled?” said he, indignantly, “as if any harm was likely to happen when I was there.”

“You put them in deadly fear, nevertheless, Johnny, my boy,” I returned;

“and I’m not clear whether, of the two, fear isn’t worse than danger.”

“Of course it is,” remarked Ravenswood, bitterly. “Fear is the feminine of danger, therefore the worse.”

“Eh! Latin grammar of early school,” said Johnny; “that’ll do. Give me some tea. I wonder could you tell me what’s the masculine for tea?”

“Brandy-and-water,” coolly replied Ravenswood, as he filled Johnny’s cup, and then, rising from the table, sauntered quietly out.

“Cobb,” said Johnny, having carefully watched the door till it closed behind Ravenswood, “do you know I rather think you were right about Nina.”

“I was pretty certain I was right,” said

I; "pretty certain at the time we were talking about her, but now I KNOW that I was. Mark my words, I KNOW."

"Yes, I am beginning to think so myself," said the young rogue, fancying that he could impose upon me as an original discovery of his own the very impression which I had intended and arranged should be conveyed to him through Edith; "but they desired me to tell you that you must mind and come to dinner on Monday to meet them; there'll only be old Hargreaves and his daughter.

"Who is old Hargreaves?" asked I.

"He is a retired cotton-spinner, I believe," replied Johnny; "but he does a great deal of good here, and understands all about steam-engines, and the balance of

trade and exchanges, and political economy and statistics, and that sort of rubbish, and my mother wants him for Mr. Wharton; I believe he likes that sort of thing; and Lady Elizabeth says I'm no company for him, for which the Lord be praised. I dare say you'll like him too. I suppose somebody must look after things of that sort."

"Somebody must drive the coach, Johnny," I answered, "and the better the coachman understands his business, the more safety for the passengers."

"That's that great genius, Ravenswood, has bit you with a mad epigram," said Johnny; "however, I'll forgive you this time if you'll let us have tripe for dinner to-day."

“Tripe, you young epicure,” returned I, “you infant Heliogabalus, you want tripe for dinner, do you? boiled four hours, with a rich purée of mushrooms, eh? and the large flaps grilled, lying on top of it, eh? and fried bread all round, eh? That’s what you’re thinking of, and almost before you have swallowed your breakfast, too, you irreclaimable young sensualist.”

“Well, don’t jaw, but send out for the tripe,” replied my undutiful ensign; and having complied with his orders, I heard no more of him till the time for eating it arrived.

I found Ravenswood sauntering moodily about; and thinking that anything was better for him than solitude, proposed a walk of about six miles, to an old castle, now in ruins, a good bracing mountain

walk, likely to do him much more good, all circumstances considered, than his own thoughts. The same unfortunate subject was still uppermost in his mind.

“Is that young lady to come soon?” asked he.

“She comes on Monday,” replied I; “I am to meet her at dinner.

“You know her?” continued he.

“Yes, I saw a good deal of her at Ballymacrocodile, at the rectory,” replied I. “Indeed, I made her acquaintance before by running up against the carriage; and as my jaunting car was disabled, they took me on in their carriage. It was at the time that Johnny was laid on his back by locked jaw.”

“And what was your first impression of her character?” asked he.

“A very unfavourable one,” I answered; “there was an expression in her countenance that I never thoroughly got over.”

“Ah!” he answered, “I have heard that said before. I wish I had believed it the first time. Belief is the word of command that sets the mind in order of battle! would to heaven I had obeyed it, the fool that I was!”

“My dear fellow,” replied I, “there are things that are beyond our own control, and we are not to blame ourselves for not controlling them any more than we are to blame ourselves if that rock got way upon it, and came thundering down upon our heads.”

“I wonder which would be the greatest calamity,” said he, looking up at the rock,

which certainly did look somewhat threatening, for it completely overhung the little path upon which we were moving.

I myself had no doubt whatever as to which I should have considered the greatest calamity; squashed by a rock is as irretrievable as spilt milk, but then I was not at that time suffering the actual reverse that Ravenswood was, and "he jests at scars that never felt a wound." I thought the huge gaunt pinnacle of grey limestone, that towered so menacingly above us, likely to do much more harm to my head, if so evilly disposed, than was ever likely to accrue to my heart from any specimen of animated marble, however bright and cold. It, however, changed the current of Ravenswood's thoughts altogether.

“There,” said he, “stands one of Nature’s milestones, by which we may measure the course of creation through time, the scale whose inches are centuries. What millions upon millions of our puny lifetimes, and our wretched laws, must have passed away since the time that the base of that rock was living and sentient beings, and the world was in its grub stage.”

“In what stage is it in now, then?” I inquired.

“In the chrysalis,” he answered, “wrapped up in rags, cumbered in clay. The free and beautiful winged creature of life is in the womb of futurity—the Psyche is yet to come—her shadow is already cast before.”

“How?” I asked, too much interested in

my friend's mystic, yet not always baseless speculations.

“The shadow of the All Grasper is even now stealing over the soul of the world,” returned he; “that mystic communion which enables one mind to enter another, and reflect it, shows itself already in dim and fitful revelations; yet not the less truly the dawning of the dayspring gleams on the horizon from the yonder world; yet dawn it is, and day follows dawn very surely, yet not very slowly.”

“Well now, Ravenswood,” said I, for I fully understood what he alluded to, “are you really and truly in your heart a believer in clairvoyance? Do you believe that a person in a particular state can really discern what is going on in another part of the world?”

“Does the fish see the river it returns to with unerring instinct? Do the migratory birds see the country hundreds of miles beyond the horizon to which they steer?” replied he. “On what ground are we to assume that no more senses are ever to be developed in us than the five ordinary ones that we suppose we are always to be confined to? I know to my cost that there are circumstances under which one discovers undreamed of capacity for feeling and suffering—why not for knowing? From the earliest ages there have been dim traditions of men gifted with extraordinary, if not supernatural powers, or cursed with afflictions beyond ordinary human endurance. The Prophet and the Pythoness, the Urim and Thummim of the Hebrew;

the Oracle of the Heathen, what were they but human creatures, or at all events, earthly existences possessed of a sixth sense? We stand in the same relation to them as a man born blind would to us. Why, when everything points to increased and increasing development, are the elements to aid the development to be withheld?"

"Do you believe that the second sight of the Highlander really existed?" I asked.

"With certain reservations I do," he answered; "I do not believe every case I hear of second sight, but I do believe that something of the sort existed, and that it was in some degree analogous with clairvoyance, though neither in one case

nor the other do I believe that we know the exact extent to which it was correct, nor can we protect ourselves against occasional imposture. Nor do I think that occasional or frequent cases of failure invalidate the general position, that something of the sort is in the world, for none of our faculties are always in the same state of working order; that varies with circumstances, with the state of bodily or mental health, and all are alike liable to be weakened by exhaustion; and there is no reason why clairvoyance should be excepted from this rule; though far beyond such mental powers as have been as yet given to the human race, it does not profess to be infallible."

"Its friends say so," observed I.

“Its friends are fools,” answered he, impatiently. “Is anything human infallible,—sight, hearing, memory, judgment? More than human it may be, without professing to omniscience.”

I did not consider myself competent to give an opinion on that sorely vexed question, animal magnetism; nor do I think Ravenswood would have paid much attention to anything I could have said; indeed, he was clearly in a state of excitement, more violent than anything I had ever seen him in before. Formerly, I had always considered him as a clever but impassible man—a curious study of a head, without much heart to study. He seemed, however, to have been exhausted by his own fire on the subject of the MYSTERIOUS GIFT, and walked

on in silence till he reached the castle, which was the object of our walk.

There was not much remaining of what had been Hortington Castle. Part of the keep, whose massive walls had been a match for Time and Cromwell,—both great destroyers, and both great restorers, in their several ways,—girt with some grassy mounds the graves of bygone walls; and a gateway, still perfect, looked down from the rugged spur of a ridge of limestone hills upon the still flourishing village that nestled (and spun cotton) under its shadow. The past and the present were brought fairly face to face, and the past and the present in collision raise thoughts of the future in the human mind, as surely as flint strikes fire from steel.

“I wonder,” said my companion, “which system will work best in the long run,—the small with duties to the great, and the great with responsibilities to the small, or every man for himself, and God for us all—or otherwise, as the case may be?”

“Why, my opinion,” I said, “upon that subject is, that as to the matter of living upon very indifferent food, in a gloomy-vaulted edifice, with a wet ditch round it, it is time to commence that sort of life after one has been convicted of felony.”

“I think you belong to the nineteenth century, Cobb,” replied Ravensworth.

“I hope so,” I replied. “I should be frightened into fits if any other century came to claim me. One might go farther and fare worse.”

“One might fare worse without going farther,” answered he; and indeed I thought so too; for I saw a thunderstorm gathering upon some of the neighbouring hills, which looked very much as if thunderbolts did grow spontaneous about their naked summits; and upon pointing out this alarming demonstration of the Flavian Jupiter to my brother in arms, found, as I had anticipated, that the most transcendental philosophy does not reconcile a man to being drenched to the skin. Epigrams are not umbrellas, nor apophthegms waterproof—and he fully agreed with me that feudality, competition, and communism, might take care of themselves, but that our first duty was to take care of ourselves, and get home as fast as possible.

We started with the best intentions, but speedily found, and even Ravenswood was compelled to admit the humiliating fact, that whatever new faculties may be in the course of development in the human mind, that of running races with thunderstorms is not one of them. First came an oppressive and steamy warmth, and then an ominous chill.

“Here’s iced lightning,” said Ravenswood, quickening his pace. “There’s a cave not very far off; if we can make it, we shall do, in such weather as this. These mountains are like potatoes and ancient families, the best part of them underground. Forward, forward!” We stepped out manfully. The first drops, about the size of acorns, acted as whip and spur, for

it was evident that there was more where they came from, and a smart race for the mouth of the cave ensued between us and the main body of the squall, which race we won, without many seconds to spare.

CHAPTER VI.

REFLECTIONS ON THE CONNEXION BETWEEN CAVERNS
AND JILTINGS—A CHANCE MEETING—BLUE JOHN
AT HOME—THE EXPRESSION OF THE ORDERS OF
ARCHITECTURE—THE FLIRT ON HER TRIAL—
FAITH IN ITS CRADLE—ALARMING DESERTION
—INCREDIBLE FIDELITY OF THE CONFESSOR.

I HAD acquired a holy horror of caves from the short period of premature interment I had undergone in the neighbourhood of Dunmanway, but, in the present instance, the choice between twenty minutes in a thunderstorm and twenty minutes in a

cavern was before me, and I judged the latter the lesser evil of the two.

Scarcely had we entered our chance place of shelter before the squall came hurtling and howling and rattling across the mouth of the cleft in the rock, where, for a time, we dwelt, like the coneys, as if it really meant mischief, which, however, did not concern us. We had the satisfactory feeling of being out of the scrape.

“You missed that, like your mammy’s blessing,” was my address to the Eolus that rode past upon that blast. Ravenswood addressed it more commandingly.

“Mount ye, diabolus, and fly!”

It is a most extraordinary fate, reflected I to myself, that I never get near a cave except when I am concerned in somebody’s

unsuccessful love affairs. I bury myself, alive, when at Dunmanway, because Hawkins finds it in his heart to jilt Ellen O'Reilly; I bolt into this hole in a Derbyshire hill, because Nina Wharton takes it into her head to jilt Ravenswood; what fate is it that turns me into an underground Hymen, with a stalagmite altar, and a tallow candle torch? I wonder shall I ever take to earth on my own account?

The first crash of the storm had now swept by; sounds inside of the cavern became audible; a slight trampling and shuffling behind us attracted both my notice and Ravenswood's at the same moment, and turning round simultaneously, we beheld Edith Waldgrave, who had taken refuge there a few minutes before us.

She was riding with a lady and gentleman whom I had not seen before, whom she presented as Mr. and Miss Hargreaves. Ravenswood cast a hurried glance at the party, but having ascertained that the strange young lady was not Miss Wharton, regained his self-composure, which had been somewhat ruffled at the idea of Nina forming part of our troglodite assembly.

“Happy to see so much good company in one of our Derbyshire caverns,” said Edith, gaily. I hope you admire our country halls of reception, Mr. Ravenswood?”

“Nothing can be more charming,” replied that gentleman, “nor has any cavern ever been seen in so favourable a point of view since the time of the pious Æneas.”

“Is this, then, your first introduction to Blue John?” asked she, laughing heartily, and looking at Miss Hargreaves, who, however, was evidently in a state of blessed ignorance respecting the tragic episode of the deserted Dido.

“I have not hitherto much frequented the court of the cobold king,” replied he. “Air is an element that I find essential to my existence, and I do not find that it flourishes when it gets very far into his dominions.”

“You must admit, however,” continued she, “there is beauty in the spar-roofed halls, with their fretwork of rock icicles, and furniture of stone sofas and tables. Even in this little cavern you may see, a little further on, what will give you a

very good idea of the ceiling of a Gothic cathedral."

"I can just make it out," answered Ravenswood, "and the gloom harmonizes with the character of the order. Gothic," continued he, "is truly the Christian's order; for it is the only order that embodies prayer in stone. The Saracenic, with its interlaced cordage and its horse shoe constantly recurring, *appeals* to the tent and the war steed; the classical pleasure temples of Greece and Rome *invite* their divinities to descend and disport themselves; whilst the ponderous Egyptian but *conceals*, in its mysterious recesses, what ought to be open to all mankind, and the fantastic Chinese but shadows forth the child mind of the nation that plays at praying, its deity a

coral and bells. Gothic alone points upwards.”

I listened to this with some surprise; I thought it very likely that Ravenswood knew a good deal about architecture, but I was not prepared to find that he thought much about prayer. It recalled to my mind that passage of his “that sung, not for an age, but for all time”—

“Sweet are the uses of adversity,
That like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Bears yet a precious jewel in its head;”

and I began to wonder whether a slight touch of the scourge might not do *me* a great deal of good, not that I in the least desired the loving chastisement, but it just occurred that, sometimes what cannot be swallowed in gilded pills, must be taken

in a draught, however black and nauseous. We were all silent now for some time; indeed, I believe that Ravenswood's short analysis of architectural expression had given us a small, but well-chosen assortment of texts, upon one or other of which each of us constructed a little unspoken sermon for home consumption. Miss Hargreaves broke the silence.

“How tiresome this storm is,” said she; “we shall be kept here all day.”

“The country seems tired of it,” answered I; “the oaks moan, and the hazels scream, and the cave groans, and the stream growls, and the corn murmurs.”

“It does not seem better pleased itself,” said Edith, “for it howls, and it chatters, and it weeps. I wonder will it soon pass.”

“It will soon pass,” replied Ravenswood.

