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LADY SAXONDALE'S CRIMES

VOLUME XIII









"THEY PASSED INTO THE CONSERVATORY"

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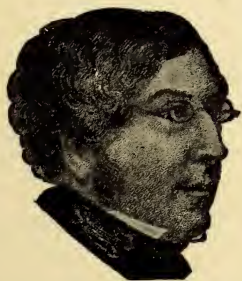
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The Works of  
**George W. M. Reynolds**

**Lady Saxondale's  
Crimes**

Volume III

**The Mysteries of the Court  
of London**



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# REYNOLDS' WORKS

## CHAPTER I

### THE THOROUGHBREDS

ON the following day Mr. Hawkshaw arrived to lunch at Saxondale Castle, shortly after one o'clock, according to invitation given him by the lady of the mansion herself ere he took his departure on the previous evening. He came on a most splendid thoroughbred horse, of which he had spoken the day before, and concerning which Lord Harold had expressed some degree of curiosity. During luncheon, Staunton renewed the conversation relative to the horse, and Mr. Hawkshaw launched forth into enthusiastic eulogies of its brilliant qualities, at the same time describing it as one which only a fearless rider would venture to mount.

"Perhaps," said Lord Harold, with a smile, "you are not aware, Mr. Hawkshaw, that I am considered by my friends to be a most excellent equestrian, and if you will permit me the opportunity, after luncheon, I will convince you whether I am afraid to take your horse at the highest gate we can find in the fields around about."

"I request, Harold, that you will not be so foolish," said Florina, who, notwithstanding her diminished opinion of her brother's rectitude of principle and worth of character, nevertheless still entertained for him too great a sisterly regard not to be frightened at this proposed venture on his part.

"And I also must interpose my authority," said Lady Macdonald, "that is to say, if I possess any, which indeed I hope I do. For people in our sphere of life —"

"My dear aunt," interrupted Staunton, "and you also, Florina, I cannot possibly listen to your fears; or, rather, you must permit me to tell you both that they are quite unfounded. Have I not been out hunting alone? Did I not ride at the celebrated Dunchurch steeplechase?"

"But, my lord," said Lady Saxondale, with an air of grave remonstrance, "I think that your aunt and dear Flo have given you most excellent advice, and if you will allow me to add the weight of mine, I must beg that you think no more of riding Mr. Hawkshaw's horse, — at least, not for the purpose of taking any desperate leaps."

"What does Mr. Hawkshaw himself say?" asked Juliana. "For he, of course, is the best judge respecting the danger to be incurred."

"You shall see me take a gate first," replied the squire, "and then you four ladies can constitute a jury to decide whether Lord Harold shall attempt the same achievement."

"Indeed, if there be any danger," said Juliana, throwing a look of alarm upon her lover, "I cannot think of permitting even you to try the feat."

"Danger, my dear Miss Farefield!" exclaimed the squire, at the same time rewarding her with a look of grateful rapture. "There is none for a really good horseman."

"Nevertheless," said Lady Saxondale, "I would much rather that Lord Harold should follow the advice which his aunt and sister have given him. It is foolish to run risks of this kind."

"Well, we shall see," ejaculated Harold, rising from his seat. "Come, Mr. Hawkshaw, you and I will go down to the stables and have the horse brought out, and the ladies will perhaps join us presently in the park."

No objection was offered to this proposal, and the two gentlemen accordingly withdrew. The ladies then ascended to their chambers to put on their walking attire, and in about half an hour they all four traversed the gardens and entered the park, where Mr. Hawkshaw was already mounted on his splendid horse, showing off its paces to Lord Harold Staunton, who admired the animal exceedingly.

"Let us proceed," said the squire, "toward yonder palings. There is a five-barred gate in that barrier."

Juliana walked by the side of the steed which her admirer rode, and true to the tactics which she had so skilfully

adopted, first to captivate and afterward to secure Mr. Hawkshaw's heart, she talked to him of nothing else but his favourite steed.

"Pray, Harold," said Florina, taking her brother's arm, "do not attempt anything rash. Do not, I beseech you! An accident so soon occurs."

"How is it, Flo," inquired Staunton, "that you are so very anxious concerning me all of a sudden?"

"How can you talk in this manner, Harold?" said his sister, gazing up at him reproachfully as she walked by his side.

"Oh, I thought you were rather cool to me yesterday after my return, and likewise this morning. I did not know, however," continued Staunton, "in what way I had offended you —"

"But whatsoever amount of offence you might give me, Harold," interrupted his sister, "I should still be anxious concerning you, all the same, and therefore I beg that you will undertake nothing rash. Of course I am no judge of horses, but it seems to me that Mr. Hawkshaw's is very spirited, and that it is one which only a person accustomed to ride it, and who therefore knows it well, ought to attempt any bold feat with."

"Well, my dear Flo," returned Harold, carelessly, "we shall see all about it presently. Pray don't alarm yourself beforehand."

Lady Saxondale and Lady Macdonald had followed at a little distance, and were conversing on the same subject, the former being to all appearances quite as averse as the latter that Staunton should take so daring a leap with a steed which he had never ridden before.

In a few minutes the palings skirting the park were reached, and a halt was made. There was a very high gate in that boundary, and this was the one which Mr. Hawkshaw proposed to leap. Juliana raised her eyes toward him with a look of tenderness and alarm, so that the squire could scarcely refrain from bending down and giving utterance to a few words expressive of his rapture at the interest which she thus demonstrated on his behalf. Yet he did restrain himself, because the period which he had prescribed for courtship ere avowing his passion had not yet passed; but then, he looked all he would have said, and the eloquence

of his eyes told a tale satisfactory enough to the intriguing and selfish Miss Farefield.

Taking a proper distance, but with the unconcern and fearlessness of a man who knew perfectly well what his horse could do, and what he himself might in all safety venture, Squire Hawkshaw galloped the steed at the gate and cleared it in the most beautiful style, to the admiration of those who beheld him. Cantering into the middle of the field on the other side of the park railings, he wheeled the horse around, galloped it back again at the gate, and leaped over in the same admirable manner as before.

"There," he said, springing from the steed as he reached the spot where the ladies had remained standing with Lord Harold, "you see that anything can be done with this horse."

"Then I am sure that I need not fear to venture," said the young nobleman, and he advanced to take the bridle from the squire's hand.

"No, Harold," cried Florina, "do not, I beseech you, do not!"

But by the time she had uttered these words her brother had sprung upon the horse, and galloping away, he made a wide circuit, not only to settle himself upon the animal's back and try its paces for himself, but also to convince the squire that he was no mean equestrian.

"Your ladyship need fear nothing," said Mr. Hawkshaw, addressing himself to Florina, "for your brother is quite capable of doing with that horse whatsoever I can do."

"But you are such a superb rider," remarked Juliana, in an undertone, accompanying her compliment with a tender look.

"Lord Harold is as good as I am," returned the squire, surveying Staunton's equestrian performance with the eye of a connoisseur. "See, he is going to take the gate. Stand back a little. Pray, don't be afraid, ladies. I can assure you he is all safe. It is perfectly right, he knows what he is about. Why, he sits upon the back of that horse as if he formed part of it. There, away he goes!"

And away Lord Harold did go, clearing the gate in as fine a style as Mr. Hawkshaw had already twice done. But all in an instant shrieks burst forth from the ladies, and an ejaculation of alarm from the squire, for scarcely had

Staunton leaped the gate when he disappeared from the horse's back, the steed galloped on, and he was left lying in the field.

"O Heaven, he is killed, he is killed!" was the wild cry that issued from Florina's lips, and she sprang frantically toward the gate.

"Do not be alarmed, dear Flo," said Harold, half-raising himself, but apparently with great pain, and then he sank back again.

The gate was opened, and in a moment he was surrounded by all the party. He was very pale, and looked up with anguish on his countenance. Florina threw herself upon her knees by his side, while Mr. Hawkshaw assisted her to raise him. Lady Macdonald was excessively alarmed, Lady Saxondale seemed so, and Juliana was frightened as much as it was in her nature to care for anybody.

"Where are you hurt, Harold? For Heaven's sake, speak!" cried his sister, full of anguish. "Oh, do speak, Harold! Tell me where you are hurt."

"It is nothing — beyond a mere fall — a few bruises," murmured Staunton, as if with difficulty giving utterance to the words.

Mr. Hawkshaw ran his hands over Lord Harold's arms and then his legs, and finding that he did not give vent to any expression of pain, the squire at once concluded that no bones were broken.

"Stand up, my lord, let us assist you to rise. There," he exclaimed, as he and Florina together helped Staunton to regain his feet. "How do you feel now?"

"Better, much better; I am only bruised. Run and get your horse, Hawkshaw. I can stand alone now, or at least supported on my sister's arm. Thanks, dear Flo, for the kind interest you take in me."

Mr. Hawkshaw, now perfectly assured that nothing very serious was the matter with Lord Harold, hastened in pursuit of the steed, which he soon caught; and on leading it back to the spot where the accident had occurred, he found Staunton leaning against the gate, surrounded by the ladies, who were receiving his assurances that he only felt very much shaken, but that there was nothing serious to apprehend. To his sister's proposal that medical assistance should be sent for, he gave a decisive negative, declaring that

he had experienced on former occasions more severe falls than the present one.

"The best thing you can do, my lord," said Hawkshaw, "is to get back to the castle and go to bed. You must lie up for two or three days, at the end of which time you will be perfectly recovered."

"Decidedly I shall follow your advice," responded Staunton. "Come, let me lean on your arm, Flo, and yours, too, aunt, for I feel somewhat weak, which is to be expected."

"God be thanked it is no worse!" said Lady Macdonald, as she gave her nephew her arm, while Florina fervently echoed her elderly relative's words.

"I can't fancy how the deuce you could have managed it," said Mr. Hawkshaw, leading his horse by the bridle, as the party moved slowly onward toward the castle. "You cleared the gate in beautiful style; nobody could have done it better. I watched you as narrowly as possible the whole time, and it seemed to me that when landing on the opposite side you were as firm in your saddle as at the moment the horse made the spring. But all of a sudden you disappeared as if shot by some unseen hand."

"I myself can scarcely tell how it did occur," replied Harold, speaking in a voice that seemed very feeble and weak. "I don't know whether it was a sudden dizziness, or a loss of balance, or whether the horse shied at the moment —"

"No, that I can swear he didn't," exclaimed Hawkshaw. "He never swerved a hair's breadth to right or left, but went straight on as he always does. However, the harm's done, and there is no more use in talking about it. At the same time, my lord, I don't think that your reputation need be considered damaged as a good equestrian, for you certainly took the gate gallantly, and there is no mistake about that."

The party reached the castle, and Lord Harold was conducted up to his chamber, where he got to bed, declaring his intention of remaining there for a day or two. The incident appeared to throw a damp upon the spirits of every one, the gloom being genuine in some respects, feigned, no doubt, in others. Mr. Hawkshaw, who was a generous and frank-hearted man, expressed himself in the kindest terms relative to Harold, and two or three times in the course of the day he ascended to his lordship's chamber to inquire how he felt.



Florina would have remained there altogether to attend upon her brother, but Harold preferred being left alone, as he said, that the shock which he had sustained had left an exceeding drowsiness behind it. Mr. Hawkshaw stayed to dinner, which was served up as usual between six and seven o'clock. He and Juliana walked out together in the garden afterward, the other ladies remaining indoors. Between eight and nine o'clock the squire and Miss Farefield ascended to the drawing-room, where Lady Saxondale, Lady Macdonald, and Florina were seated.

"How gets on the patient?" asked the squire. "With your ladyship's permission I will pay him another visit, and then perhaps he will like to be left quiet for the rest of the evening."

"Do so," responded Lady Saxondale, to whom the remark was addressed. "I will accompany you. And, Florina, perhaps you will come with us?"

The three accordingly proceeded to Staunton's chamber, and in answer to their queries he said that he felt very stiff and sore, that he was much bruised, and feared he should be unable to leave his chamber for some days. Florina again urged the necessity of having professional assistance, but her brother said that it was useless, and Mr. Hawkshaw himself did not consider it to be by any means necessary, adding that a good night's rest would do wonders for him.

"We will therefore leave his lordship to his repose," said Lady Saxondale. "The bell-pull is within your reach, and I have given orders that your slightest wants or wishes are to be attended to."

"My grateful thanks are due to your ladyship," replied Staunton, with as much respect as if not the slightest improper intimacy had ever taken place between himself and the splendid mistress of the castle.

Her ladyship, Florina, and Mr. Hawkshaw wished Harold good night, and quitted the chamber, returning to the drawing-room, where they reported to Lady Macdonald and Juliana how the patient was getting on.

"I must now leave you to amuse yourselves as best you can for ten minutes or a quarter of an hour," said Lady Saxondale, "while I repair to the library to write a few letters."

Thus speaking, she quitted the room. But her absence was not longer than she had specified, and on her return she sat down to join in the conversation with her daughter and her guests.

## CHAPTER II

### A TRAGEDY

It was about half-past eight o'clock on this same evening of which we are speaking, that Mr. Gunthorpe and William Deveril set out on foot from a hotel at Gainsborough, where they had arrived during the afternoon, and they proceeded along the bank of the river toward Saxondale Castle. The sun had gone down half an hour previously, the twilight was waning, the dusk was setting in, but by the appearance of the evening there was no probability of the darkness being so great as to render the walk by the side of the Trent at all dangerous. Deveril, moreover, had been there before, and perfectly remembered the various features of the route.

"I wonder whether the fellow Chiffin will keep his appointment," said Mr. Gunthorpe, after they had walked a considerable distance, and it was now past nine o'clock.

"I think there can be no doubt of it," replied Deveril. "The man is evidently one who will do anything for money, and the prospect of receiving a large reward from you, sir, will win him over to our interests. But really I am quite ashamed when I think of all the trouble you are taking on my behalf, and what is more still, all the money you are spending."

"Stuff and nonsense!" ejaculated Mr. Gunthorpe, petulantly. "How often am I to tell you not to address me in that way? If you ever speak to me again in such terms, I shall think that you mean intentionally to offend me."

"No, my dear sir, you cannot think that, because you know it to be impossible. On the contrary, you would doubtless consider it very extraordinary if I did not express all my gratitude toward you. Ah! it was here," suddenly exclaimed Deveril, "that I rescued that strange woman

from drowning, and yonder is the cottage to which we were both conveyed. You perceive that glimmering light?"

"Yes," said Mr. Gunthorpe, "and I tell you what, William, I feel uncommonly thirsty, and we will just step out of our way that much, and call upon those good peasants. There is plenty of time, for Chiffin will of course wait for us. That confounded soup at the hotel in Gainsborough was so salt that it has left my throat as dry as if I had been eating red herrings."

Mr. Gunthorpe and Deveril accordingly turned away from the bank of the river and approached the cottage, which they reached in a few minutes. On knocking at the door it was opened by the peasant himself, who, instantaneously recognizing Deveril as the light from the room streamed upon his countenance, gave vent to an ejaculation of surprise and joy.

"This is kind of you, sir, to come and see us again. Walk in, sir. Mother, here is Mr. Deveril, and another gentleman along with him."

"They are both heartily welcome," said the old woman, making her appearance, and in the kindness of her heart she grasped Deveril's hand.

Our young hero and Mr. Gunthorpe entered the little sitting-room of the cottage, where the old woman's daughter welcomed Deveril in her turn. But there were two other persons in this room, — two females. One was handsomely dressed, and had the air, if not exactly of a lady, at least of a person in good circumstances, while the other, who appeared to be her maid, carried a large brown paper parcel in her hand. It immediately struck Deveril that he had seen the countenance of the lady before, but he could not at the instant recollect when or where.