“I see the bow in the cloud.”

“What beau? Where?” asked Miss Hargreaves. “Who is it?”

“Not that sort of beau,” replied Edith, laughing heartily; “surely the two we have are enough for moderate women like you and me.”

This remark enlightened both Ravenswood and myself as to the meaning of Miss Hargreaves’ question, which at first we did not understand, as well as threw a trifle of light upon the character of that young lady, and drew our attention to her accordingly. We both approached her horse’s head simultaneously.

“I grieve for the dulness that reigns here,” said I. “If Blue John only had his

floor in better order, I should petition you for a polka to the music of the elements."

"I wish to heaven we had a few more polkas here, to any music, or none at all," replied she, naively. "I never get a dance, and I am *so* fond of dancing."

"And flirting," added Edith, maliciously.

"Oh, no, indeed, I never flirt,—never think of such a thing," replied the other, hastily, as if the imputation had hit a sore spot. "I would not for the world be thought capable of flirting."

"Not with John Boothby?" asked Edith, significantly. (Confound John Boothby, thought I, what business has she to be jealous of him.) "Now, Mary, don't deny it."

"I do deny it," indignantly returned the

accused young lady, reddening and pouting, which I thought rather improved her, and prepared to extend my patronage to her accordingly (in so far as was consistent with my devotion elsewhere); "I do deny it. There is nothing I detest more than the character of a flirt."

"A flirt is the tiger that preys upon hearts, without the excuse of being hungry," said Ravenswood, gloomily, and indeed sternly; "the whited sepulchre, beautiful indeed outwards, but within full of dead men's bones. Milton describes a flirt as—

‘Woman to the waist, and fair,

But ending foul, in many a snaky fold;’

and so, when the first revolution gave the flirts of Paris full swing, the furies of the guillotine flirted with death. I HATE A FLIRT."

“I do not,” answered I, “I rather like them. I do not know how we should get on without them.”

“I do not,” said Edith, boldly, compressing her lips as if she were going to stand up for her sex through thick and thin, like a true-hearted woman—“I do not hate a flirt, because I think a great deal of injustice is very often done to women by simply christening them flirts, and then accusing them of having bad hearts, and of doing all sorts of unfeeling things. What is called a flirt is very often a good-natured, open-hearted girl, who likes seeing everybody happy about her, and does her best to make them so; and who cannot bear seeing any one uncomfortable or unhappy, and tries to please them; and the reward that she gets

from you men is, you say she is a flirt. That is not my idea of reciprocal kindness."

"Certainly," said I, "it does not follow that because girls flirt, they have therefore bad hearts. All one's experience of the world shows that many of the most determined flirts turn out excellent wives; and a good wife is not likely to have a very bad heart."

"No," said Edith, looking pleased, though surprised, at finding me on her side on this question; "the fact is, there are many girls who seem to have likings and penchants for dozens of men, who are only too glad to concentrate them all in one sweet mass of affection and love upon one, when *the one* appears."

"Then, according to your doctrine," said

Ravenswood, with a sneer, "flirtation is merely the overflowing of the heart, from the want of an adequate vessel to receive its outpourings, like milking a cow into a teacup."

"You say that sarcastically," retorted Edith, colouring a little at the implied ridicule; "but it is true, nevertheless; and you men call women flirts, as the wolf declared the lamb that was drinking out of the river lower down than him, muddied the water."

"What is flirtation?" asked I, innocently; "for of course we know nothing about that sort of thing in the army."

"The serpent speaking through the woman's mouth," answered Ravenswood, "as it was in the beginning."

“Saying nothings as if they were somethings,” said Miss Hargreaves.

“Saying somethings that are to go for nothings,” amended her more practical sire.

“Talking privately in public,” suggested I.

“It is the first flicker of the flame that may sink and leave no trace, or may warm into light and love,” said Edith, with that peculiar expression of a calm kindliness, or a kindly calmness on the countenance, that showed that she at least might talk of flirtation without feeling herself amenable to the accusation. “It is the gleam that may be the northern light, or may be the coming sun; and I am happy to see that the sun is come at last to relieve us from our prison cavern. Good bye, do not forget

Monday," continued she, as she rode out, stooping to bestow on me a friendly pressure of the hand, which flashed through me from head to foot. "Good bye, Mr. Ravenswood. I hope you will learn charity towards flirts, and Miss Hargreaves joins in the hope."

"Indeed, I don't," hastily interrupted that young lady, as the party, putting their horses into a canter, speedily vanished from our view.

Ravenswood and I walked home in comparative silence. I always thought, that though his peculiar epigrammatic turn of expressing himself seemed to come so natural to him, still it was followed by a certain exhaustion, as if an amount of headwork had gone into a few words, and a few seconds, that ought to have been spread over

a greater amount of thought and conversation and a larger space of time. I was absorbed in my own reflections. Edith rather puzzled me by her gallant defence of flirtation, yet I did not know whether to be pleased or displeased at it; and her parting with me had been kindness itself. I knew perfectly whether to be pleased or displeased at that.

A new feature, too, and one wholly unexpected, had appeared in Ravenswood's character. I could plainly perceive that in his trouble he had sought for consolation in the Scriptures. I did not think he had found it, for though the words were in his head, they had not as yet touched his heart. Still there they were, and not likely to remain there long without doing their appointed work.

Then I began to consider whether I had during our subterranean conversation said anything that might have given umbrage to Edith, or damaged me in her estimation; but as my memory did not charge me with any very heretical declaration, I finally found my mind at ease, and began to comfort myself with the reflection that I had, upon the whole, done a good day's work, and ought to be contented with it; which, accordingly, like a sensible man, I was.

So was Johnny, when he began gorging himself with the cannibal delicacy he had insisted upon in the morning; and I think even Ravenswood was the better for the opportunity of easing his mind by his diatribe respecting the inconstancy of the sex.

“'Pon my honour, Cobb,” said Johnny,

“that tripe’s delicious. We’ll have it every day for dinner.”

“Indeed, you shall have nothing of the sort, you young Anthropophagus,” said I. “What would Lady Elizabeth say, if she heard you were devouring such an atrocity as that?”

“Oh, that’s all you know about it,” returned the young monster. “Lady Elizabeth says it’s the most wholesome thing in the world; and whenever Edith is delicate, she gives her nothing else to eat.”

I suppose no one will dispute the ardency of a passion that not only survived, but burned the brighter, after such a disclosure as this.

CHAPTER VII.

PUSS AT HER PLAY—HOW TO DRESS A YOUNG LADY
—THE BETTING ON THE MOUSE—CHARITY A LA
BERGAMOT—FEUDALITY AND WESTRIDINGISM—
ROYAL ROAD TO RICHES—MOUSE WINNING IN A
CANTER—DAWNING OF HOPE—PUSS IN PER-
PLEXITY.

MONDAY came, and with it its expected banquet, and my first meeting with the Whartons. Nina received me with the greatest cordiality, that is to say, with a volley of abuse, which I took as the highest compliment she could pay me, as in truth it was. It was "pretty Fanny's way."

Mr. Wharton in his way was not less cordial.

“ I hope,” said he, “ that now we shall see more of one another, now that you have no wild Irishmen to shoot, and no idea of being hanged yourself.”

“ Certainly,” returned I; “ the occasion is more favourable, especially—”

“ As you yourself are less occupied,” interrupted Nina, significantly; “ that makes all the difference in the world.”

I did not perceive exactly what the young lady meant by this inuendo; and dinner being announced, we took our places at the table, to all appearance very socially, but really in order of battle; for Johnny was, at least at starting, ludicrously on his guard, Nina feeling her way, and watching

him like a cat; Edith, jealously scanning every move of that enterprising young lady, and I maintaining a superintendence of the whole party, equally vigilant and impartial. I cannot say that I much like such gladiatorial repasts. I agree with a great authority, that "better is a dinner of herbs where peace is, than a stalled ox and contention therewith." Nevertheless, even a rat driven into a corner makes a dangerous fight. I recollect once, in Germany, being vanquished by a field mouse, in an attempt to capture him, and my friend, who was walking with me at the time, narrating the circumstances so ably, that in the course of the evening I was congratulated upon my escape from the young bear that had attacked me in the woods.

However, if one must fight one must; if one must watch one must. I had rather eat, drink, and be merry; but, on this occasion, it was worth my while to keep a bright look out, and I did so. Nina's attack was made with very sufficient skill. She had felt Johnny's mouth, and, finding that he would not stand the curb, which it would have suited her best to apply, changed her hand, and acted upon the principles of the humane costermonger, who sings—

“If I had a donkey wot wouldn't go,
D'ye think I'd wollop him, no! no!! no!!!
I'd give him carrots, and give him beans,
And try all sorts of gentle means.”

Nina's carrots and beans were consulting Johnny, and then paying great deference to his opinion, looking well into his eyes, making him promise to write some of “that

darling poetry of his in her album" (which she always carried about with her as a sort of rising-poet-trap); which bait poor Johnny swallowed with as much eagerness, and as much sense as a shark does a bit of red cloth, believing that it was the dawning of his poet glory.

She was attired with great skill and effect, appearing in a dress of *rose de chine glacée*, over a slip *à la watersuchet, soufflée à la fleur d'orange*, and trimmed with *rosettes aux navets*; her sleeves *en gigot piquée à l'oseille*, and looped *à la jardinière*; and her head dressed *à la Chambord*, with a wreath of perriwinkles, and a *Seigné à la Maintenon*; at least, that was the description Edith gave me of her dress, and she never deceived me. Armed she was, indeed, for conquest, from head to heel; for

her shoes, which were made of something that I did not know the name of, and of a colour that I could not describe, excepting that it was a queer sort of grey, with little green spots, were, as I was informed by the same authority, *pieds d'agneau à la poulette*. I ventured to make a complimentary allusion to her fairy feet to Nina—a delicate audacity which she soon forgave, but never forgot.

She was very careful of her father, treated Lady Elizabeth with a mixture of deference to herself and gratitude for her hospitality, which was delightful to behold, and I should imagine still more so to receive, and scattered enough of the light of her countenance over the eyes of Mr. and Miss Hargreaves to blind them effectually.

In short, she played what would have been a very pretty, and probably successful game, but that every move was watched all the time by two pair of very sharp, and not very friendly eyes. Yet, as far as skill was concerned in that game, she got the better of us both; and a time was not very far distant when I cursed the day that ever brought me into collision with Nina Wharton.

“I suppose you are to receive some great reward,” said she to Johnny, “for your battle with those horrid Irish? Shall you be made a major, or a knight, or what?”

“We have been forgiven for it,” replied Johnny, “and that, I imagine, is as much as we shall ever get. I got a couple of months’ leave, though, and that’s something.”

“You never came to see us,” said she, reproachfully.

“No; I got it to go home,” was the matter-of-fact reply.

“Ah! I do not wonder at your being eager to get home,” said the young lady, “you have such a charming home, so much to attract you, and so many pursuits. I should never, never make up my mind to leave such a home.”

“Certainly,” said Lady Elizabeth, with a stately humility, “we have little to complain of here; ours is as happy a home as well may be, and our position is every thing that can be desired; for we feel its responsibilities, and yet can see under our own eyes that its duties are discharged as carefully as well may be.”

“And as advantageously as well may be to those dependent upon your ladyship,” rejoined Mr. Hargreaves. “It is pleasing to see rich and poor united by the common tie of a common sympathy.”

“Oh, yes! it must be delightful,” said Nina, “to go about doing good to the poor, and teaching their children to read and write, and how to dress themselves, and good manners, and to see all the people pulling off their hats and curtsying as you pass; and then to have schools and give prizes, it must be a delightful sensation.”

“There is wide difference between the sense of the discharge of duty, and the theatrical sensation of love of applause,” said Mr. Hargreaves, gravely (“Old Huncks!” ejaculated Nina, aside. I must say it rather

struck me as breaking a butterfly upon the wheel); "as wide as the difference between our intellect which is spiritual, and our passions which are material."

"I suppose there is no harm in liking having Sunday-schools?" said Nina, pettishly.

"There is no harm in liking having Sunday-schools," replied Mr. Hargreaves; "there is good comes out of evil; without the love of applause, many things which are done would be left undone; but man loves consequence, and, as Pope truly says—

'What his hard heart denies,
His charitable vanity supplies.'

"I don't see the vanity about charity children," said Nina. "I never saw a pretty charity child in my lifetime. Charity

may be a beautiful virtue, but she has an uncommonly ugly family."

"That does not quite put those poor orphans out of the pale of human kindness," said Mr. Hargreaves.

"No; but it makes it a much greater sacrifice being kind to them," said Nina. "I'm sure it almost makes one sick to look at their dirty little faces. Uch!"

Mr. Hargreaves looked very grave and solemn, and shocked and horrified, and I dare say thought Nina a young vulture or two-legged hyæna. He turned to Lady Elizabeth, and made some sententious remarks about the duties of landed proprietors towards the poor on their estates, which called up Mr. Wharton, who lamented the rapidity with which the land was changing hands.

“I do not think that it changes hands half fast enough,” said Mr. Hargreaves. “The absurd difficulties about settlements, and tithes, and incumbrances, the leaven of the old feudality, ought to be swept away. The incubus that weighs down the productive power, is to be found in the prejudices and the poverty of its present nominal owners, and should be tolerated no longer in a great civilized, commercial, and advancing nation like this.”

There spoke Manchester, thought I, in language cribbed, without acknowledgment, from New York.

“I do not think it desirable that the change, which I admit must come, should take place too quickly,” said Mr. Wharton, “and for this reason—that for centuries

property in land has been held and acknowledged by its owners to imply certain responsibilities towards inferiors; whereas commercial and funded property has always been held irresponsible; and I firmly believe that the rapid growth, of late years, of the enormous mass of *irresponsible* riches that now exists, has done much towards vitiating the heart of the nation."

"Perhaps so," interrupted Mr. Hargreaves; "but a better feeling on that subject is appearing: look at the care the mill-owners take of their hands; look at the iron masters keeping their furnaces in blast at a loss; look at the railways building churches and schools. The moneyed class is beginning to learn that riches have their duties as well as their rights."

“Very true,” replied Mr. Wharton; “the moneyed class is beginning to learn that great and good lesson, but only beginning, and I should like it to complete it before it gets possession of the land. I do not say that those whose incumbrances prevent them doing their duty towards their property should be allowed to retain it to the injury of their tenantry; but I wish to see the whole body connected with agriculture a united body, bound together by ties less tangible, but not less stringent, than Smithfield bargains; not to see them as haggler and huxter, but as landlord and tenant. And sure am I of this, that free-trade principles once introduced into the system of the occupation of land will speedily have no tenantry at all.”