"Sit down, gentlemen," said the old woman, bustling about to give Mr. Gunthorpe and our hero chairs; "there's plenty of room. Well, we have got company this evening. Who would have thought it? This lady and her maid have taken a longer walk than they meant to do, as they say, and were so tired they were obliged to step in and sit down for a few minutes. But what will you take, gentlemen? Our fare is humble, yet such as it is, you are most welcome."

"My friend here," answered Deveril, "is exceedingly thirsty. A draught of water, or milk —"

“ Or cider? ” exclaimed the old woman. “ We have got some good cider, and this lady and her maid have pronounced it excellent.”

“ Yes, that assurance I can certainly give you, gentlemen,” said the handsomely dressed female, who had never taken her fine dark eyes off Deveril since the first moment he entered the cottage, for she was evidently struck by the exceeding beauty of his person, as well perhaps by having heard his name mentioned by the old woman’s son when he made his appearance.

Deveril bowed courteously as she spoke, and again it struck him that he had seen her before.

“ If it be not impertinent, sir,” she said, “ are you the Mr. Deveril whose name created so much sympathy on a recent occasion? ” Then as our hero again bowed, though somewhat distantly, — for he did not much like the hardihood of his questioner’s looks, — she exclaimed, “ Ah! I am well acquainted with Lord Harold Staunton, and his intimate friend Lord Saxondale too.”

“ Do you come from London, then? ” inquired Mr. Gunthorpe, in his blunt manner.

“ I reside habitually in London,” was the response, “ but a little business has brought me down into these parts. I dare say,” added the lady, “ that my name is not unfamiliar to you, gentlemen. I am Mademoiselle d’Alembert of the Italian Opera.”

“ Ah! ” ejaculated Deveril, now instantaneously recollecting where he had seen her countenance before.

“ Yes, that is my name,” she continued, flattering herself that it was in admiring surprise that the young gentleman had sent forth that exclamation. “ But come,” she added, addressing herself to her soubrette; “ we must be off.”

Rising from her seat, she ostentatiously took from her purse a sovereign, which she tendered to the old woman of the cottage, who literally confounded herself in curtsies at this unlooked-for liberality, but Mademoiselle d’Alembert, turning abruptly away with the air of one who does not require thanks for any evidence of her bounty, said, in a sort of half-whisper to our hero, “ If, on your return to London, Mr. Deveril, you would favour me with a call at Evergreen Villa, in the Seven Sisters Road, Holloway, I shall be happy to receive you.”

"I thank you, mademoiselle," replied William, bowing coldly and distantly, "but I shall not be enabled to avail myself of your polite invitation."

The dark eyes of Emily Archer flashed with sudden fires, her countenance became crimson, she bit her lip, and was evidently about to give utterance to some angry ejaculation, for she was deeply mortified, but restraining herself, she passed on without saying a word, flouncing indignantly out of the cottage, followed by the soubrette, who turned up her nose with a half-grimace at both Deveril and Mr. Gunthorpe as she whisked by them.

"Ah! they be London folks, I see," said the old woman. "They give their gold, but they also give themselves airs."

The cider was now produced. Mr. Gunthorpe and Deveril each took a glass, and pronounced it excellent.

"I wonder what that woman and her servant can be doing out here at such a time in the evening," observed Mr. Gunthorpe to our hero. "It's very strange, is it not? But didn't she say she was acquainted with Lord Saxondale? Perhaps she has come after him. However, it's no business of ours." Then turning to the peasant woman, he said, "You behaved most kindly to my friend here on a recent occasion, and though I have no doubt he testified his gratitude, yet you must permit me to show mine on his behalf."

With these words Mr. Gunthorpe put five sovereigns upon the table, and then hurried out of the cottage, accompanied by William Deveril, but followed to the door by the old woman, her son, and her daughter, who all three poured forth their most heartfelt gratitude for this proof of generosity. And true generosity it was, — the money being given from motives of the purest kindness, very different indeed from the ostentation which had ere now accompanied the gift of Emily Archer.

Mr. Gunthorpe and Deveril sped away from the cottage, and in a few minutes reached the bank of the river, where they were almost immediately joined by Chiffin the Cannibal, who was coming from the direction of Saxondale Castle. The ruffian had his club under his arm, and his hands thrust into the pockets of his great rough shaggy coat; his battered white hat was cocked a little on one side, and the blue smoke was curling up from the bowl of a short pipe which he held in his mouth.

“ Well, gentlemen,” he said, “ so you are come according to appointment? My eyes, what a lark I have just had! There was two women a little way farther on in that direction,” jerking his thumb over his shoulder toward the castle, “ and when they saw me they screeched out as if they took me for a highwayman. Now really, gentlemen, I think I look a trifle more respectable than that, don’t I? ” and Mr. Chiffin gave a deep, chuckling laugh at what he considered to be the merriness of his conceit.

“ Ah, I suppose they are the same we saw just now at the hut,” said Mr. Gunthorpe. “ Is it possible that they are going to the castle? ”

“ Well, it looks like it,” responded Chiffin. “ But, I say, gentlemen, if anything is to be done to-night, we must look sharp. For it’s now close upon ten o’clock, and at eleven, you know, her ladyship will peep into the chapel of the castle to see if I am there.”

“ Well,” said Mr. Gunthorpe, “ you are to introduce us thither along with you. I suppose there are plenty of places where we can be secreted, while you hold your discourse with her ladyship? ”

“ Plenty,” answered Chiffin. “ There’s the steps leading from the vestiary down into the vaults; you can stand there just inside the door. Or what’s better, perhaps, there’s the tombs, behind one of which you can hide as nice as possible; ’cause why, I can walk as if quite promiscuous in there, while chatting with her ladyship. But mind, whatever she wants done I am going to ask a blessed high reward, and if she agrees, you’ve got to double it.”

“ The bargain is well understood,” answered Mr. Gunthorpe. “ But now tell us how you propose to introduce us into the castle, for we don’t want to stand the chance of being shot at like burglars.”

“ No fear of that, sir,” replied Chiffin. “ It’s on the western side that overlooks the river. The wall comes flush down into the water — ”

“ Then how the deuce are we to get in? ” demanded Mr. Gunthorpe.

“ Why, you see, sir, the river’s quite shallow — not knee-deep — all along just under the wall, and it goes shelving down so gradual that there’s no chance of getting out of your depth. Then there’s a precious great tree that grows right

up out of the bed of the river against some of the windows, and there's a thundering big bough that goes right bang across one of them windows, and it's as easy climbing up that tree as if it was a ladder. You ain't the thinnest person in the world, sir, but you can manage this here business with no more bother than if you was walking up-stairs. There's a precious sight nastier tree than that to climb, I can tell you, gentlemen, — a leafless one that they sometimes set up at the debtors' door of Newgate," and the Cannibal again sent forth that low, deep chuckle which was horrible to hear.

"Come, a truce to this jesting," said Mr. Gunthorpe, sternly.

During the above colloquy the two gentlemen and Chiffin had been walking hastily in the direction of the castle. At the very moment that those last words had issued in a tone of rebuke from Mr. Gunthorpe's lips, the report of a pistol from a little distance reached their ears. This was followed by a shriek in a female voice, and quick as thought, a second report of a pistol was heard. Then all was still.

"Good God, what is that?" cried Mr. Gunthorpe.

An ejaculation likewise burst from Deveril's lips, and the two gentlemen, accompanied by Chiffin, rushed along the bank of the river in the same direction they were already pursuing, namely, toward the castle, for it was in that same direction whence the pistol-shots and the scream had emanated.

In a few minutes they beheld something dark lying across the pathway ahead; another minute, and they distinctly perceived that there were two objects. The next minute brought them up to the spot, where, to the unspeakable horror and dismay of Mr. Gunthorpe and Deveril, and to the astonishment of Chiffin, they beheld the forms of two females stretched upon the ground.