“Well, I do not see the necessity of a tenantry; after all, tenant farmers are little else but middlemen,” said Mr. Hargreaves. “If I buy an estate of a couple of thousand acres, with ten or fifteen substantial tenants on it, it is clear that I, the owner, have to support ten or fifteen substantial families in ease, and comfort, and perpetual bungling into the bargain, merely to superintend the cultivation of the land,—that is to say, to do what a sharp Scotch steward would do for a couple of hundred a-year; it would be only a couple of miles each way.”

“That is precisely what I dread,” answered Mr. Wharton; “instead of a rural gentry full of local attachments, and influential over an independent yeomanry,

which latter class can hardly now be found other than in the ranks of the tenant farmers, you would substitute capitalist proprietors and agricultural serfs, working under a bureaucratic system of cultivation, hopeless of bettering themselves, for the want of steps in the ladder of life, and ever ready for insurrection. The land of tillers, farmers, and lords, alike bound together by common interest, mutual dependance, and the traditions thereto belonging, is a rock on which the edifice of the state stands secure, whatever storms assail it; dissolve those ties, make it matter of pure merchandise, and it crumbles into sand; the cohesion is gone.

A terrific yawn from Nina—an act of disrespect towards her father's eloquence,

which seemed to horrify Lady Elizabeth—greeted the termination of Mr. Wharton's remarks, which I thought not only very sensible, but very interesting, and wished most sincerely that he (and, indeed, any one else, should this meet the eye of any seeker of truth) would give me a couple of thousand acres to try his system on, and another couple to try Mr. Hargreaves'. I would promise the utmost fairness in the experiment, and the most impartial fidelity in the report, which I should have no objection to making half-yearly, or at any other period that might be agreeable.

“Now don't be long,” said Nina to Johnny, as the ladies left the room; “don't stay drinking that abominable wine all the evening. I want to have a walk and a

talk with you;" an overture to which Johnny, half pleased, half suspicious, answered with a grim benignity that quite upset the small stock of gravity I carried about with me. Nina gave me a look when I laughed, not exactly daggers, but steel traps and spring-guns; I cannot say that I liked it much.

A long conversation about political economy, free-trade, and protection, and the projects of Peel, ensued between the two elder gentlemen, of which all that I can remember is, that Mr. Wharton stoutly maintained that it was impossible to add to the national wealth, according to the system of that eminent and many-sided statesman, by impoverishing every individual in the nation; whereas, the champion

of free-trade doggedly asserted that it was the only road to riches. I had a hazy idea on my mind, that a rate of duty on imports might be discovered or revealed that would combine a rational protection, somewhat equivalent to the burdens imposed by the debt, with a considerable revenue, which would enable our rulers to dispense with taxes that internally clog the industry and production of the country; but, as I always get puzzled with quoting figures, after the thirtieth or fortieth hundred thousand, or million, or whatever figure it may be that one plays at statistical tennis with, I held my tongue, and eat peaches. Johnny exhibited the most undeniable marks of fidgetiness, and I have no doubt thought that we had been several hours at table,

when, in about twenty minutes, the claret having passed untouched, and the post-scriptal glass of sherry having signalized the cessation of thirst, we adjourned,—or rather paired off, for the party of eight was forthwith quartered into four twos.

Nina carried off Johnny as a cat carries off a mouse, and with a view of extracting enjoyment for herself from him by a somewhat similar process. Lady Elizabeth was enlightening Miss Hargreaves with stories of the court of George the Fourth and Sarah the queen, to which that young lady, whose glimpses at high life were necessarily through a telescope of considerable power, listened with a reverential ecstasy or an ecstatic reverence, I am not quite sure which. Messrs. Wharton and

Hargreaves were deep in the metallic mystery of currency—so deep, indeed, that I doubt whether either of them saw his way out, though they certainly had not got to the bottom of it, and it was the first opportunity I had of thanking Edith for some flowers she had sent me the day before by Johnny. I think it took me about an hour and a half to express my gratitude properly, but I hope, and indeed believe, that she was satisfied with it.

Johnny never could be persuaded to disclose, either to Edith or me, what Nina and he talked about, or what she said to him, but whatever it was, I could easily perceive that she was making nothing of him; for as, strolling about the pleasure-ground, we occasionally encountered one another, I

could see by the heightened colour, and by the increasing viciousness with which she tore flower after flower into bits, that affairs were not progressing to her mind.

It so happened, that on one of those occasions she caught Edith and me exchanging a glance of intelligence, which discovery I have no doubt let her into the whole secret of her indifferent success with Johnny, for she set her lips, glanced for a moment at me with a most unfeminine expression, and dashed the flower she was pulling to pieces angrily to the ground.

I shall not, for reasons of my own, detail the conversation that passed between Edith and me that evening. I do not say that it was of a very important, still less conclusive character. I do not think that I once

used the word love, nor am I aware that she ever once blushed during the half-hour that we rambled about the pleasure-grounds previous to being summoned to tea, or the hour we employed at that meal; but this I will say, that I never before felt so hopeful or so happy as I did that evening. It seemed as if the dawning of a brighter, purer career, was stealing through the dimness of my then life. Life itself assumed a promise and a value that I had not previously attributed to it. I should have had an invincible repugnance to being hanged that evening, yet when we did assemble round the tea-table we were such bad company that Lady Elizabeth positively reproached us with our dullness, and not without justice.

Nina was as cross as a cat, and kept snapping at her father, who treated it with his customary coolness, which did not, however, prevent Lady Elizabeth being much scandalized. Johnny was put out; the two elder gentlemen had talked themselves dry (which was fortunate); Miss Hargreaves had, I believe, just made the discovery that some of the gentlemen ought to have paid her some attention; Edith was grave and thoughtful, and I do not think that I was perfectly *compos mentis*, though I had, at all events, no disposition to talk. All that was said added to our perplexities.

“Edith,” said Johnny, suddenly, across the table, “do you know what Ravenswood says about——”

“Who?” interrupted Nina, colouring.

“Ravenswood, of our Regiment; you know him, don't you?” answered Johnny, in perfect simplicity, for he was utterly ignorant of the affair between Ravenswood and Nina, as indeed was everybody else in the room excepting the young lady and myself.

“No—that is, yes, I believe I do,” replied she, getting confused. “Where is he? He is not here, is he?”

“Yes, he is at Carlton,” replied Johnny; “some one must stay and look after the barracks; but I dare say we shall get him to dine here in a day or two.”

Nina seemed on the point of breaking out into a deprecation of this addition to the family party, but thought better of it.

She bit her lips, changed colour more than once, and then, appearing to have recovered her composure in a marvellously short space of time, challenged me to a game of chess.

CHAPTER VIII.

Chess was not the only game that Nina played at when we sat ourselves down to the little chequered table that was supposed to be about to occupy our exclusive attention that evening, but at the other game she played to a disadvantage, for she did not know that I had already seen the cards. She was prompt in action, I must say, for her; she opened her fire directly.

"So Mr. Ravenswood is at Carlton," said

CHAPTER VIII.

CHECK-MATE—FORWARD!—FORWARD!—JOHNNY UN-
PUMPABLE—TONGUE *v.* HAND—A PALE DREAM.

CHESS was not the only game that Nina played at when we sat ourselves down to the little chequered table that was supposed to be about to occupy our exclusive attention that evening, but at the other game she played to a disadvantage, for she did not know that I had already seen the cards. She was prompt in action, I must say that for her ; she opened her fire directly.

“ So Mr. Ravenswood is at Carlton,” said

she, with a glance at me half fearful, half shy; "what an oddity he is; is he a great friend of yours? does he still wear his hair so long? has he got right in his liver? you know he had a dreadful liver complaint; does he still talk like a French novel? is he great friends here?"

Presuming, from the rapidity with which she hurried question upon question, that she cared very little about the answers, I merely answered the last.

"He comes here occasionally," said I, "but I do not know that he is particularly intimate."

"Oh, not very," said she, as if that was rather a relief to her mind; "what an odd person he is."

"Yes," said I.

“He’s not a bosom friend of yours,” continued she, “is he?”

“He and I are very good friends,” replied I; “I like him very well, and I believe he likes me; but as to bosom friends, both he and I go our own way, and such men do not make bosom friends.”

“No, you horrible, unsympathizing, unconfiding creatures,” answered the young lady, apparently rather more at her ease; “you men never do. How very odd he is.”

“Very,” answered I; and Nina began to bite her lips. She evidently wanted me to ask how he was odd, so that she might have been enabled to tell me her own story about her affair with him; for I take it for granted, that she was quite sharp enough

to see that something about it was sure to transpire soon, and also to see the advantage of having her story in possession of the ground. I, on the other hand, was curious to see what her next move would be if I gave her no assistance in introducing the subject. She dropped it for a moment, began to talk about chess, got quite naturally from the mimic war at chess to real battles, from battles, with a charming simplicity, to soldiers, from soldiers, with a sweet artlessness, to barracks, from barracks in general, with a ready facility, to those of Carlton in particular, thence, with an angelic subtleness, to those who dwelt in that warlike residence, and back again to Ravenswood. "What an oddity he is."

“Quite an original,” was my answer.

“Do you know,” said she, despairing, I suppose, of making anything of such an obdurate monster as me, “he thought proper during the summer to fancy himself in love with me.”

“No, really,” answered I; “what put that into his head?”

“Well, I do not know,” returned the young lady with a toss of the head, as much as to say—no such wonder that he should; “I’m sure I gave him no encouragement; quite the contrary; if I had, I should have had a scene, no doubt, and I cannot bear scenes; besides which, I did not think it right to encourage him; there is nothing that I detest like a flirtation; I would not be called a flirt for the world.”

“I should think there could be no danger of that,” I answered, with a wonderful gravity.

“No,” answered she; “I could not bear to be thought one. But he was so absurd. I should not wonder, even now, if he set some story about me going, now that he and I are so near one another. However, you will not believe him if he does, will you?”

“Check-mate!” was my answer.

“You tiresome creature, it isn’t check-mate.”

“Satisfy yourself,” replied I; and after a minute or two she was compelled to confess herself defeated. She flattered herself, however, that she had been victorious at a game of more importance; and indeed, had

I not been already in possession of Ravenswood's version, which I believed then, and do still, she would certainly have succeeded in making me believe hers. As it was, the only effect produced on my mind by the conversation we had over the chessmen was the establishment of a general and chronic disbelief of everything she said; I had suspected her before, and I now felt my suspicions fully confirmed.

Scarcely had we risen from the chess-table than she returned to her attack upon Johnny, who received all her blandishments like a Newfoundland dog just come out of the water; and I caught her eye fixed upon me, as if she connected me in some manner with his unimpressibility. Edith had thought it right to devote herself to the amusement

of the Hargreaves, and I was not sorry when the hour of our departure arrived. Whilst they were packing up Johnny's chest, so as to make it weather tight against the night air, I had another short but sweet conversation with Edith; and we parted, as I supposed, the best friends in the world.

"Well, Johnny," said I, when we made a start at last, "what was that young lady saying to you all the time?"

"Oh! I dare say," replied that mysterious youth, ungratefully turning my own weapons against myself, "you expect me to tell you, do you, and you always telling me that I ought never to repeat conversations?"

"Very true," said I; "but you should always confide implicitly in your captain;

that's the canon law, cannon law, my boy! fortieth military article."

"Don't you wish you may get it?" answered the young cockatrice; and as I was compelled to admit to myself that he was right, I abstained from pressing him any more on the subject. And, indeed, I had thoughts of my own to occupy me. With respect to Johnny my mind was at ease. I saw that he was thoroughly awake to Nina's character, and that now he might be trusted to take care of himself. On the subject of the influence that that young lady might have upon my own future prospects I was not quite so easy. That glance which I had encountered seemed to me to embody much of "the evil eye," more than I liked. However, I thought "faint

heart," &c. &c.; and then there came a dream of a brighter glow and a rosier hue than those that used to haunt my waking hours, and which abundantly occupied me until I reached Carlton.

Here I found my goblin page, as usual, on the look out for me, with what I suppose he he would have termed a clane pleete of letters.

"There's one from the captain, sir," said he, "and here's one from Ballymacrocodile. I know that place well; it's in the coun Tiprare."

"Upon my word, Doddy," replied I, "if I had ever had any doubt as to the county that had the honour of rearing such a brilliant specimen of humanity as yourself, I should have it solved now, for none but

Milesian organs could have articulated the word Tipperary in one syllable."

"That's throe, sir," answered my Leporello.

The first letter I opened was one marked "On Her Majesty's service," claiming thereby that precedence due to public matters. I found it was an order for Ravenswood and myself to proceed to Derby, to sit upon a court-martial which was to be held there the day but one after this, Monday. The second was from Hawkins.

"Dunmanway.

"DEAR COBB,

"Many thanks for your pithy note; it is like what a great authority says a general action ought to be,—short, sharp, and decisive; and, indeed, comprises one of

those instructions that fulfil themselves, for I have ceased to doubt. I have, however, one question more to submit to your judgment, it is the last of the series—Do you recommend that I should make the communication, which I am about to make to Ellen, in person or in writing? I incline to the latter, but should be glad to have the benefit of your opinion.

“Yours sincerely,

“JAMES HAWKINS.”

The next letter was from Mrs. O'Reilly—

“DEAR CAPTAIN COBB,

“Though I have but little to say, I know from the kind interest you have always taken in our family that you will be glad to hear from us. Your little pet, Alice, is

flourishing, but often asks for you, and when you will come back. She desires her very, very best love to you, and hopes you are well, and will take care of your health which, she says, you neglect, and that that is very naughty. Ellen, I regret to say, is far from well. Her spirits have completely failed her, and I am really getting somewhat alarmed about her. I have been strongly recommended to take her to Buxton, where, I am told, that, in addition to the sanative quality of the waters, there is a fine bracing air, likely to prove very restorative. I think *change of scene* very desirable for her. Perhaps, as you are in the neighbourhood, you can give us some information on the subject. We have made no friends in the new regiment, who do not by

any means make themselves as popular here as your brother officers. We were so pleased to hear from our young friend, Johnny. It is gratifying to find that the maxim, 'out of sight out of mind,' does not always apply. Nanny was quite melancholy when he went away, but consoles herself with the idea that he will soon come back. If you can spare time, pray let me hear from you, and believe me,

“ My dear Captain Cobb,

“ Ever yours most sincerely,

“ FLORENCE O'REILLY.

“ P.S.—Mr. O'Reilly, who is just come in from a round of his parish, desires me to remember him kindly to you, and to beg your opinion as to what were the dimensions of the ark, as compared with shipping of the present day. F. O'R.”

“I think my friend Ellen will speedily reconcile herself to the air of Ballymac-crocodile,” was my soliloquy, as I folded up the letter. “Doddý,” said I, “I shall be going into head-quarters for a day or two to-morrow, and I shall take you with me; so mind you have everything ready and smart, and now be off to bed with you.”

“I’ll have everything as nate as a new pin. Good night, yer honner!” replied my faithful henchman, as he vanished from my sight. I had been for some time aware, from the perfume of a cigar that floated upon the ambient air, that somebody was smoking in the neighbourhood, who I knew could not well be anybody but Ravenswood, and accordingly that gentleman soon afterwards approached me.

“Well, how did your dinner go off?”

asked he. "How was Miss Wharton looking?"

"Much as usual," I replied. "She knows that you are here."

"How does she know that?" asked he, hastily.

"Johnny mentioned your name."

"And what did she say?"

"Nothing at the moment, I replied; "but afterwards, under pretence of playing chess, she told me a long story, evidently the one she wishes to be believed herself, saying that you had fancied yourself in love with her, but that she had never given you the slightest encouragement."

"God forgive her for saying so," said he, clasping his hands in great agitation.

"I suppose," said I, "you will not go to Beauchamp while she is there?"

“Good heaven—no!” answered the poor fellow; “I’d rather go to the lowest pit of hell than go there whilst she is there; sooner than see her and hear the sound of her voice I’d rather dig my own grave, and have the earth shovelled in over me alive.”

A cold shudder seemed to run over him; his knees were for a moment unsteady, and I was exceedingly alarmed, for I was afraid that he was about to experience a renewal of his attack. However, by a strong effort, he recovered himself.

“Don’t think me weak,” said he, with a melancholy smile; “strength comes and goes, and none can control it. Strange it is that feelings, the best that our nature is capable of, should imply sufferings the

deepest that our nature can support. Love may point to heaven with its positive pole, but its negative points to a widely different region."

I do not know why it was that this observation grated very harshly on my ear, and I felt once more that dim presentiment of coming evil, that sent a chill into my heart, yet I knew not why.

"By-the-bye," said I, "you are for a court-martial at Derby on Wednesday; I shall drive over in my car, in the course of to-morrow, and I can take you."

"Thank you," said he; "I am not sorry to get away, even for a day or two. Do you know what the court is about, or why we are sent for? Have not they got people enough there?"

“It is a general court-martial,” I answered; “and I suppose they have not enough for that and the duties of the place besides.”

“I am very glad it has happened,” repeated he. He then walked backwards and forwards two or three times.

“I have not a chance of sleeping,” remarked he, and lit another cigar. “Cobb,” asked he at last, “do you believe in dreams?”

“No,” replied I, “of course I do not.”

“Do you believe that a vision may appear to one in sleep?”

“I don’t know what may happen, or may not,” I answered; “but I do not believe that anything of the sort has happened to you during the last week, if that is what you are driving at.”

“But it has occurred already, and may happen again,” urged he; “you will not deny that.”

“The deluge did happen, and may occur again,” replied I, Mr. O’Reilly’s question about the tonnage of the ark running in my head; “but I do not believe that it is going to do so. There were prophets, but they are rubbed out now. If you are inclined to put faith in a dream, tell me what is a dream?”

“A dream is the shadow of the mind floating over the brain,—the dim light that shines on us during the eclipse of the soul,—the only picture the human spirit embodies untinged with self-interest.”

“A dream, my dear fellow,” retorted I, “is nothing more than imagination in a

night shirt, and is no more to be trusted than any other illusion. You may trust the rule of three, but not the rule of contraries."

Ravenswood was evidently unsatisfied; he walked backwards and forwards moodily, and then returned to the old subject, which, poor fellow, evidently lay very near his heart, and seemed but an indifferent neighbour.

"Did Miss Wharton speak of me," asked he, "in any friendly manner, or seem to show any interest in me?"

"I cannot honestly say that she did," I replied; "all her attention seemed to be directed to exculpating herself."

"Did she know that I was here," he asked, "before she came?"

“No; she learned your presence from a chance observation of Johnny’s.”

“I wonder would she have come if she had,” muttered he to himself; “yet I do not suppose that would have made any difference to her; she can have no feelings; from that torment she is free.”

“She is only to stay a fortnight,” I remarked; “and once you get to Derby, you might get leave from the colonel to stay away yourself. I can get on very well with Johnny, for there is literally no work to do here at all.”

“No,” replied he, firmly, “I shall hold my ground. My conscience does not reproach me, though I confess that the two days at Derby will be a relief to me. Do you remember the other day when I was brought home insensible?”

“Of course I do,” I replied.

“Well,” said he, “that day I was a good deal affected by the mention of Nina’s name, and I went out, thinking that a solitary walk would be a relief to me, and I strolled over to Hawkdale, and then I sat down upon a stone; and whether I fell asleep or not,—whether I dreamed a dream or saw a vision,—I cannot say; but as plainly as I see you now, I saw a figure of my sister Millicent, who has been in her grave these six years, pass slowly before me, and hold up her finger, as if warning me of some great impending danger. I cannot say what it was; she said nothing. I could not for the life of me speak. The figure seemed to float solemnly past, and then melt away; and it seemed as if consciousness was melt-

ing away in me at the same time. I recollect nothing more till I found myself at home."

I now recollected Ravenswood's first question when his consciousness returned—"Is she gone?" and this story of his accounted for the pertinacity with which he had stuck to the subject of dreams. I always knew that he had a slight dash of superstition in his character, and he evidently attached much weight to this, which seemed to me to be either an ordinary dream, or at the most an illusion not unnatural in the case of a man seized with a fit. Indeed, I knew that in cases of epilepsy something of the sort does immediately precede the fit. The patient fancies he is going to be run over, or fall from a precipice; and an appa-

rition from the grave was not an unnatural form to take for the nameless terror that heralds those visitations. On the other hand, the theory of its being really a vision was not quite repugnant to my mind; for, as I believe we all are when highly excited and morbidly anxious, I was at that moment somewhat inclined to be superstitious myself.

CHAPTER IX.

SOUND THE ADVANCE——THE VOICE OF CAUTION——
 DODDY A LA SUPREME——FIZZES OF THE HEART
 ——THE CONFESSOR AS DANTE——RAVENSWOOD AS
 ZIMMERMAN——DEODATUS AS PETRARCH——THE
 LAW'S DELAY.

PREVIOUS to starting for Derby the next morning I had to answer the letters I had received; my answer to Hawkins was short, though not so laconic as my former one. It ran thus, and I recommend it to the careful study of ingenuous youth, male and modest.

“ DEAR HAWKINS,

“In your dealings with the fair and gentle sex, never, if the very hair was dropping off your head for terror, let a woman let you see that you are afraid of her. It invariably throws them into a state of homicidal mania, and is ruinous, likewise spooney, which is worse. If you write, it will be very likely attributed to something of the sort; besides, ‘litera scripta manet;’ therefore, beware of the pen. Go in person, and prosper; or, as our sporting friend would say, go in and win.

“ Yours sincerely,

“ SOMERSET CAVENDISH COBB.

“ P.S.—

‘If when ’twere done, ’twere well, then ’twere well done,

That ’twere done quickly.’”—SHAKSPEARE!

The other to Mrs. O'Reilly I shall also give, for the benefit of those desirous of cultivating the art of polite letter writing.

“ MY DEAR MRS. O'REILLY,

“ I am truly sorry to hear that Miss O'Reilly's health is not what her friends could desire. Buxton is justly celebrated for the sanative power of its water and the purity of its air, but I think it would be not advisable to go there *immediately*; *in another fortnight* the crowd will be much diminished, and the weather more settled. I shall have great pleasure in making what inquiries you may require made, and shall write again in a few days. Give my love to Alice, and tell her I shall come and see her

whenever I can, and bring Johnny with me if possible. That young gentleman is in high health and spirits, but by no means inclined to forget his friends at the rectory, I assure you. With respect to Mr. O'Reilly's question about the ark, if my calculation is correct, she must have measured, presuming her to have been merely what the name imports, a huge floating chest, about 43,000 tons, which would have given her the capacity of about 20 sail of the line. If she was ship-built, she would measure from 25,000 to 30,000 tons, which I see no reason to suppose she was; but in either case would be of enormous size, and able to carry an incredible quantity of animals and stores. I hope to hear from

you soon again, and trust you will write in better spirits.

“ Believe me, my dear Mrs. O’Reilly,

“ Ever yours faithfully,

“ SOMERSET CAVENDISH COBB.”

Having dispatched these missives, and given Johnny a great deal of good advice as to how he should comport himself during our absence in his arduous office of commanding the troops for the first time—advice which he seemed to consider superfluous, Ravenswood and I, attended by Doddy, started for Derby.

That small youth was uncommonly smart I think the maids at Beauchamp made a sort of live doll and animated lay figure of him. He had a remarkably brilliant silk hand-

kerchief which *I* never gave him; a bouquet which I should rather have liked myself; a pair of those worsted manacles, wherewith young ladies occasionally handcuff favoured young gentlemen, round his wrist; and a coral shirt pin representing a heart and arrow. Ravenswood was highly amused at his dandified appearance.

“Doddy,” said he, “you’ll play the deuce with the girls in Derby; we’ll have them all running after you to Carlton.”

“Faith, I wouldn’t demean myself with the townsfolk, sir,” replied Doddy; “it’s the county families I’ve live with; you wouldn’t have me consort wid them flaghoppers in Derby?”

“Don’t be rash, Doddy,” said I; “who knows who you mayn’t lose your heart to?”

“Sorrow fear of that, sir,” said the ingenuous youth, with a sketch of a blush; “I don’t go chucking my heart in every woman’s face I meet.”

“It ought to be very light, very empty, and very elastic, to do so,” said Ravenswood to me, with a melancholy smile; “yet there are those that can.”

“I don’t know that,” I answered; “it isn’t an entire heart, not a true flame; it is like a box of lucifer matches—you may have fifty little blazes, each of small effect, less value, and no endurance.”

“You may well call that sort of thing Lucifer,” answered my companion, “for it is the invention of the devil.”

“Well, I do not know,” answered I; “but I have seen the hand of the ‘chief of the

‘ligne-cadette’ of the angelic hierarchy in some of those affairs.”

“How do you know his hand?” asked Ravenswood.

“By the mark it leaves,” I replied.

“The touch burns.”

“What a barren, dreary moor we are entering on,” remarked Ravenswood. “Has waste land any effect upon you, Cobb?”

“I do not call this waste land,” answered I; “it is too full of fences and roads to give one the feeling of solitude, but I have felt a strange sensation in some parts of Connemara, when I have stood upon a hill, and looked round, and seen no single man, or living animal, or house, or road, or fence. I have then felt that sort of exhilaration that I am told people feel in deserts.”

“The effect upon me is always depressing,” said Ravenswood. “In solitude the mind, without sympathy to support or object to excite, runs cold. The elements of inflation fail us, and the bubble collapses.”

“I differ with you there,” said I; “in my mind, in complete solitude, the chains that bind us to earth drop, and the spirit ascends.”

“Is that your idea?” said he, smiling. “I should have supposed that yours was more like Byron’s—

“By solitude I mean a sultan’s, not
A hermit’s, with a harem for a grot.”

“Byron’s, if you like,” I replied, “but not that passage.

“Oh, that the desert were my dwelling place,
With one fair spirit for my minister,
So I might all forget the human race,
And, hating no one, love but only her.”

“Och! that the dacerd wor me dwelling place,” I heard, in a suppressed voice, behind me, as if reciting the lines with a view of fixing them on the memory for future use, “with won pair sperrits for me minister (that’s Scotch for a priest), so I might not forget the hurdle race, and batin’ no one.”

Here my friend Doddy’s study of the sentimental was cut short by a roar of laughter from Ravenswood.

“By the virtue of your oath, Doddy,” said he, “did you ever write poetry yourself?”

“ Ah! now, sir,” replied the youth, shyly, “ is it the likes of me writin’ pothry; it’s pokin’ fun at me you are.”

“ I see it in your eye,” said Ravenswood, with an awful solemnity, which only elicited a wink from Doddy, who then rubbed his eyes, as if to rub out the evidence against him. “ Speak the truth and shame the devil—did you ever write poetry?”

“ ‘Faith, I never did, sir,” replied Leporello, with a sudden readiness which suggested to me that possibly Doddy’s accomplishments might not extend very far in the direction of pen and ink.

“ Did you ever compose?” asked I.

“ What’s composin,’ sir?” inquired that op-booted innocence.

“ Did you ever make verses?” repeated I.

“Sure it isn’t a manufacture, sir,” returned the votary of the Muses, who was feeling himself hard pressed.

“Come, recite some of your own verses immediately, if not sooner, or I’ll wring your neck,” said I; and clearing his throat, and muttering something about “needs must when the divil dh rives,” which I suppose was intended as a personal compliment to me, the youth recited the following verses, which I have no doubt had already been duly applauded, and I hope appreciated, in the housekeeper’s room at Beauchamp Hall:—

I.

“Would I had a power of song,
Blazin’ with Apollo’s fire,
Nought I’d do the whole day long,
But sing the eyes of Miss Maria.

II.

“Would I were as grand and tall
As Jupiter, or rather higher,
I'd look at no one else at all,
But pay me coort to Miss Maria.

III.

“Were I a gentleman as rich
In guineas as the Bank of Ire-
land, I'd just behave as sich,
And lay them out for Miss Maria.

IV.

“Would I were as big and sthrong,
As that mighty man, Goliah,
Nought I'd do the whole day long
But thrash the foes of Miss Maria.”

“Very good, Doddy,” I answered; “if that does not melt Miss Maria's heart, she must be a she-wolf with a liver complaint. Is that all of it?”

“Yes, yer honour.”

“Well, we’ll let you off the rest in that case.”

“Doddy, I have a better opinion of you for these verses,” said Ravenswood; “I daresay you will thrash Miss Maria’s enemies.”

“By dad! I would, sir, or her friends either, if she wished it,” was the liberal answer.

“I suspect Doddy’s muse is an *ignis fatuus*, and deludes unwary travellers,” remarked I. “I do not know the country well, and am by no means sure that we have not lost our way.”

“That fellow breaking stones over there will tell us,” said Ravenswood. “Hollo! my man, where does this road go to?”

“I doan’t know where it goes in the night,” replied the man; “I always find it here when I come to work in the morning.”

“Mighty nate,” muttered Doddy. “I didn’t think there was a Saxon had ’cute-ness enough for that.”

“Will it take us to Derby?”

“Yes, if you want to go through Crackenthorpe.”

As I knew that Crackenthorpe was four miles out of the way, I did not want to go through that celebrated place; and, after a short single combat of cross questions and crooked answers, got my head straight, and we arrived at Derby without adventure or misadventure.

“Cobb, my boy,” said Jenkins, when he

greeted me on my arrival, "when is a regiment divided by being brought together?"