"The same we saw at the cottage," ejaculated Mr. Gunthorpe, as soon as he could recover the power of speech, while Deveril, stooping down, pronounced life to be extinct in both.

The countenance of the unfortunate Emily Archer was dreadfully disfigured, the pistol-bullet having evidently penetrated her forehead, shattering all the upper part of her head. The soubrette had been killed by a ball penetrating



her heart, for that side of her dress was saturated with blood. It was a sad, a ghastly, a shocking spectacle, and both Mr. Gunthorpe and our hero shuddered from head to foot, as if stricken with an ice-chill.

"Well, I'm blowed," said Chiffin the Cannibal, "if it isn't a deuced lucky thing for me that I was with you gentlemen at the time, or else you would have been sure to say it was me as did it."

"What, in the name of Heaven, is to be done?" exclaimed Deveril, addressing himself to Mr. Gunthorpe, but glancing toward Chiffin. Then, in the Italian language, he said, quickly and whisperingly, "If this man is seen with us, we shall be accused of the deed."

"True," replied Mr. Gunthorpe, now recovering his presence of mind, but still trembling from head to foot with feelings of indescribable horror. Then thrusting his hand into his pocket, he drew forth a quantity of notes and gold, and giving them to Chiffin, said, "Begone! Stay not here for another moment, or no power on earth could make the authorities of justice believe that you are innocent of this!"

"Right enough!" ejaculated the Cannibal, clutching the money with avidity. "But what about the business yonder?" and he jerked his thumb over his shoulder toward the castle.

"Is it possible that you think of staying in this neighbourhood?" demanded Mr. Gunthorpe.

"No, I should rather think not," was the Cannibal's quick response.

"Then away with you!" cried both Mr. Gunthorpe and William Deveril in a breath.

Chiffin sped off across the fields, away from the vicinage of the river, and was speedily lost to the view.

The colloquy just recorded had scarcely occupied a minute, during which Deveril looked about in every direction to see if he could discover the slightest trace of the path which the murderer or murderers had pursued, but there was no indication to lead him to any such discovery. Indeed, it was evident enough that the flight of the author or authors of the terrible deed must have been exceedingly precipitate, for at the moment when Gunthorpe, Deveril, and Chiffin had first come up to the spot, no sound of retreating footsteps had met their ears, no form vanishing in the distance

had caught their glance. One circumstance Deveril now observed, — which was, that the parcel the soubrette carried in her hand when at the cottage had disappeared.

“ Now what is to be done, sir? ” asked Deveril, so soon as the Cannibal had taken his departure.

“ Hasten you to the hut, and bid the peasant repair with all possible speed to Gainsborough, or else to the nearest county magistrate, that information may be given.”

“ And you will remain here? ” asked Deveril.

“ Yes, certainly,” rejoined Mr. Gunthorpe. “ We must take care that the bodies of these unfortunate women are not touched until the authorities have seen them.”

“ But if the murderers should return, you might not be safe? Suffer me to wait here and keep watch, while you repair to the cottage.”

“ No such thing, William! Do as I bid you. Begone at once!” and Mr. Gunthorpe spoke in a very peremptory manner.

Deveril accordingly offered no further remonstrance, but hastened back to the cottage, which was about a mile distant. The inmates were just shutting up the place in preparation for retiring to rest, but they were not as yet in bed. Deveril knocked loudly and impatiently with his clenched hand at the door, and when it was opened, his pale countenance and horrified looks at once showed that something dreadful had occurred. His tale was quickly told, and it naturally produced consternation and dismay on the part of the old woman, her son, and daughter. The man himself, as soon as he had regained his self-possession, at once declared his readiness to hasten to Gainsborough with whatsoever message Deveril thought it right to send, and our hero accordingly bade him use all possible despatch and inform the local constabulary of what had occurred. The peasant set off on his errand, and William Deveril hastened to rejoin Mr. Gunthorpe, whom he found pacing to and fro on the bank of the river close by the spot where the murdered women lay stretched.

Two hours elapsed, during which Mr. Gunthorpe and our hero remained upon the scene of the awful crime that had been perpetrated. But little was the conversation that passed between them; their feelings were too highly wrought — too full of horror and consternation — to enable them to

enter upon deliberate discourse. As for any conjecture relative to the author or authors of the crime, they could offer none. It was indeed shrouded in the darkest, deepest mystery, for according to the appearance presented by the bodies of the murdered women, it was evident their persons had not been rifled.

To add to the utter discomfort of the position of the gentlemen, the sky grew overcast and the rain began to fall, at first only drizzling, but in a little while descending more sharply, until at length it poured down in torrents. They had no umbrellas, but they stood up under the thick canopy of a neighbouring tree, and thus avoided being completely drenched by the rain.

At the expiration of the two hours they heard persons advancing along the bank of the river from the direction of Gainsborough, and half a dozen individuals soon made their appearance. These consisted of a magistrate, a surgeon, and some constables, accompanied also by the peasant. In a few words Mr. Gunthorpe explained to the magistrate the circumstances under which himself and Deveril had discovered the murder. The lanterns which the constables had with them were lighted, the position in which the bodies lay was carefully noted by the authorities, and the magistrate then decided upon having the corpses conveyed to Gainsborough. Some hurdles were procured, and upon these the bodies were placed. The procession then set out along the bank of the river, through the deluging rain, toward the town.

## CHAPTER III

### THE CHAPEL

WE left Lady Saxondale and her guests seated together in conversation in one of the magnificent drawing-rooms of the castle, after a visit had been paid to Lord Harold's chamber. Lady Saxondale herself had retired for ten minutes or a quarter of an hour to the library, as she stated, to write a letter or two, and on her return to the drawing-room she joined in the conversation which was progressing at the time. Mr. Hawkshaw sat with Juliana a little apart from the rest, and though they both mingled in the general discourse, yet he found an opportunity of manifesting these little attentions and paying those assiduities which belong to the pleasing ceremony of courtship. Florina was, alone of all the party, desponding and abstracted. She was previously in low spirits before the accident occurred to her brother, and that circumstance had naturally tended to depress her still more. Lady Macdonald, satisfied that there was nothing alarming in her nephew's position, had regained the wonted equanimity of her disposition. Lady Saxondale studied to render herself as agreeable as she could, and such an attempt on her part was never made in vain. Toward Mr. Hawkshaw she was particularly courteous and affable, although there was nothing in her manner to show that she played the part of a manœuvring mother endeavouring to secure an eligible husband for her daughter. Nor indeed was it at all necessary for her to lend her aid in the matter, as Juliana had played her cards so well that Mr. Hawkshaw was ensnared, to all appearances, beyond the possibility of self-emancipation from the thralldom of love.

At about ten o'clock supper was served up, and Florina suggested that as her brother had taken but little refresh-

ment since the accident of the morning, he might possibly require some now. She accordingly intimated her intention of ascending to his chamber to make the inquiry.

"I will accompany you, Flo," said her ladyship, displaying all the concern of a generous hostess with regard to an invalid guest.

The two ladies thereupon quitted the room, and ascended to Lord Harold's chamber. On reaching the door, Lady Saxondale said, in a whispering voice, "If he sleeps, Flo, it will be a pity to disturb him. Let us enter very carefully indeed."

Lady Saxondale accordingly opened the door with the utmost caution, and listened upon the threshold. The wax lights were burning upon the mantel, and her ladyship, motioning with her hand for Florina to remain where she was, advanced on tiptoe toward the couch; then having peeped between the curtains, she retreated in the same noiseless manner toward Florina, to whom she whispered, "He is sleeping soundly."

The young lady was pleased by this announcement, because the circumstance appeared to indicate an absence of pain on her brother's part, and therefore that he had in reality received no serious injury. Lady Saxondale closed the door again with the same caution she had displayed on opening it, and, accompanied by Florina, she retraced her way to the apartment where the supper was served up.

"What news?" inquired Mr. Hawkshaw, who throughout had shown the most generous interest on Lord Harold's behalf.