"Upon my word, Jenkins," I answered, "I do not know, and I do not care."

"You've no fun—you," said he, disappointed.

"The mountain labours," said Ravenswood, "let the mouse come forth."

"When it's quartered in the same place," replied the wag, and applauded himself very cordially. I believe he had a number of other riddles on half cock, but went to report myself to the colonel, and so escaped them.

Colonel Howard informed me that I was in for a much longer job than I had anticipated. We had three cases to try, each of which was likely to be a difficult one; and

one in particular, which might be prolonged almost indefinitely, by the illness of one of the witnesses. Now, when the reader reflects that, in the first place, a court-martial which assembles at ten o'clock in the morning has no legal existence after four in the afternoon, such being the law; and, secondly, that a court-martial is infinitely more difficult to satisfy, as to evidence, than any other court, the above-mentioned reader, my friend and father confessor, will perceive that a very slight hitch may prolong the proceedings of the court for a very considerable time.

This was very provoking, for I was exceedingly anxious to get back to Carlton. I had a project in my head, for my arrival there, which was very near my heart: I

did not look upon the regimental enjoyments with such a favourable eye as before. I thought the mess dull that evening, and the fine old full-bodied military port exceedingly like poison. I thought Jenkins a remarkable bore, and O'Flaherty an unmitigated savage. I suspected Simpkins of lying like a trooper, in a little anecdote he told me (in the strictest confidence) of Miss Hopkinson, of Puddle-street, in that ancient city, having told him she could not sleep the night before for his unkindness; and I suspected Doddy of being a scamp, which indeed was natural enough, for I had certainly done nothing to prevent his being so. Ravenswood remarked that I was put out, and asked the cause; and upon my informing him that the delay at Derby was

disagreeable to me, philosophically remarked, that, as it was very disagreeable to me, and very agreeable to him, we had better strike an average, and both be indifferent to it.

I thought him an ass.

I did not tell him so; I think a great many men asses, but I do not think it necessary to tell them so. Indeed, I believe most of us consider every one whose opinion differs materially from our own as qualified for that epithet. I think men in love are peculiarly apt to entertain disparaging opinions about others; the object that occupies their thoughts is so overwhelming, that they consider any indifference to it as positive deficiency; at least, so I thought then. I know, when our court-martial did assemble,

it struck me that the prisoner exhibited a most undue and incomprehensible interest in the proceedings (which terminated in seven years' transportation). I wondered at the grave and earnest attention bestowed upon the case by the court, and still more at the delays that it tolerated—keeping me away from Beauchamp. I do not think that I myself gave as much attention as I ought to have given to the evidence; and, indeed, I found great difficulty in keeping my attention rivetted to any subject. But as our conviction in the first case was unanimous, I presume that it was correct. It occupied one whole day, however. The second took one and a half. The third was delayed by the illness of the witness mentioned by Colonel Howard.

CHAPTER X.

THE VESSEL RIGHTING AFTER THE SQUALL —
POACHERS BEWARE—THE ALL-CONNECTER—THE
STRIKING INTO THE RIGHT PATH—THE SHADOW
OF A CLOUD—THE SPREADING OF A SNARE—WOE.

OWING to the dangerous illness of the witness, to whom I alluded in the last chapter, and whose testimony was indispensable, the court-martial lasted an unusual length of time, and several days elapsed before we were able to return to Carlton, during which time, as Ravenswood informed me, just before we started on our homeward journey,

he recovered his senses, and became himself again. It was strange, he said, but the very first morning when he woke in a town, and heard the rattle of the carriages, and the trampling of the horses, and the voices of the carmen, and, in short, the sounds of a city, he felt all sentiment oozing, as it were, out of him; he felt armed for the battle of life, and mailed against the weapons of love.

“The city, Cobb,” he said, “is an arena of gladiators; the country the fool’s paradise of swains. In the country, the many reduce themselves to one; in the town, the one dissolves into the many. ‘The wonder to me now is, that I was such a fool as to be enslaved by such a flirt.’”

“My dear fellow,” replied I, thinking,

I am sorry to say, with no little exultation at how infinitely superior my choice was to his, "all watches do not keep time together, and if the heart does sometimes go a little faster than the head, it is nothing but an excursion. It soon comes home again."

"Very true," replied he; "but it finds the fire out."

"Well," we are not vestal virgins," returned I; "that is not a capital offence; try one of the lucifers we were talking about. There's Miss Hargreaves."

"I think Miss Waldgrave would suit me better," replied he, with an abominable coolness.

"Upon my soul," I answered, "you have recovered quickly from all your grief. I don't think you'll break your heart in a

hurry; the moment you've got out of one flirtation, you think you are to go head and ears into another."

"Why, it was your advice," retorted he, in some surprise; for he was not by any means aware of anything passing, or being likely to pass, between Edith and me; "it was you that suggested to me to try Miss Hargreaves."

"Oh, I don't care a d——n for that; it would suit Miss Hargreaves very well, I dare say; that is quite another sort of thing; she's made for a garrison hack, but all girls are not." I had serious thoughts at the moment of jamming *his* side of the car against a large cart, loaded with stone, that we were passing. I dare say the damage might have been repaired for a couple of

pounds; but unfortunately I had put Doddy on that side, and did not much like squashing him in his new top-boots; besides, not being of a very sanguinary disposition, I began to recover my temper, which had been roused by his (to do him justice) unintentional proposal to poach in my preserves; and after a quarter of an hour's silence I became sociable again, and asked him if he had seen Jenny Lind. I dare say the reader has heard that question asked before. Ravenswood answered it as if he never had.

“I have seen that incarnate melody,” said he, “and trembled to the vibrations of the yonder world that flowed from her lips.”

“Why do you call it yonder world?”

asked I. "Shut your mouth, Doddy, or the flies will get in," for that youth, in his thirst for the acquisition of knowledge, had opened that receptacle wide enough for a four-pound loaf to enter.

"Because music, though it exists on the earth now," replied Ravenswood, "does so only partially, or by sufferance, dimly felt, and darkly understood; it is, as it were, a dialect in the great language of communication, yet not confined to one district of space, but to one order of souls; whereas, in the fulness of time, when the human race, sufficiently purified, ascends Olympus, music, the outpouring of the catholic soul (Doddy here crossed himself), will overspread the world in a great conducting medium, and become the universal

language of regenerated intellect (I perceived Doddy's mouth again enlarging);—music is now only dim murmurings of the language of the soul in its pure state, before it was debased by its connexion with clay, hereafter to become its speech, when released from the trammels of the flesh."

"Then I suppose a comic song finds no great favour in your eyes," remarked I.

"A comic song," returned he, with a gesture of abhorrence, "is little better than a sacrilegious indecency, against which all minds not aboriginally and hopelessly vulgar revolt intuitively. It is a monstrosity on the same footing as a woman in man's clothes, a diamond ring in a pig's snout, a camelia decorating a puppy dog's tail; a comic song is the offspring of 'Beauty

and the Beast,' born on a dunghill, and bred in a pigsty."

"The Muses pledging their robes for gin," suggested I; "Apollo, overtaken by Barclay and Perkins, resorting to the stomach-pump."

"Faugh!" said he, "don't let us talk of such trash as comic songs."

Upon our arrival at Carlton, Johnny surrendered his command with great dignity, reporting that the conduct of the detachment had been exemplary during my absence, and inviting Ravenswood and myself to a grand dinner at Beauchamp Hall upon the following Thursday—an invitation which that gentleman, rather to my surprise, accepted.

So much for the rattle of cabs, thought I.

I wonder would the noise of carriages have the same effect on Ellen O'Reilly.

The colour-sergeant now brought me my letters, which had rather accumulated during my absence. The first I opened was from Hawkins:—

“DEAR COBB,”

“Many thanks for your judicious advice and kind encouragement. I shall act as you recommend; and as soon as I can possibly get leave you may expect to hear from me. It is a nervous time, but certainly I am happier now that I have made up my mind in the right direction. I cannot think that I am doomed to encounter disappointment; but still hope is not very strong within me. I wish I had

your buoyancy of spirit, that *will* not give in. I long for the moment that I may start for the rectory, yet tremble at what must ensue when I arrive there, still more at what may ensue.

“Yours sincerely,

“JAMES HAWKINS.”

I confess to some little amusement as I compared the tone of this letter with that of the epistle wherewith this history opened, in which Ellen was bequeathed to me, and I occupied the twelve miles between Ballykillcavanagh and Ballymacrocodile in thinking what she was like. There was another letter for me from my lady mother, urging me still more strongly to come to Cowes, telling me that Lady Mesopo-

tamia had promised "so kindly" to take me up; and dwelling at still greater length upon the charms, amiability, eligibility, and fifty thousands, of the Miss Wallingfords, which I considered a personal insult to myself.

I then started for Beauchamp Hall. I had fully made up my mind then that day should not pass without declaring my passion for Edith; the few days I had spent separated from her had been so intolerable. But no man knows what a day may bring forth. Lady Elizabeth received me much as usual, but there was something in Edith's manner that struck a chill into me at once. It was a coldness so slight as hardly to be discernible, but so perceptible as to be unquestionable. I endeavoured, as

far as I could, to prevent its affecting my manner towards her, for, whatever it might be, I had no wish to hurry on a quarrel, which, however it might be deferred, come when it might, would come a great deal too soon for me. I am afraid I succeeded but indifferently, for she seemed to grow more and more constrained. Sometimes I fancied that I could discern an expression of reproach brooding for a moment on her countenance; and yet perfectly certain was I that I had given her no cause to reproach me.

I spoke of the regret with which I had found that I should be detained so much longer at Derby, and explained how it was inevitable; and she positively looked as if she disbelieved every syllable I said; and

for the first time, when Lady Elizabeth, according to her custom, expressed a hope that I would stay dinner, Edith forbore to add the expression of her hopes too. Determined, if possible, to sift this mysterious matter to the bottom, I did not wait to be pressed, but accepted at once. Then there came another phenomenon, which again puzzled me.

Before this day, whether in the drawing-room, or rambling about the lawn, or sauntering through the conservatories, Edith and I had constantly found ourselves with nobody else near us, until it had become so completely a matter of course, that it attracted no remark or observation from us or anybody else; but to-day, during the hour and half that intervened between my

arrival and dinner, somehow or other she contrived that nothing of that sort should happen; and it appeared to me that Nina was conspiring with her to that end, for she seemed determined not to leave us. I had brought a few books with me from Derby, and mentioning them in conversation, offered to lend them to Edith; but she made some excuse for declining the loan, though previously she had not scrupled to borrow as many as she wanted of me.

I felt exceedingly disappointed and distressed at this; but another feeling began now slowly, and against my will, to make its painful way from the very depths of my soul; I mean the suspicion—which, a day ago, I should have considered too monstrous to be entertained for a moment—that Edith

was little more than the heartless coquette which I knew Nina to be. Some such element might have lurked unperceived by others, and even unsuspected by herself, in her character, until the double occasion, the opportunity of gratifying the taste for conquest, together with the presence of Nina, to stimulate and encourage the attempt, might have brought out the hidden demon into life and activity. I dismissed the idea in a moment, as unworthy of myself and her alike; but it would recur nevertheless, the more so as I fancied that I perceived a malignant expression of triumph in Nina's countenance, as if the two girls were conspiring to lead me in chains, and then mock me. The idea was unbearable, but it was difficult to get rid of.

It may be supposed that I did not spend a particularly pleasant evening. Lady Elizabeth observed that I was depressed, and in her innocence attributed my dejection to the circumstance of some incident of a painful character having occurred to me in the performance of my judicial duties—perhaps the necessity of sentencing a fellow creature to an untimely and disgraceful death. She endeavoured to console me, by reminding me that Samuel did not hesitate at hewing Agag to pieces when he knew that it was his duty so to do. The remark was well meant, but I cannot say that I derived much consolation from it.

“ You come back from Derby very, very glum, Captain Cobb,” said Nina; “ was your colonel cross to you?”

“No,” I answered, “I never saw our colonel out of temper in my life.”

“Oh, you story teller,” said she, “all colonels are cross, and some captains,” added she, significantly. “Perhaps you have had bad news from your friends in Ireland?”

“No, indeed,” said I, brightening up a little; for when one is in trouble, any good deed that one may chance to have done at any time, is sure to present itself in the shape of a crumb of comfort. “All the news I have had from Ireland is of the most gratifying nature that can be: I can desire no better.”

“And that makes you so grave,” said she; “it must be something very important.”

“ Well,” replied I, “ to the parties concerned, perhaps it is.”

“ And you keep it all to yourself, like the dog in the manger, you cross curmudgeon,” pursued she. “ Why don’t you tell us all about it, and let us enjoy the news too?”

“ I do not know that you would enjoy it,” returned I; “ and I am sure Miss Waldgrave would not.”

“ There,” said Nina, turning triumphantly to Edith; “ I told you so. Oh, he is very, very deep—very secret; he lets nothing out.”

“ It would be premature,” remarked I; which, indeed, would have been the case, for in addition to the traditional slips between the cup and the lip—though I knew that Hawkins meant to propose for

Ellen, I was by no means certain, however decided an opinion I might have formed upon the subject, that she would accept him, at least at first. Undoubtedly he had used her very badly; and though I have been credibly informed, by witnesses of unimpeachable veracity, that ill-usage very often causes woman's love to burn more brightly and purely, I did not at that moment discover any very positive confirmation of that doctrine in my own breast—quite the contrary. I think a good-sized and not particularly sweet-tempered hyæna fairly at bay, and engaged in a professional debate with the hunters, with an arrow or two sticking in its side, would have been a much better emblem of me than a deserted dove; however, it might be otherwise with-

Ellen O'Reilly, and I hoped for her sake that it was so.

“Premature—pooh!” said Nina. “Come, confess, and be hanged.”

“In my opinion,” exclaimed I, “it is time enough to confess after one is hanged; but I do not suppose *you* at least have much to learn about my news from Ireland. I daresay you are thoroughly *au courant*.”

“How do you know that?” replied she; “why should you suppose that I know anything about your news from Ireland? it is nothing to me. I don't care anything—I don't know anything—about it.”

“Well, then,” answered I, “I have no right to disclose a matter in which another is concerned, so I shall hold my tongue.”

“There,” said she, again appealing to Edith—“I told you so.”

Edith received this remark with a peculiar and melancholy smile, in which I fancied I remarked an expression of resignation which seemed to me to embody a much greater amount of regret than the withholding of a piece of gossip which could not be very interesting to her would account for; still, though not particularly pleased with her, I could not bear seeing her put out about anything, and was on the point of taking the entire family into my confidence about the loves of Ellen and Hawkins, by telling the whole story right out, when I caught Nina’s eye fixed upon me with such an expression of malignant triumph glaring from it, that the accursed

idea that I was being made the dupe and the butt of a couple of heartless flirts, rose suddenly, gaunt and grim in my mind, and sealed my mouth.

It was a dreary evening. Edith, gloomy and reserved, held me steadily at arms' length, and, without ever falling into the slightest incivility, resisted any and every attempt I could make to engage her in anything like a separate conversation, which, indeed, had she been so inclined, Nina would have prevented, for she seemed determined to attach herself to me, and I began to suspect that, having found that the smiles she had lavished on Johnny had not produced the desired return, she proposed transferring them to me, in the hope that it might prove a better investment.

I need not say that, were such the case, they were by no means likely to receive a hearty welcome, and I most assuredly gave her no encouragement. Lady Elizabeth, dimly perceiving that something was wrong, felt the influence of the mantle of lead, and was unusually prosy about the court of George the Fourth and the beauty of some pre-adamite viscountesses, who, I have no doubt, were so many coronetted Venuses, but I took no interest in them.

“You need not come here any more till you are in better humour,” said Nina, playfully (that is to say, with her claws sheathed), as I rose to depart; “we don’t want any one that is cross, and besides, with so much to think of yourself, you are not likely to be good company again for some time to come.”

I did not at the time understand the allusion or its drift, but Nina had a way of making little mysteries, and I was in no humour to investigate it. Edith made no comment upon this abrupt warning off—which, before my trip to Derby, would have elicited an immediate and emphatic disclaimer from her; and when I shook hands with her there was an indescribable numbness in the dead cold grasp that sent a chilly shudder all over my frame.

I could not marshal my thoughts into anything like order as I walked slowly home that night. I could not make out what I felt, still less what I ought to feel. The gloomy shadow of disappointment fell thick and black upon me; but whether it was brought on myself by my own act, or

the unjust infliction of one who certainly *ought* not to have been hard upon me, I could not tell. Possibly Johnny might be able to enlighten me on the subject.

CHAPTER XI.

BIRDLIME AT A DISCOUNT—THE SHADOW OF THE
CLOUD—THE HEART AND THE BRAIN WHEEL-
ING ROUND ONE ANOTHER—LE PREMIER PAS
QUI COUTE—FEMALE FENCING—CONSOLATORY
DREAM.

As it was still early when I arrived at Carlton, I had hopes of finding Johnny up. I was anxious to see him that night, and to discover as far as I could what had passed during my absence; for the reader will recollect, that, having started for Beauchamp immediately upon my arrival from Derby, I had had no opportunity of having

any conversation with him. I was not disappointed; indeed, he wanted to see me, too, and had strolled a little way out on the road to meet me.

“You were quite right about Nina, Cobb,” said he; “I thought she would have eaten me alive. One day I was to ride with her; another day kept me holding silk for an hour, making eyes at me all the time; then she consulted me about all manner of things, the strangest things in the world; she said there ought to be no want of confidence between her and me; and she told me all about Ravenswood, and what difficulty she had in keeping him from making love to her.”

“She lied in that instance, Johnny,” remarked I, parenthetically.

“Oh, no!” said Johnny, innocently. “She told me herself that he wanted to be so very, very intimate with her, but that she would have nothing to say to him, because she was sure that he was hard-hearted, and had no trust in women.”

“And I suppose she gave you credit for a lively faith,” said I. “Was that the view she took of your character, eh?”

“Yes,” replied my callow chick. “She said I was a very different person from him, and that when I smiled it was a smile, and not a sneer.”

“And you believed her?”

“Well, what else could I do? but still I did not like her. She hates you so; I could see that plain enough by her manner of speaking of you, though I never heard

her say anything directly against you. I'd have pitched into her if she had. Besides, I don't feel particularly inclined to fall in love with anybody just now."

"Then she could make nothing of you, Johnny?" said I.

"Nothing," replied that Derbyshire Joseph, pulling up his shirt collar with rather a strut. "I kept her off, and she's given it up as a bad job these two days. She's barely civil to me now—hates me like poison, I dare say. Devil may care!"

"But," said I, "could you make out why she hated me? What sort of things used she to say about me?"

"Well, she did not so much say things against you individually, as against the army in general, and include you; whereas

she used always to say that I was not like the rest."

"About what was it, then?" I asked. "What were the crimes she laid to our charge?"

"Oh! she used to say that officers were all male flirts; that they all considered girls as playthings, that were to amuse them whilst they were quartered in a place, and then to be flung aside when they left it. She said that they consigned their loves to one another, like bales of goods; and that a friend of yours had left you a legacy of the sort at the last place you were quartered at; and I could not deny that, for I remembered the letter that you gave me to read on the line of march between Ballykilocavanagh and Ballymacrocodile; so I said

that was a very different sort of thing, and she laughed and said, 'Yes, *very* different;' and Edith got so cross then that I was rather glad to change the conversation. Oh! she does not like you, you may rely upon it; perhaps you did not pay her attention enough when she was at the rectory—she is rather *exigente*."

"Perhaps, Johnny," suggested I, "she might have fancied that I was in some degree the cause of her not succeeding better with you."

"Oh!" said he, "I should not think that was it. I don't suppose she cared a pin about that."

"You heavenly innocent!" returned I. "Cross a woman, and fancy that she is indifferent about it! Johnny, you'll take an

apprenticeship in stealing tigresses' cubs before you are quite up to your work."

"Shall I?" said he, a little offended. "Teach your grandmother to suck eggs! Do you know, Cobb, I shall not be sorry when she is gone, either: for Edith has been infernally out of sorts for the last three or four days; and I cannot help thinking that it is Nina puts her out. Between you and I, there is no love lost between those two young ladies; though my mother likes Nina extremely, Edith does not. You know Edith is always straightforward, and hates anything like a manœuvre; and what you told me about Nina being an incurable manœuvrer, is quite true. I found that out, and so did Edith, I promise you. She's quick enough, you know, though she is so

quiet. You would not think how fast she sees a thing, all the time she looks so innocent. Well, I have got nothing more to tell you, so I shall go to bed. I want to go over there to breakfast, to morrow; will you give me leave from parade?"

"Very well," said I; "good night."

"I now began to take my position into serious consideration. It was perfectly clear to me that Nina had made up her mind to do me an ill turn with Edith, and by no means certain that she had not succeeded. I thought at the moment that perhaps it would be the best plan to set Johnny to ferret out what the actual charge she had brought against me was; for I could not suppose that the vague generality of including all officers in the one common

category of flirts of the masculine gender could have effected so complete a change in Edith's behaviour and manner to me. Since I had discovered Nina's affair with Ravenswood, too (to say nothing of the unscrupulous manner in which she set about justifying herself on the subject), that young lady had appeared to my eyes as a much more dangerous antagonist than before. It was impossible to say what stories about me she might have picked up from him, or what a mess they might make cooked up with a trifle of pepper, salt, and a bay leaf. For a dash of pungency, a touch of wit, or a poetical turn, will make a very large story out of a very small fact; and I had little doubt that, under the circumstance, Nina would season with a liberal

hand. However, I was in too complete a whirl and confusion of sorrow and anger, vain repinings and fierce resolutions, to arrive at any definite plan as to the course to be pursued, and I went to bed, having come to only one decision, which was, that whatever it was, it should not very long remain unsettled. I found great comfort in this resolution. I believe one generally does in stout-hearted determinations, only then there is that confounded difficulty to come—the carrying them out.

The next morning I gave Johnny his instructions, which that youth received with great gravity and earnestness, entertaining no doubt but that Edith—all openness and confidence—would never dream of withholding anything from him, and pro-

mising to put me *au fait* to the whole thing in the course of the day, adding, that he *had* observed that for the last three or four days she had never mentioned my name to him; whereas, as he said, "Before that, she used never to be tired talking of you; she was always asking questions about you, and telling my mother of the clever things you used to say, and the strange stories you used to tell her; and she frightened old Hargreaves into fits once, by calling him Captain Hargreaves; he'd as soon have been called Satan. However, never mind, I'll find out what's the matter with her."

I did not share Johnny's confidence in his exploring undertaking. There are things that brothers are the last to hear of; and unfortunately this was one of them.

However, it is a good doctrine never to throw away a chance; so I watched Johnny's figure receding in the distance, with as much hope as I could conjure up, as Ravenswood and I sat down to breakfast.

"Where's Waldgrave?" asked my companion.

"He's gone over to Beauchamp Hall," replied I; "he said he wanted to be there early. I suppose they are going on some expedition."

"Do you think so?" said Ravenswood, looking disappointed; "then they'll all be away."

"I fancied so," I answered, "but I really knew nothing about it; don't act upon anything I say, for it is only my conjecture."

“I had thought of going over there myself,” said he; “I want to get the first meeting with Nina over, and I had rather do it at once. I do not know how I may like facing anything of the sort before a large company.”

“Very true,” I remarked; “it would be pleasanter, or at least, less unpleasant, to say nothing of the having it over. However, I do not imagine you are in danger of a scene, for she has known so long that you are here, and that you will come to dinner, that she must be thoroughly prepared by this time, and I do not think her feelings will overpower her.”

“I have no doubt but that she has the self-possession of the devil,” returned my friend; “the one feeling she has is the

craving for a sensation, but I am not quite so confident of my own steadiness under fire."

"What *must* be done is commonly well done," I answered. "Put your trust in fate."

"That word **MUST** is a great solver of riddles and opener of doors," returned Ravenswood. "Necessity is a good steeple-chase rider, keeps one's head very straight, and crams one very hard at one's fences; nevertheless, I should prefer a smaller audience at my first interview. Suppose we stroll over there to-day, and take our chance?"

"Oh, I shall be busy all day," replied I, somewhat disturbed at this proposition; "I shall not be able to go over there; I've got a lot of letters to write."

“I should not have thought you were troubled with many letters,” said he. “Recorded thought, perishable yet not evanescent, seldom enters much into the philosophy of our life.”

“Perhaps not; but recorded figures, and not figures of thought do, confound them!” said I. “All dunning letters should be detained at the Post Office.”

“Ah!” said he, “the Post Office; if that great volcano of talking lava were to close all its outlets, what an earthquake would ensue.”

“It is a porcupine,” said I, “that shoots pens instead of quills.”

“It is the great digester of the body politic,” said he, “that assimilates all, and rejects none.”

I spent the rest of that day fidgetting and fussing. I believe the men thought I was gone mad, for my habit had always been to take things quietly ; indeed, rigid disciplinarians used to say, that when I invoked the god of battles to train my company to their duty, I took care not to embarrass the regimental Mars with any officious assistance of my own, to which I used to reply, that I made it a rule never to do anything for myself that I could possibly persuade any one else to do for me, and as I invariably acted on the maxim, they might see whether it worked well or not. Ravenswood went over to Beauchamp Hall, and Johnny subsequently described to me his interview with Nina.

That young gentleman returned before

dinner, exceedingly disgusted with the result of his undertaking. He, as indeed I had partly anticipated, could make nothing of Edith. She declared that she had no quarrel with me, that she had *no right* to quarrel with me; that her manner was not changed, that if she had said or done anything uncivil she was very sorry for it, and hoped I would forgive her; that she could not always be very gay and cheerful; that she was subject to low spirits; that she had sometimes reasons for them; that she did not know why I should think her altered; that she thought it was very odd, and did not see why I should care for it, or think about it at all, but was sorry that anything should give me uneasiness; was sure she never intended it, but supposed that I knew

how to console myself, and hoped I would do so, and did not think that Johnny had any business to quarrel with her about it, and then began to cry.

Such was Johnny's report, and in further conversation with him on the subject, I gathered from him that he had really lost his temper with her, and told her that there was no dependence to be placed upon her, and that any woman might be proud of his friend Cobb's notice, and that she didn't deserve it; and that after her bursting into tears, he heard Nina reproaching her with her weakness, and telling her not to make such a fool of herself, or let any one else make a fool of her; and that he had subsequently a smart passage of arms with Nina on my behalf, in which he suddenly found

his hands strengthened by an unexpected ally, for in the middle of the debate Ravenswood appeared. Ravenswood he described as being pale and agitated at first, but as having speedily rallied, and remarked that Edith was in low spirits, which he attributed to the electric state of the atmosphere, and said that life and electricity were the same things, to which Nina demurred, asking how it came that people lived before any electric machines were invented, she was sure there were none before the flood; and that Ravenswood said that electricity was the great driving wheel of creation, which Johnny did not understand, but would get me to explain to him when I had time; and that after Ravenswood was gone, Nina became so snappish and disagreeable to him

that he would not stay for dinner, and was not sure that he would dine there any more until she was gone, except on that grand day when we were to meet the dignitaries of the neighbourhood—and that she might go to the d—l.

I think that I rather wished that she might avail herself of this kind permission, at least I should have offered no opposition. Ravenswood returned soon afterwards in high spirits.

“I stood it like a rock, Cobb,” he said. “I am very glad it is over; now I feel myself safe, for I know I am indifferent about her; I don’t care a brass farthing about her; in short, I am free.”

The evening wore slowly on, and at last it became necessary somehow to go to bed. I

hated the idea of going to bed; I had nothing to expect from it. I hoped for no rest—I was tired, I was broken spirited, I was wearied, I was what is emphatically called “done.” I had a headache, I had a heartache, I had throbbings in my veins, I had pains in my limbs, I had twitches in my nerves, and I had no hope. I thought of the proverb, “without hope the heart would break.” I wondered whether mine would, or whether it was not too tough, and would only keep me alive to suffer. I thought of blowing my brains out—but what would Lady Caroline say! I hope I never shall pass such a night again. I wish I had not passed that; it brought thoughts into my head that had no business there—they were not right; but I thought of

Prometheus on his rock, and the vulture, and wondered was I too condemned to live and suffer beyond human endurance. In due time, however, I fell asleep.

I do not believe much in portents or omens, but I had an odd dream. I dreamed that the devil came, looked searchingly at me, shook his head, and turned hopelessly away. I did not see the antagonist angel that protects man from himself; indeed, I had no eye for angels that night. When I began dimly and imperfectly to awake, I awoke with a sort of feeling that when things are at the worst they mend. I awoke more thoroughly, and became alive again, and then I remembered how often I had despaired for a moment, and then found my spirit rise again, and shake itself clear;

and how I had seen and confronted difficulties I had thought fatal; and found that, when I took them stoutly by the collar, they had fairly melted out of my grasp. Faint heart never yet won fair lady, thought I; I may be wrong, and she may be wrong, but we need not be always wrong. Let us try conclusions. I certainly rose in a better mood than I lay down, but still I was very, very unhappy.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MEETING OF MEANING—THE RISING OF THE
SPECTRE—THE SEEING THROUGH GREEN GLASSES
—THE DANGEROUS LUNATICS—THE ONE MISSING
WORD—THE EVIL GENIUS—STILL WATER RUNS
DEEP—THE DARK TIME—GOOD WORKS RETURN-
ING—THE FAINT GLEAM IN THE HORIZON.