"Our patient is sleeping soundly," replied Lady Saxondale, with an air of great satisfaction.

"So much the better," observed Mr. Hawkshaw. "You may depend upon it that in a day or two he will be all right again. If he suffered much pain he would not be sleeping in that manner."

Florina was well pleased to hear an opinion which thus confirmed her own hope, and she felt somewhat more cheerful. It was nearly eleven o'clock before Mr. Hawkshaw took his departure, and ere he withdrew, he asked Lady Saxondale to be allowed to ride over in the morning and make personal inquiries relative to the invalid. This per-

mission was of course accorded, and the squire's horse having been gotten in readiness, he left the castle.

Immediately after he had thus taken his leave, the ladies withdrew to their respective chambers.

It was now eleven o'clock, and Lady Saxondale, on reaching her own room, dismissed her maids for the night, with the intimation that she intended to sit up reading a little while ere she sought her couch. In about a quarter of an hour — when she thought the household was quiet — she stole forth from that chamber, and proceeded to Lord Harold's. There she remained only a few minutes, in conversation with the young nobleman, and on issuing forth again — instead of returning at once to her own room — she proceeded along the galleries leading to the western side of the castle. She extinguished the candle which she carried in her hand, and felt her way through the gloom of those corridors to the chapel, on entering which, she closed the door and then relighted the candle, having brought matches with her for the purpose. This precaution she adopted to prevent any of the inmates of the castle perceiving, from the opposite side of the courtyard, a light moving along the galleries of the uninhabited portion of the building.

Scarcely had she thus obtained a light again, when the sounds of footsteps reached her ears, and forth from the place of tombs emerged the unmistakable form of Chiffin the Cannibal.

"Ah, you have come at last?" said Lady Saxondale.

"Yes," was his growling response, "but I had a deuced great mind not to venture here at all to-night, for there's a precious rum thing took place at a little distance, about two or three mile away toward Gainsborough."

"And what is that?" demanded Lady Saxondale, fixing her eyes upon the ruffian in a penetrating manner.

"Why, nothing more nor less than a double murder," responded Chiffin.

"A double murder?" echoed her ladyship. "What do you mean? Have you —"

"No, not I, and it's a precious lucky thing for me that I had witnesses to the contrary, or else, if I had been seen lurking about in these parts —"

"Witnesses?" ejaculated her ladyship. "Do you mean

me to understand that you brought any of your companions or friends with you?"

"Nothing of the sort," interrupted Chiffin. "But I will tell your ladyship all about it."

"The murder? Speak of that first. Who has been murdered? And what mean you by a double murder?"

"I mean what I say, — that there is two young women lying dead — or at least I left them there — on the river's bank, both killed with pistol-bullets. I heard the report, and so did two gentlemen that was there at the time."

"And you would have me believe," said her ladyship, now fixing her eyes with a still more peculiar look than at first upon the Cannibal, "that this is not your work?"

"It's so like mine that your ladyship can't very easy believe it isn't, but it isn't though, for all that."

"And these women? You say that you have left two gentlemen upon the spot —"

"I have got a little tale to tell your ladyship, and then you will see," continued Chiffin, "that I am a right staunch, trustworthy kind of a fellow. But first of all you must tell me what you wanted me down here for, and all about it."

"I do not require your services just at present," answered Lady Saxondale. "Circumstances have changed. But of course I shall reward you for your trouble, and it may be that in two or three weeks I shall need your aid. I will however write to you again. Here, take this packet; it contains a recompense which I have no doubt will satisfy you. And now what have you to tell me?"

"Of course," replied Chiffin, taking the little parcel, and weighing it for a moment in his hand so as to calculate the probable amount of gold it might contain, "your ladyship will consider that what I am going to tell you is worthy of a further reward?"

"Go on, go on," interrupted Lady Saxondale, impatiently. "You have already received sufficient proofs that I know how to behave liberally."

"Well, you see, ma'am," resumed the Cannibal, "t'other night two gentlemen came to me at Solomon Patch's house in Agar Town, and very perlutely introduced themselves as Mr. Gunthorpe and Mr. Deveril —"

"Ah!" ejaculated Lady Saxondale, with a visible start,

and her face, already pale this night, grew paler still. "But proceed. What did they require of you?"

"They told me that Mr. Deveril was at Gainsborough when your ladyship posted that note to me, that he saw it posted, and that he knew it was you that posted it, and what's more, too, he saw the address."

"But this is absolutely impossible!" cried Lady Saxondale, in mingled amazement and consternation. "You are deceiving me — you have betrayed me."

"Oh, well, if that's your opinion," observed the Cannibal, gruffly, "I may as well be off."

"No, no; proceed with what you have to say. Go on, I will not interrupt you again."

"Well, ma'am, that's what the gentlemen said," continued Chiffin, "and they further stated that for certain reasons of their own they were uncommon anxious to see the contents of the letter. So, as there was nothing particular in it, I did show it to them."

"You showed it to them?" ejaculated Lady Saxondale, angrily, and also in terror.

"Well, I thought it best; they seemed so positive that you had written it, and I couldn't possibly deny it."

"But what in Heaven's name must they think now?" murmured Lady Saxondale, in accents of despair.

"Don't you see, ma'am, I was acting in your interest? I wanted to draw the gentlemen out, and ascertain what object they had in view. So I pretended to tumble into their schemes, and they said that whatever reward you offered me for doing what you required, they would double it. Then they said that they should come down here into Lincolnshire, and I must manage to make them overhear what was to take place betwixt you and me. Now you know how it was they were in these parts to-night. But a very few minutes after I had joined them, we heard the report of pistol-shots; we rushed along the bank, and found the two dead bodies. Then the gentlemen got frightened at my being with them; they didn't think me quite respectable enough, I suppose, and so they bundled me off at once, giving up their scheme of getting into the castle. At first I thought of cutting away out of the neighbourhood as hard as I could, but then I reflected that it was better to come and see your ladyship, and tell you what is in the wind in respect to Mr.



Deveril and Mr. Gunthorpe. So I made a circuit and got back again to the castle, and that's all I have to tell you. Now, if your ladyship thinks this is worth anything — ”

“ Yes, you know I shall reward you,” interrupted Lady Saxondale, impatiently. “ But did you really mean to introduce these personages into the castle? ”

“ Well, to speak the truth,” answered Chiffin, “ I should have done so, but then I should have took uncommon good care to tip you a wink, or drop you a word in a whisper, not to talk on any serious business. The fact is, I wanted to see this matter out with them two gentlemen, and that's all about it.”

Lady Saxondale said not another word, but drawing forth her purse, which contained notes and gold, she emptied it into the Cannibal's hand. His eyes glittered with a horrible reptile light, as he thought to himself that what with the money he had received from Mr. Gunthorpe, and the two separate sums he had just obtained from Lady Saxondale, he had made an excellent evening's work of it.

“ And so, ma'am, you have nothing more for me to do to-night? ” he resumed, as he consigned the money to his pocket.

“ Nothing. When I need your services again, I will write to you. You will do well to get out of this neighbourhood as quick as possible.”

“ I mean to do so. Thank you for the advice, ma'am; I have no inclination to get took up on suspicion of doing what I didn't do.”

“ But one word more,” said Lady Saxondale. “ It is probable that Mr. Gunthorpe and Mr. Deveril may seek you out again. If so, can I rely upon your letting me know what they want of you? You are well aware that your reward will not be deficient.”

“ Depend upon it, ma'am, you sha'n't be kept in the dark,” responded Chiffin.

“ But still one word more,” remarked Lady Saxondale, after a few instants' deep reflection. “ You are going back to London — ”

“ Yes, I shall walk all the rest of this night.”

“ Well, well, you are going back to London, I say, and no doubt Mr. Gunthorpe and Mr. Deveril will be going back to London also. Now, if they should both visit you again at

that place in Agar Town, are there no means — But you understand me?" and the lady looked with dark and ominous significancy at the Cannibal.

"Well, I think I do, ma'am," he replied, a horrible leer corroborating his words. "Yes, it's quite possible for them two gentlemen to tumble down into a cellar at the Billy Goat and break their necks, or disappear somehow or another in such an unaccountable way that their friends shall never know what the deuce to think of it —"

"I do not wish to hear any more," interrupted Lady Saxondale. Then, in a low, murmuring voice, she added, as she again fixed her eyes with a look of deep meaning upon the Cannibal, "But this much I may say, I dislike those two persons so much that if you did happen to come with the intelligence that they had disappeared so unaccountably as you state, I think that in my satisfaction I should make you a present of a couple of thousand guineas."

"Ah, that's something like!" exclaimed the Cannibal, a ferocious joy appearing upon his countenance. "Not another word, ma'am, upon the subject. I dare say you will see me again before long."

"Every Monday and Thursday night," added Lady Saxondale, "at eleven o'clock, I shall look into the chapel. And now you must take your departure."

Chiffin delayed not to follow this intimation, and succeeded in effecting his egress from the building by means of the window in the adjacent tapestry chamber.

Lady Saxondale, extinguishing the light, regained her own chamber, without being observed by any inmate of the castle, and when she was alone, she sat down and gave way to her reflections.

"Can that man be trusted?" she asked herself. "Did he not meditate treachery toward me when agreeing to admit that odious Gunthorpe and that Deveril — who is alike loved and detested — into the castle? I can scarcely understand the true meaning of the villain's conduct. But no matter. I will write to him no more; nor will I further place myself in his power. If the hints I have thrown out and the immensity of the reward I have offered shall tempt him to remove these enemies from my path, so much the better; and if he should ever dare to proclaim that he received the hint from me, who would believe him? No one. But how

could it have been that William Deveril was at Gainsborough the other day? Was it to obtain a secret interview with Florina? Ah, and that girl's coolness and reserve toward me! Yes, yes, assuredly she has seen Deveril, and he has done his best to prejudice her against me. But I will defeat all my enemies yet; I will defeat them, and I will triumph."

But, oh, at what a price were Lady Saxondale's victories to be won and triumphs to be accomplished? She herself shuddered at the idea.

On the following morning, when the postman from Gainsborough called at Saxondale Castle with letters for some of its inmates, he related to the domestics such particulars of the horrible and mysterious murder which had taken place on the previous night, as were current through the town. Lady Saxondale had not yet descended from her own chamber, and Lucilla, one of her maids, brought her up the intelligence which she had just received from the other servants after the postman had called. Her ladyship, who could not of course admit that she had received the same tidings during the past night, affected to be alike shocked and amazed. She asked for further particulars. Lucilla went on to inform her that Mr. Gunthorpe and Mr. Deveril had discovered the bodies, and that they were going to be examined as witnesses at the coroner's inquest in the course of the morning. Lady Saxondale inquired if suspicion attached itself to any one, but on this point the maid could give her no explanation.

On descending to the breakfast-parlour, Lady Saxondale found Lady Macdonald, Juliana, and Florina already assembled there. The tidings had reached their ears, and they were unfeignedly shocked and astounded. Lady Saxondale attentively watched Florina's countenance when the name of William Deveril was mentioned, and she saw that the young damsel exhibited signs of considerable emotion. Her ladyship was half-inclined, through sheer maliciousness, to throw out a hint that Mr. Gunthorpe and the young artist were themselves suspected of the crime, but this she felt would be too preposterous, as not a word to that effect had been mentioned by the postman or by the domestics.

"Have you seen Lord Harold this morning?" inquired Lady Saxondale of Florina.

“ I have, and I am grieved to say that he is not so well as I had hoped and expected to find him. He has passed a good night, but it has not rendered him the benefit which might have been anticipated.”

“ Doubtless he feels the bruises more to-day,” said Lady Macdonald, “ than he even did yesterday. It is always the case, and persons in our sphere of life,” she added, using her favourite expression, “ are more tender and delicate than the lower orders, who think nothing of common accidents.”

“ Is your brother acquainted with the horrible tragedy the intelligence of which has just reached us? ” asked Lady Saxondale, again addressing herself to Florina.

“ I thought it better to tell him of it,” she replied. “ An invalid is always more or less nervous; and I was fearful that he might feel the shock, if the tidings were too abruptly communicated. For, oh! there is something truly horrible in the reflection that while we were all seated together in the drawing-room last evening, and Harold was slumbering profoundly in his couch, such a terrific crime was being accomplished within two or three miles of the castle, and we utterly unsuspecting of the occurrence! ”

“ It is indeed very terrible — very shocking,” observed Lady Saxondale. “ It quite makes one shudder.”

## CHAPTER IV

### THE INQUEST

At a public-house on the outskirts of Gainsborough nearest to the point whence the mournful procession had started with the two dead bodies on the preceding night, the coroner's inquest was held at midday. As might be expected, the tragedy had produced the utmost consternation throughout the town and neighbourhood, and the public-house where the corpses had been deposited was surrounded from an early hour in the morning by a crowd of persons, all anxious to obtain any additional particulars that might transpire.

At twelve o'clock, as above stated, the coroner arrived, and the proceedings were opened in the largest room which the public-house contained. A jury was speedily sworn in, and the various witnesses were kept together in an adjoining apartment, — Mr. Gunthorpe, Deveril, and the peasant being amongst them.

The coroner and jury, having viewed the two bodies, — which were in a third room, and had in the meantime undergone a surgical examination, — commenced the proceedings.

The first witness called was the landlord of a hotel in the town. He deposed that the deceased lady, accompanied by her maid, had arrived at his establishment at about three o'clock on the preceding day. They had travelled post from Lincoln, and on the lady's box was the name of Mademoiselle d'Alembert, but she appeared to be an English woman by her speech and accent. She had dined by herself in a private room at about five o'clock, her maid having previously partaken of refreshments in the servants' room of the hotel. At seven o'clock Mademoiselle d'Alembert had tea; shortly after which she and her servant went out to-

gether, mademoiselle intimating to the landlady that they were going to visit some friends whom she had in Gainsborough, and that they might not be home till eleven o'clock. The landlord had noticed that the maid carried a large brown paper parcel in her hand, but what it contained he did not know, and had not given the matter a thought at the time. From that moment he had not seen the deceased females again.

The peasant was the next witness called in. He stated that at about nine o'clock the lady and her maid approached the cottage where he dwelt with his mother and sister, and as he was standing outside the door at the time, they asked him to be permitted to sit down for a little while, as they had taken a longer walk than they had at first intended, and were tired. They were invited to enter; they sat down, and such refreshments as the cottage afforded were offered, of which they partook. Soon afterward two gentlemen came to the cottage, one having been there before some few days previously. The peasant then described how Mr. Deveril saved a woman from drowning on the occasion to which he referred, and how that circumstance had rendered him an inmate of the cottage for a whole night. The peasant, in answer to the coroner, stated that it was perfectly evident that Mr. Gunthorpe and Mr. Deveril were totally unknown to the two females previous to meeting them there, as he gathered from the conversation which passed between them at the time. The lady and her maid took their departure, but no one inside the cottage at the time had any opportunity of perceiving in what direction they proceeded. The two gentlemen waited perhaps ten minutes longer, and gave his (the peasant's) mother five sovereigns on account of the kind treatment one of them had experienced, as previously described, at the cottage. It was perhaps three-quarters of an hour afterward that Mr. Deveril came rushing back with horrified looks, bearing the intelligence that the two females were murdered, and ordering him (the peasant) to proceed at once to Gainsborough and give the alarm.