MORN on the mountains—and out I rode into the fresh, cool, morning air, to try if its balmy breath would assuage the fire that was raging in my brain. I could not bear to remain in the barracks. I had no particular place to go to; but as I rode out of the barrack gate my old mare turned to the

right of her own accord, broke into a canter, and carried me I knew not whither, but somehow or other she kept constantly ascending, and in a short time I found I had attained a considerable elevation; and whether it was that the sharper air, or a feeling of exhilaration produced by riding, as it were, braced my temper, I know not, but I found a very considerable change take place in the view I took of the position of affairs. I began to think I was exceedingly hardly used; that it behoved me to exhibit a proper spirit, and not to submit patiently to the caprice of a wayward girl; in short, to assert my dignity as a man, and treat fickleness with the scorn it deserved.

Monstrous fine resolutions!

I had been out about four or five hours, when it suddenly occurred to me that my horse was getting tired, which, as the poor animal was, I suppose, approaching its twentieth mile, was not very wonderful. As, however, I had not gone straight on end, but wandered about in various directions, the distance from home was not so great as it might have been, and I knew from what I could see that I was not more than seven or eight miles from Carlton. I speedily also began to suspect that I had executed a half circle, which had placed Beauchamp Park in a right line between me and my home, and as it was so, I thought I might as well just look in on my road home. Perhaps the conversation with Johnny might have mollified Edith (I

meant, brought her to her senses), and if she could be persuaded to listen to me for a few moments (that is to say, to apologise, and promise more steadiness in future), I might succeed in convincing her of the utter falsity of the imputations which had estranged her from me (that is to say, I might take her into favour again), and heaven knows what the result might have been. I was not a gentleman that ever suffered grass to grow under my feet. I turned my horse's head in that direction, and sauntered slowly along. About a mile from Beauchamp I met Edith and Nina riding together, and away on the wings of the four winds of heaven flew all my fine resolutions.

I could have kissed the very ground she trod on.

In her manner to me, however, there was no favourable change apparent. Calm and collected, she simply wished me good morning, and though she held out her hand as usual, there was no warmth in her greeting. I turned to ride with them, and when we were again in motion, I discovered that the two young ladies had so contrived that Nina was between her and me, which arrangement continued till I left them at the park gates.

“Your friend Mr. Ravenswood was here yesterday,” said Nina; “I think he gets bitterer than ever. To be sure, there were only we two poor women, and men never spare women.”

“What was Ravenswood’s offence?” I asked.

“Contradicting me, the horrid savage!” answered she. “I hate being contradicted.”

“And pray on what subject, may I ask?” I inquired, wondering whether Nina’s fertility of invention would help her out of this, for she could not well tell me that it was defending me from her strictures that called out Ravenswood’s contradictions.”

“Oh, about all sorts of things,” returned she, carelessly,—“officers’ flirtations and deceitful practices; and then he says such grave and solemn things, it is like a book talking; and talking of books, have you read the last novel of Bulwer’s, and which do you prefer, Bulwer or D’Israeli?”

She had got off the dangerous ground now, pretty skilfully. I gave my award between the “Last of the Barons” and the

“First of the Rabbi’s,” and which I decided in favour of, I regret to say, I do not now recollect. Edith said little or nothing, but seemed to assume an appearance of injured innocence that began to irritate me exceedingly; for, mortified as I was, I felt that I had been condemned unjustly, because without the opportunity of defending myself, which, guilty or innocent, I ought to have had; and I could plainly perceive that a rebellious spirit was rising within me whose rise might be timed, not by days, nor yet by hours, but by minutes. I think Nina remarked this, for she observed, “Why, you get crosser and crosser every day, and you ought to get milder and better-humoured *now*.”

I could not for the life of me see why I

ought. At that particular period, I thought I had truth enough to qualify a saint for four grains of blue pill; but I suppose the two young ladies saw very good cause, for I observed them interchange glances of intelligence, which still farther confirmed me in the idea that I was being made a fool of; and when we parted my anger had taken a definite form, a reality that considerably facilitated the course I was rapidly resolving on—viz., to withdraw from all attempts even at friendship with Edith.

Friendship, indeed, was impossible.

I did not see her again until the dinner to the rustic magnates. I do not recollect much about the dinner. I do not think there was a lord, but suppose there was a baronet, though I cannot say that I observed

who it was took Lady Elizabeth in. I know I sat next a fat, middle-aged, snub-nosed woman, with a great topaz necklace, who was a desperate and alarming admirer of Wordsworth, and drove me distracted with a long, weak, washy, everlasting flood of encomiums upon that gentleman's waggoner, who, I most sincerely wished had picked up my neighbour and driven her off to the uttermost ends of the world, and left her there. The fact was, that the lady in question was the exemplary wife of a neighbouring gentleman of the most unspotted character, beloved by all who knew her, and a pattern of the domestic virtues, with a highly cultivated mind; and though I differed with her about the waggoner (and do so still), I believe has a remarkably cor-

rect taste in literature; but of course, at that time and place all these considerations did not weigh with me one pin's point, and I wished her comfortably tombed in the family sarcophagus, together with Mr. John Watson, jun., who sat on Edith's right hand, and Lieutenant Ravenswood, of the Light Company of the 120th Regiment, who sat upon her left.

I dare say the reader thinks me a fool; I dare say he would have been another under similar circumstances. I don't think he would have picked up Mrs. Boothby's pocket handkerchief which she dropped twice, and her gloves which she dropped once, without swearing, as I did, thereby honouring the maxim, "Equam memento rebus in arduis servare mentem," which that shrewd Ul-

tonian and mighty hunter before the Lord, Boyd, used to translate, "Remember, when you get a fall, never let your mare get away from you—mind that!" I do not think he would have, as Byron said of Marceau, "kept the whiteness of his soul;" which I, being only a captain, utilitized into a clear head and a bright look out. If he differs with me, I hope he will retain his opinion, for I am too good a Christian to wish him ever in a position that will call in his experience to rectify his judgment. The words of experience are the guides of ages, but we need not write them on our own skins with red-hot pokers.

Of course I sat down with the fixed determination of never once taking the slightest notice of Edith, or looking at

her, or anywhere in the direction of where she was sitting, all dinner time,—it would have been such an admission of interest, such a false move, so *infra dig.*—I do not know why the soup came round so slowly; I suppose that in Lady Elizabeth's establishment the butler was slow and steady, and the rest of the servants *regis ad exemplar*; but before my portion of *consommé de volaille* (they put the combs in, which I disapprove of) reached me, I had caught her eye fixed upon me with that melancholy expression of reproach which had already puzzled me so much. What cause she had for reproaching me, or even for quarrelling with me, was beyond my philosophy. I had seen women often enough do what they call "trying a man;" that is

to say, saying or doing something that, as a matter of course, *must* irritate him extremely, and then wonder at his being irritated. But I acquitted Edith of this mild variety of idiocy. I suppose the glare of Mrs. Boothby's topazes attracted her eye, for I caught it several times afterwards during dinner, which I think lasted about six hours. I do not wonder at the attraction of the topazes; each of them was about the size and appearance of a decanter of sherry.

After the ladies retired, I engaged in several single combats with gentlemen upon several very opposite subjects. I confuted Mr. Hargreaves upon the difference between fixed and floating capital, and defeated young Mr. de Popkinsonne about the age of

the Marchioness of Mesopotamia, a triumph which I owed entirely to myself; for having discovered that he did not know the colour of her liveries, I concluded that he was a mere pretender to fashion, a pinchbeck genealogist, and assumed a certain hardness of assertion which I should not have so readily ventured upon had his knowledge of high life been equal to his desire of getting credit for it. I discovered, notwithstanding my troubles, with my customary sagacity, that young Mr. de Popkinsonne embittered his existence and exhausted his energies in the endeavour not to be thought a snob. I cannot say that I did much to forward his praiseworthy views on that subject; but a man crossed in love is not likely to overflow with loving kindness for

any one; indeed, it is well if he keeps out of mischief, for he is never very far removed from a dangerous maniac.

True, there are certain laws in society that we are so much in the habit of deferring to, that that habit becomes, not second nature, for that is a mere phrase of the philosophers, but dominant nature, just as men risk life and soul alike for a point of honour. But look at the lower animals, they show what, under such circumstances, the fetters of convention being removed, nature does. Nature fights.

Again, when we returned to the drawing-room, I found that Nina was determined to enforce the separate system she had established between Edith and me; but all her vigilance—and I must do her the justice to

say that it was most draconical in its character—was unequal to the task of keeping up a perpetual quarantine, the more so as it seemed to me that Edith, if she did not actually wish for some conversation with me, at all events by no means avoided it so sedulously as before. At last Nina was persuaded to sit down to sing. A song does not last many minutes; but that was something; the opportunity appeared, and I pounced upon it with the stoop of a hawk. Edith was standing alone, returning some music-books that had been displaced to find the music required by Nina, and I was at her side in a second.

“Why is your manner so changed towards me?” I asked. “What have I done?”

“Really,” returned she, “I am not aware

that you have anything to complain of me. If I have been neglectful of any civility I ought to have offered you, I am very sorry. I hope I shall never forget the attention due to so kind a friend and guide as you have always shown yourself to my brother."

"D——n your brother," was the thought which, I regret being compelled to confess, flashed across my mind at that moment. "It was not thus," I said,—“not simply as the friend of your brother that you used to talk to me; before the court-martial at Derby I used to think that you considered me a friend of your own.”

"Certainly, as a friend," replied she; "I shall always consider you as a friend. I hope always to entertain feelings of the greatest regard towards both you and"——

she stopped at the word *and*—a most unfortunate stop. One word more would have saved both her and me much unnecessary misery; but that word, which would have elicited light from the darkness, remained unspoken; I filled up the gap as I best might, and took it into my head that it meant Ravenswood. I do not say that there was any sense in that conjecture of mine. These are Confessions of Country Quarters, not the autobiography of Solon. Now, the placing Ravenswood upon a footing of equality, which in my then state of mind of course meant rivalry, with me, roused a spirit that was not to be lightly laid,—even that absurd conversation that the reader may recollect having passed between him and me, as we drove out of Derby, and my equally absurd

irritation, came out into strong relief. "The trifles light as air" were to me "confirmation strong as proofs of holy writ."

"It was not thus that you and I used to talk of one another, and to one another, a week ago," said I, bitterly; "you change quickly."

"I am wiser now," said she, colouring violently; "I may be sadder, though I am afraid I am not better; for a week ago I had more faith, more hope, even more charity."

"But," urged I, "what is my offence?—why speak in enigmas and parables?"

"The enigmas and parables must be as plain as a printed page to your conscience," returned she.

"My conscience acquits me," said I, beginning to get exceedingly angry.

“It must be a very convenient one,” returned she, quietly but markedly.

“But what is my crime?” demanded I.

“I accuse you of no crime,” said she.

“Of what then?” I persisted; and whether it was that my vehemence cowed her, or that my obstinate demand to know what it was that she had against me, and to be put fairly upon my trial, excited in her mind some suspicion of the egregious error under which she was labouring and suffering, she seemed suddenly to melt.

“Oh, Captain Cobb!” exclaimed she, “I did not expect this of you, and I did not deserve it.”

At this moment Nina, who had acquired an evil influence over Edith, completed her song, and instantly approached us.

“What are you two talking about so earnestly,” said she; and then suddenly turning deadly pale, retreated. I learned afterwards that I had fixed upon her a look of such demoniac ferocity, that even she positively quailed under it—not indeed, I think, without good reason, for her conscience must have told her then, if the storm did burst, there would be wild work, but that unfortunate moment completed her evil work; the very sight of her, the sound of her voice, the malicious twinkle in her eye, the half-concealed sneer, hardened Edith’s better heart at once; she drew herself up with great dignity.

“Let it be understood that we meet as friends,” said she, “and only as friends, for the future.”

“As friends, is impossible,” I answered.

“So be it then,” she replied, with a slight tremor in her voice; “it is your choice; unfriendly *I cannot* be, but I do not wonder that *you* should.”

This last blow crushed the little patience I had left: to say that she left me otherwise than angry would be absurd—indeed, incredible. I was angry—and something more. I was more desperately in love with Edith than ever, but my faith in her was gone. I had ceased to suppose that the altered relations between her and me arose from any well-grounded suspicion, ascertained or even imagined delinquency on my part. The evident state of communication in which she and Nina appeared to be, the interchange of looks, the constant keep-

ing together, staggered me. It seemed to me also that even if I had offended her, there was an obstinate unforgiveness—a new feature in her character that was not to be lightly regarded. In short, I arrived at the conclusion, that either I had grossly deceived myself in my estimate of her character, and had flung away a fervent and sincere passion upon an object utterly unworthy, or that even if she were naturally possessed of estimable qualities, she whom I had supposed the perfect model of all womankind, the embodiment of the womanly virtues undimmed by womanish failings, had so little inherent strength of character as not to be able to bear a fortnight's contact with so inferior a nature as Nina's.

I left the house in a tempest of conflict-

ing passion that was perfectly awful. I have not in these Confessions found myself compelled to record any very violent ebullition of anger, or any malignancy of disposition; but the fearful state of mind in which I returned home that night was one that I hope none of us may be soon called upon to witness, still less to experience.

It was with me as with many of the quiet-going ones of the world, the demon within sleeps very sound, and wakes slowly, unready and unwillingly; but once fairly roused, he is the very devil indeed.

What I said, what I did, what I thought, what I felt, how I lived, how I should have died, had my hour arrived, during the next month, are matters beyond the pale of this

confessional. I have been thankful in after-life that that unhappy period was passed among those who were more merciful to me than I was merciful to myself and others, and that no record exists save in a friendly memory of scenes best buried in oblivion. The first time that I felt as a Christian should feel, was upon the receipt of the following letter from Hawkins:—

“DEAR COBB,

“I cannot suffer one post to leave this place without communicating to you the happiness that has within the last hour become mine, but which I cannot but feel I owe entirely to you. The very instant I could get leave I hurried here, and the fondest wishes of my heart are now grati-

fied. I am sure that you will rejoice in my happiness, and not the less that the good work is your own. Once more receive my heartiest thanks for the wise and kindly guidance under which I have attained the greatest blessing heart can desire, and believe me, my dear Cobb,

“ Ever your most attached

“ And grateful friend,

“ JAMES HAWKINS.”