William Deveril was the next witness called in. He stated that he had arrived with his friend Mr. Gunthorpe at Gainsborough on the previous day, and that in the evening they set out along the bank of the river for the purpose of proceeding to Saxondale Castle. He then described how he and

Mr. Gunthorpe had called at the cottage, how they met the two deceased females there, how one of them had introduced herself as Mademoiselle d'Alembert, of the Italian Opera, and how she had likewise mentioned her knowledge of Lord Saxondale and Lord Harold Staunton. Here the coroner asked Deveril if there were any reason to suppose that the deceased were on their way to Saxondale Castle, but our hero could not hazard a conjecture on the subject, much less speak with any degree of certainty. He then proceeded to describe how himself and Mr. Gunthorpe, after leaving the cottage, had heard the pistol-shots and the scream. There was an interval of not more than a few moments between the shots, and it was immediately after the first that the cry was heard, — the inference being that on one female being suddenly shot dead, the other had screamed out and the next moment met her death likewise. Then William Deveril detailed how he had sped to the cottage to give the alarm, and had subsequently rejoined Mr. Gunthorpe to keep watch until the authorities should come. It appeared that they both noticed that the parcel which the maid had carried was missing.

The coroner having heard Deveril's evidence thought that the jury might dispense with that of Mr. Gunthorpe, as it would merely prove a repetition of the testimony just given.

The magistrate who had proceeded to the spot where the murder was committed was the next witness called in, and he deposed to the circumstance of being summoned thither, and finding the bodies in the condition in which they were almost immediately afterward removed to the public-house at Gainsborough. He had subsequently superintended the search which was made about the persons of the deceased, and had seen that their money and their trinkets were all safe about them, so that the murderer or murderers had not rifled the victims of their property, beyond the large parcel which had been proved to be missing.

The head constable of Gainsborough was next examined. He deposed that he had visited the scene of the tragedy with some of his men on the preceding night, and that he had returned thither immediately after daybreak in the morning. He had narrowly searched all about to discover, if possible, any trace which might afford a clue to the unravelling of the mystery. He had searched for the marks of footsteps

farther along the bank than where the murder had been perpetrated, but the torrents of rain which fell during the night had obliterated all traces of footmarks everywhere roundabout. He had likewise searched in the adjacent fields for any evidence to prove that the parcel had been opened, — if brown paper or string, for instance, had been thrown away, but nothing had transpired to show the track which the murderer or murderers had pursued after committing the crime. He had likewise made inquiries at some of the cottages as to whether any suspicious-looking individuals had been seen lurking about the neighbourhood, but he could obtain no positive information upon the subject.

The surgeon gave his evidence last of all. It was to the effect that Mademoiselle d'Alembert had been shot in the head, her servant through the heart. From certain indications, it was evident that the pistol or pistols must have been fired close to them, and that death must have been instantaneous in both cases.

The examination, which lasted three hours, was now concluded so far as the depositions of the witnesses were concerned, and the coroner summed up to the jury. He represented the deed as one of those mysterious tragedies which occasionally occur, without leaving the slightest clue to the diabolical perpetrators. In the present instance it would appear, judging by all the evidence given, that the author or authors of the crime had been disturbed immediately after its perpetration by the ejaculations of alarm sent forth by Mr. Deveril and Mr. Gunthorpe, and that not having time to rifle the victims, the murderer or murderers had snatched up the parcel and fled precipitately with it. The coroner went very carefully through all the evidence, and one portion of his summing up was too remarkable, for several reasons, not to be recorded here:

“I can conceive, gentlemen, no position more unpleasant for any persons to be placed in than that of Mr. Gunthorpe and Mr. Deveril in the present instance. It is too frequently the case that thoughtless individuals, and those who are in the habit of arriving at rash and hasty conclusions, greedily seize upon the slightest circumstances which seem to be suspicious, and thus do at once affix the taint of suspicion upon innocent persons. I feel it to be my duty to make these remarks upon the present occasion, inasmuch as the discov-



erers of a crime may not incur the risk of being identified with the criminals. In the present case we have two gentlemen who, so far from being in needy circumstances, bounteously reward a poor peasant family for hospitalities and services previously vouchsafed. Accident brings them for the moment in contact with those persons whom they are destined shortly afterward to find stretched lifeless upon the ground. But it is clear that these gentlemen and those victims were previously unacquainted with each other, and that an invitation was given by the lady to one of these gentlemen to visit her in London, which he, however, civilly declined. When these gentlemen discover the bodies, nothing is plundered from them except a parcel which by its size and description probably contained some dress or articles of clothing. The gentlemen, moreover, give a prompt alarm, render all possible assistance, and voluntarily come forward to tender their evidence at this inquest. One of these gentlemen recently saved the life of a female in that very river on the bank of which the present tragedy took place, thus exhibiting a magnanimity and generosity of conduct deserving all our admiration. Gentlemen of the jury, I hope that you will not consider these remarks to be misplaced, as it might have happened to any two of us here to have been on that spot and at that hour last night to make the fearful discovery which was made by those two gentlemen."

When the coroner had concluded his address, the jury deliberated but for a few minutes, and came to a verdict of "Wilful murder against some person or persons unknown."

Thus terminated the proceedings of the coroner's inquest. Mr. Gunthorpe and Deveril returned to the hotel at which they were staying, and there they deliberated together what course they should now pursue. The old gentleman at first proposed that being in the neighbourhood he should pay one more visit to Lady Saxondale, in the hope of being able to induce her to do justice to William Deveril, in respect to the calumnies she had propagated against him, for he thought that he might frighten her into this course by revealing the fact of the discovery that she was in correspondence with such a person as Mr. Chiffin. But upon mature reflection, Mr. Gunthorpe concluded that Lady Saxondale was a woman of such strong effrontery and brazen

hardihood as not to be intimidated by such means, and that she would indignantly deny the circumstance of the alleged communication with Mr. Chiffin. He therefore resolved to return to London with Deveril, and take time to settle the course which was now to be adopted toward her ladyship.

"But Florina?" suggested William, when his old friend had thus imparted his decision. "Will you leave her in the odious atmosphere of Lady Saxondale's iniquity? Oh, my dear sir, if you do indeed possess any influence in that quarter —"

"Enough, William!" interrupted Mr. Gunthorpe. "I can take no step until I return to London. It must be from thence that I shall write to Lady Macdonald, but I faithfully promise you, William, that within a very few days Florina and her aunt shall cease to be inmates of Saxondale Castle. Will that suffice?"

"It will — it must," answered Deveril. "I submit to your opinion and judgment in all things. But when, sir, do you propose to depart?"

"We will go across to Lincoln presently, after dinner," responded Mr. Gunthorpe, "and to-morrow morning we will start by rail for London. Ah! you rogue, you wish to have an opportunity of seeing Florina for a few minutes, but it cannot be on the present occasion, William. I have many things requiring my presence in London."

Mr. Gunthorpe had indeed fathomed our hero's desire, for was it not natural that he should wish to see his well-beloved Florina, if only for a few minutes? And would he not cheerfully have walked across to the grounds of Saxondale Castle in that hope? But he was compelled to bow to Mr. Gunthorpe's decision, and he did so with the best possible grace.

Mr. Hawkshaw, having called at Saxondale Castle in the morning, to inquire after Lord Harold Staunton's health, had intimated his intention of riding across to Gainsborough to learn the fullest particulars of the terrible tragedy of the previous night. He was present throughout a greater portion of the examination before the coroner, and when the inquest was over, he rode back to Saxondale Castle to communicate all he had learned. It was close upon

the dinner hour when he reached the baronial mansion, and he was of course invited to stay, — an invitation which he did not refuse, as the reader scarcely requires to be informed.

“It would appear,” he said, when reciting the particulars of the inquest to the ladies assembled in the drawing-room, “that Mr. Gunthorpe and Mr. Deveril were on their way last night to the castle, when they discovered the murder.”

“It may be so,” observed Lady Saxondale, drawing herself up haughtily, “but they assuredly would not have been received by me.”

Florina, who had started at Mr. Hawkshaw’s announcement, now flung a quick glance of indignation at Lady Saxondale as she thus spoke, — a glance which her ladyship, however, affected not to perceive.