This letter affected me even to tears, and I think that flow of tears removed a weight and a bandage from my brain. I became more myself again. I probably need not say that I had not, during this long dark period, visited Beauchamp, nor was the name of that place ever mentioned before

me; my brother officers, probably aware of what had passed that last fatal night, treated me with that kindly and affectionate forbearance that is so happily characteristic of our service, and so creditable to it, and which, I believe, I taxed with more confidence than moderation.

It was with a strange, indescribable feeling, that I sat down to congratulate Hawkins. I believe it was but an indifferent specimen of epistolary skill, and shall not inflict it upon the reader; and when I had finished it, sealed it, and despatched it, I withdrew myself again within myself, and, with a heavy heart and boding spirit, I looked back upon the past month.

It had dragged its slow length along like a wounded snake; its track was seared into

my heart, as with a hot iron. I had ceased to think life worth enduring, and death worth avoiding. Whether I mouldered away in a living tomb, or sunk at once into nothingness, I cared little; the only thing that I really wanted was to be left alone. The world to me was a lightless cavern, gloomy and drear, and damp and cold; but a little feeble mole may let the breath of heaven and the blessed sunlight into its dark recesses; and it was not very long before I found that the chilliest hour of the winter's night is the hour that precedes the dawn.

CHAPTER XIII.

DARKNESS!—LIGHT!

I DO not profess to be a philanthropist, but I sometimes do good-natured things. I did one when we were re-embarking—wet, surly, tired, and hungry—from our search for arms in the neighbourhood of Cork. I suppose I deserved some reward for it, for I certainly expected none; but, however that may be, I most assuredly had one, and one of inestimable value. When I said to the ragged, shivering urchin, that

stood on the shore, looking so wistfully at us—those words even now about to bear golden fruit—“Jump on board!”—I little dreamed that I was enlisting one in my service who should hereafter prove to me of a value by no means commensurate with his not very brilliant appearance. So it was, nevertheless.

My friend Doddy, since his arrival in England, had, as I have narrated elsewhere, rapidly modulated into civilization. First, as the reader may recollect, upon my final engagement of him at Bristol, he began to wash his face; then he extended the same desirable discipline to his hands, at the same time relieving those latter organs from duties better performed by knives and forks; then, as I had dressed

him tolerably smartly, he learned that buttons were intended to be in button-holes, and not out of them, as he had previously imagined; and, finally, having a great aptitude for small jobs, and a very ardent devotion to the fairer sex, he became a great favourite, not merely with Miss Waldgrave's maid in particular, but generally with the female portion of the household at Beauchamp Hall, who bestowed great pains upon his manners, and, I doubt not, his morals too, and accordingly were the means of reclaiming him more rapidly than any other animal of equal wildness that I ever heard of. The reader will remember the readiness with which he imitated, as far as circumstances admitted, Ambrose's habit of presenting letters on a

silver salver, and in many other respects he profited largely by the example of good order and civilized habits prevailing at Beauchamp Hall, where he did not by any means consider it necessary to discontinue his visits during the period I have just been describing.

Doddy was a highly imitative as well as amative animal; and whether it was that what he called "coortship" came to him naturally, or that, perceiving that the head gardener—a young, and, I believe, very able man—was making love to Edith's maid, he thought proper to imitate him too, I have not, to this day, accurately ascertained; but, be that as it may, the fair Abigail was touched with his devotion; and though, of course, she tyrannized over

him till he hardly dared call his soul his own, still she accorded him a certain amount of confidence, part of which related to Edith, in return for which she expected from him some amazing amount of revelations about me, which Deodatus, the divinely given, and somewhat otherwise gifted, was a good deal too wide awake to suffer himself to be drawn into.

“She does be pumpin’ me, sir,” said he to me the morning after I received the letter from Hawkins, “askin’ me questions about your coortin’ Miss Ellen.”

“About what?” said I, in the sort of whisper that I believe an hippopotamus indulges in when excited.

“I beg your pardon, sir,” replied the boy, in an agony of terror; “I humbly beg

your pardon if I've done anything amiss. Ave Maria ora pro nobis, — divil blister my tongue if I've said anything wrong. I didn't tell her a word about it—murder! murder!" (aside, "he'll skin me alive, and make tay of me.") "I tould her, sir, that I hadn't had the luck to enter your honner's service until you had left Ballymacrocodile, sir; and that I didn't know when you were goin' back for the weddin'."

"Going to the wedding, you young scoundrel?" said I; "what do you know about my going to the wedding?—you've been peeping into my letters!"

"May Old Nick tear my eyes out, and stick them on his tail to roast, if I ever took a look—good, bad, or indifferent—into any of your letters!" asseverated my

pale and trembling henchman,—“barrin’ looking at the sale, with the flying tom cat on it;” (Hawkins’ crest was a wyvern, or griffin, or some such heraldic poetry of zoology.) “Sure, I wouldn’t do such a dirty trick, and yer honner like a mother to me!”

“But how did you hear about the wedding?” continued I, in anything but a motherly mood or tone. “I only heard of it myself yesterday morning, and the day’s not fixed.”

“That’s what I tould them,” replied Doddy, looking, however, excessively puzzled; “it was just that!”

“You did tell them something,” replied I; “how dared you do that?”

“Divil the much I tould them,” returned

he, "for it wasn't much I knew; it was Miss Maria tould me all about it, and how Miss Edith was ready to cry her eyes out when she heard of it, when we were at the soldier's sessions at Derby, and forbade Miss Maria ever to mention your name before her again; and took and saled up some bits of notes she had, and locked them up in the same place that she kep her father the giniral's picture, rest be to his sowl! and then sat down on the bed and didn't stir till the bell rang for dinner, and Miss Maria came in and found her sitting on the bed just as she left her, with her hands on each side of her, and her head down upon her breast, and she bid her not bother her about her hair, and took all her rings off, and went down to dinner as if she was going to her own funeral."

All this was, to me, perfectly incomprehensible. Why Edith should take any interest in Hawkins' marriage, she not being, to the best of my belief, even acquainted with him—why, even so, I should appear culpable in her eyes, were questions that I could not solve, but that I saw the necessity for solving, for their solution might involve the solution of another and dearer one. Still there came a little gleam of light, the glimmer of a clue, and I resumed my examination of Doddy.

“When did this happen?”

“The day we wint to Derby, sir.”

“Did Maria tell you anything more?”

“Nothin' more, sir, only that Miss Edith has never been herself since that day.”

“And where did Miss Edith learn all this?”

“Miss Wharton told it her, sir.”

“Miss Wharton!” said I; “well, I did not know that she was so deep in the O’Reilly confidence. Did Maria tell you anything about Miss Ellen’s being engaged to Captain Hawkins?”

“Captain Hawkins down at Dunmanway, sir?”

“Yes.”

“I never heard his name named, sir.”

“Then how the deuce did they know about his being going to be married?” asked I, partly puzzled and partly angry.

“I never heard a word about her wedding, sir; faith, he might marry the Queen

of Sheba for anything they'd care about it at Beauchamp."

"Then, who in the devil's name are you talking about? who's Miss Ellen?"

"Miss Ellen O'Reilly, sir, down at Ballymacrocodile."

"And who did Miss Wharton tell Miss Waldgrave?" asked I, slowly, for a strange suspicion suddenly raised its gaunt form in my mind, "who did Miss Wharton tell Miss Waldgrave was engaged to marry Miss O'Reilly."

"Bedad, your honner ought to know that without askin' me," said the boy, looking half bewildered and half sly.

"Who?" repeated I, in a voice of thunder, and, I have no doubt, with an aspect of indescribable ferocity.

"YOURSELF, SIR," howled the terrified Doddy.

A bright flash of light overspread my mental horizon at this simple announcement; it came like lightning, but it remained; the scales fell from my eyes, and in a moment the whole truth stood before me. How strange it seemed then, that, prepared as I was for hostility on the part of Nina, I had never thought of the blow assuming this form. It was plain now, that, baffled in her attempts to obtain a "sensation" by making Johnny miserable, and attributing, not without justice, that failure to me (and, perhaps, in part to Edith), this young wild-cat had revenged her disappointment on us both by instilling into Edith's mind an idea concerning which

her pride and her delicacy alike would deter her from demanding any explanation, whilst, at the same time, it must place me before her eyes as a contemptible and hypocritical deceiver, and her before mine as a fickle, heartless flirt. I ground my teeth so savagely that Doddy thought it necessary to do the same, which recalled his presence to my recollection, fortunately enough, for I was about, according to a custom I have when much excited, to address myself aloud on the subject, in lieu of which I forthwith directed him to saddle a horse.

It was lucky for Nina she was gone. There are times when anger fairly spreads out his dark wings, and rides forth upon the blast, and woe be to those who cross

his path. If the sight, the aspect, and the voice of a man possessed by a devil has power to frighten a young lady into hysterics, I think Miss Nina would, before very many minutes were over, have felt a ball rising in her throat; indeed, it would have been only a strong effort of self-restraint that would have kept my fingers off it. I could have throttled her at that moment.

The events of my life passed rapidly that day. The time requisite to saddle a horse is not very long; two miles of road glide swiftly and smoothly back behind the long canter of a thorough-bred; the old lady at the lodge hobbled out to open the gate, and uttered a faint shriek, as I saved her the trouble by taking it in my stride; I daresay

she thought I was gone mad; and in less than twenty minutes from Doddy's astounding announcement I stood once more in the presence of Edith Waldgrave.

I placed in her hand Hawkins' letter, simply stating that it related to Ellen O'Reilly. I saw a sudden change in her countenance, there was a sweet confusion as she finished it, and, deliberately folding it up, returned it, and looked shyly into my eyes, and a sweeter expression still as I took her hand in mine.

Of what passed between her and me I shall say nothing. There is a time to speak and a time to abstain from speaking, a time to confess and a time to give over confessing, and the latter time, gentle reader, is at hand. Let it suffice to say,

that though Edith and I spent some very happy hours together that day, the first hurried explanation was short, sweet, and decisive.

Lady Elizabeth was somewhat startled with the sudden turn affairs had taken, but being very much pleased with the direction, supposed it was all for the best. Johnny was thunderstruck; the actual real presence of an engagement of marriage was rather more than he could at once swallow. His face at first assumed an expression that I have rarely seen upon the human countenance, but that any one curious in the matter may see represented to the life by offering a dog a glass of water. As the reality of the fact forced itself on his mind, he grew first grave, and then gradually

brightened up, till any one would have said that he was by far the happiest person in that house. Maria, as Doddy informed me afterwards, went into hysterics; and that young Leperello himself, upon my communicating to him the interesting circumstance that I was going to be married, asked with a coaxing leer, "Which of them, your honner?" Upon the answer being given, with a wild howl of "Gloria in excelsis," he flung a somerset, and lighting on his hands, commenced testifying his joy by walking round me just as he had done when I pronounced those ever blessed words, "jump on board." The effect, however, in his top boots and leathers, differed widely from what it was in his rags.

"Get on your legs, you young prodigal,"

said I; "would you ruin me in buckskin gloves, and me about to contract little responsibilities by the dozen?" to which he merely answered with a topsyturvy wink.

My lady mother received the announcement as well as could be expected. Certainly Miss Wallingford was much richer in money, but the house of Waldgrave was richer in blood, and, indeed, had been connected with royalty. My two sisters, Adeline and Gundreda, were delighted, and a long letter from Hawkins answered my announcement, in which he compared himself and me entering the holy state of matrimony at the same time to the Siamese twins, to Castor and Pollux, to twin cherries on one stalk, to Saul and Jonathan, and to bubble-and-squeak. The latter comparison

struck me as being made with more ingenuity than felicity, but I confidently trust that in exchanging the vagrancy of celibacy for the settlement of matrimony, we shall neither of us get out of the frying-pan into the fire.

O'Flaherty wrote me a long letter of condolence, in which, after enumerating the many bachelor enjoyments I was bidding adieu to, he summed up by the practical question, "And what, my dear boy, do you get in exchange for all these? tea and babbies, all your life long. I've a mind to go into mourning for you; but the Lord tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, so I'll take any cigars you have left off your hands. You'll find yourself lonesome without the other boys at first, like a lobster without his shell.

New married couples always do, till they have learned to get into one another's ways and out of one another's way, so if you take my advice, you'll combine society with economy, and well regulated housekeeping with convivial enjoyment, by keeping a table-d'hote for the first six months. I'll mention it at mess."

Ravenswood remarked, that there were those that built upon the sand, and those that built upon the rock, and that my house would stand. He gradually recovered his spirits; and how in due time he commenced again to lay the foundations of a house for his heart to dwell in, may perhaps be found hereafter.

Simpkins, under the burning skies of India, amidst the stern realities of warfare,

shook off the enervating influence of Country Quarters, and became a soldier and a man. He served with credit to himself and his country in the early campaigns against the Sikhs; and when, under the deadly cannonade of Sobraon, the regiment advanced with that unflinching gallantry and unwavering steadiness, before which the wild yet high-couraged hordes of the Punjaub melted away like snow before the sun, he, as well as poor Nugent, found a soldier's grave, on the battle-wasted banks of the Sutlej.

Jenkins, his sword hung up in the halls of Caradoc, from a woodland nest in the neighbourhood of Corwen, looks with a loving eye upon the valley of the Dee; his daily salad is animate with leeks unlimited, and his jokes are current from Oswestry to

Capelcurig, and are even sometimes met with in the neighbourhood of Bangor.

O'Flaherty commands the 120th in a rich Connaught brogue and gorgeous red nose. His unappeasable thirst elicited from Brigadier-general Twentyman, who commanded the brigade at Sobraon, the sarcastic remark, that Colonel O'Flaherty would swallow the Indus, provided there was brandy enough in it—a remark considered smart enough to be repeated at the table of the Commander-in-Chief, who observed, that “he would not lade his ridgment into hell's mouth the worse for that.”

Scattered over the surface of the earth, and many under it, is that light-hearted company that used to assemble round the colours of the 120th, and various have been

the careers of those with whom our wanderings brought us in contact. Mary Anne O'Malley married a quiet, respectable country clergyman. I never saw a confirmed flirt that did not. Ducrow married a popular actress—because Lord Huddleston *admired* her; and I have no present knowledge of the fate of the rest of his brothers in arms.

Of the family of Mr. O'Reilly, of the vagaries of Doddy, of my boy Johnny, their courses and their fates, there may yet be something to be told—but not here. Three times, in a tranquil village church amid the rocks of Derbyshire, was a question put to a listening congregation, who all exchanged looks with one another when it was put; three times its only answer was

an assenting silence, and the day was not far off when a solemn voice at the altar, and a joyous peal in the air, told, in unmistakable accents, at least to one heart, that the confessional had closed upon the revelations of vagabondage, and, absolution once granted to the reclaimed penitent, the curtain had fallen upon the CONFESSIONS OF COUNTRY QUARTERS.

THE END.

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