“I must confess,” proceeded Mr. Hawkshaw, who could not understand why Lady Saxondale had spoken in such a manner of Mr. Gunthorpe and our hero, for the rumours and scandals of London life had not reached his ears in Lincolnshire, “that I was exceedingly prepossessed in favour of that Mr. Deveril. He gave his evidence in such a plain, straightforward, manly style. He is such a handsome youth, too, and the coroner paid him the highest compliments.”

Had Mr. Hawkshaw been looking at Florina at the time he thus spoke, he would have observed that her looks were fixed upon him with an expression of gratitude which she herself could not at the moment possibly subdue. Oh, how she longed to start up and accuse Lady Saxondale of all the vile perfidy of which she had been guilty, but she dared not. Deveril’s earnest injunctions to the contrary restrained her.

At this crisis a footman entered to announce that dinner was served up, and the party accordingly descended to the dining-room. After the banquet, Mr. Hawkshaw and Juliana walked out together as usual in the garden, and the moment they were alone, the squire said, “Pray tell me, Miss Farefield, was I indiscreet in mentioning the name of Mr. Deveril before your mother? I think that I was — I fear so.”

“To tell you the truth,” replied Juliana, “that same Mr. Deveril has fallen into sad disgrace with my mother, inasmuch as, presuming on certain kindness which she showed him, he fancied that she was enamoured of him, and

he was arrogant enough — But you understand me, I need say no more.”

“Ah! I regret that I should have alluded to him in the eulogistic terms that I did,” observed Mr. Hawkshaw. “But I will be more guarded in future. It only shows how one may be deceived in a person. I could have sworn that this William Deveril was one of the finest young fellows in heart, as well as in person, I had ever seen in my life, and certainly if I could have got near him through the crowded room, when he had given his testimony, I should have shaken hands with him. But, ah, here is another arrival at the castle! What a number of visitors her ladyship receives.”

This remark was elicited by the sounds of a carriage rolling up to the entrance of the castle, but Juliana, indifferent as to who the arrival might be, and thinking only of riveting the chains of her fascinations still more strongly than ever around Mr. Hawkshaw's heart, turned the conversation away from its previous topic, and skilfully began touching on those themes connected with the sports of the field which were so dear to the squire.

Meanwhile, who was it that had just arrived at the castle? We shall see. But first let us observe that when the post-chaise—for such it was—drove up to the gate, Lady Saxondale was alone in the library, writing some letters. A domestic entered and, handing a card upon a massive silver salver, said, “This gentleman requests to see your ladyship.”

The mistress of the mansion took the card, glanced at it, and read the name of Doctor Ferney.

## CHAPTER V

### THE PHYSICIAN AND THE LADY

FOR some few weeks past, misfortunes and threatening calamities had seemed to strike Lady Saxondale blow after blow, but as each fresh source of inquietude manifested itself, she had assumed new courage to encounter it. Before any of these menacing casualties first transpired, had it been suddenly foretold to her that so many perils were to rise up in rapid succession before her throughout a coming period of but a few weeks, she would have shrunk appalled from the idea of meeting them, — she would have felt that they must prove overwhelming. But she had encountered them nevertheless; she had seen gulf after gulf yawn at her feet, and in the endeavour to stop up one she had with her own hands digged others around about her. All these sources of terror and apprehension had been great, but even as they had multiplied in her path, she had still boldly and resolutely pursued her way, quailing sometimes for a moment it is true, but plucking up her spirit again, and nerving herself with fresh resolution to encounter all obstacles and grapple with all dangers.

Such, up to this point, had been the history of the past few weeks with Lady Saxondale. But now a peril which she had least anticipated, which she had flattered herself to be most remote of all dangers that she stood even the shadow of a chance of encountering, — this one had suddenly presented itself before her. For she trembled to the very nethermost confines of her being at the bare thought of being known as Lady Saxondale to Doctor Ferney, — he who hitherto, for long, long years, had only known her as plain and simple Mrs. Smith.

Was it any wonder, therefore, if the card dropped from

her hand as she took it off the silver salver and caught the name of Doctor Ferney? It did drop, as if from palsied fingers, for the stupor of dismay seized all in a moment upon Lady Saxondale. Yes, it seized upon her in a moment, but its paralyzing effect lasted only for that moment. She recovered her presence of mind as quickly as she had lost it; that is to say, she had recovered it sufficiently to stoop down and pick up the card, a movement which she accomplished so rapidly that it even anticipated that of the servant, who likewise stooped to pick it up. The outward and visible evidences of Lady Saxondale's emotions were so transitory — passing in a swift, brief instant — that the domestic did not notice them, but thought that it was through a pure accident the card had been thus dropped.

“Show Doctor Ferney into this room,” said Lady Saxondale, and though it cost her an almost superhuman effort to speak with a forced calmness, it nevertheless struck her that her voice was hollow and sepulchral, at least it sounded so unto her own ears.

The domestic bowed and withdrew, and the instant he had quitted the library, Lady Saxondale pressed her right hand to her throbbing brows, murmuring, “My God, my God! what will happen next?”

A thunderbolt falling upon her head at that instant would have been mercy, for the wildest, most agonizing terrors were agitating in her brain, as she thought to herself that there was but one possible object for which Doctor Ferney could visit her, — an object which menaced her with utter annihilation. Suddenly, however, a brightening, cheering thought flashed in unto her mind. Doctor Ferney loved her, had loved her for many long, long years, was devoted to that mysterious interest of hers which for the instant she had deemed so imperilled, and he would not betray her, — no, she felt assured that he would not. At a glance, too, of her mental vision, she reviewed the circumstances of their recent meeting, and how he had solemnly proclaimed his readiness to lay down his life for her rather than breathe a word that should hurt her. She reflected likewise on the amiability of his disposition, the generosity of his nature, and she thought also of the immense power of her own charms, her own fascinations. By the time, therefore, that the door opened again, Lady Saxondale was herself once

more, — strong-minded, bold, courageous, resolute, prepared for any emergency. But she remained seated at the table with her back toward the opening door, that a too sudden discovery of her identity on the part of the physician should not elicit from him an ejaculation that would excite the astonishment of the domestic. Nevertheless, Lady Saxondale felt more than half-persuaded that the precaution was unnecessary, for must he not have already discovered that Mrs. Smith and Lady Saxondale were one and the same? And was it not on account of this discovery that he had come to visit her now?

“Doctor Ferney,” exclaimed the domestic, announcing the physician in the usual way, and then the door of the library closed again.

Lady Saxondale rose from the table, but the instant that Doctor Ferney caught a glimpse of her countenance, he did give vent to an ejaculation of wonder and amazement and he staggered back as if stricken a fierce blow by the hand of an invisible giant.

“Yes, Doctor Ferney,” said her ladyship, extending her hand with the most gracious affability toward him, “it is I, and now the mystery is cleared up. Mrs. Smith exists for you no longer.”

“Is it possible? Is it possible?” murmured the doctor, with confusion in his brain, and he took the proffered hand in a mechanical, unconscious manner.

“My dear friend, pray be seated,” said her ladyship. “Come, place yourself on this sofa, and I will sit down by your side. What has procured me the pleasure of your visit?”

“And you are Lady Saxondale?” he said, still gazing with a sort of vacant incredulity upon the mistress of the castle, “you are Lady Saxondale?”

“And most welcome are you at Saxondale Castle. But do tell me, my dear Doctor Ferney, what has brought you hither? Is there anything amiss? Why do you still gaze upon me in this manner? You really begin to frighten me. Are you not toward me the same kind and devoted friend I have ever thought you?”

“Yes, God grant that I may be enabled to continue so,” was the physician’s solemn response, and now he appeared to be recovering somewhat of his wonted self-possession.

“You will hasten to tell me, then, what has brought you

hither?" said her ladyship, "for it is evident enough that in seeking Lady Saxondale, you did not expect to meet the Mrs. Smith of other times. Therefore I suppose your visit has nothing to do with the circumstances which first rendered us acquainted?"

"No, nothing, nothing," rejoined the doctor, and his answer afforded unspeakable relief to Lady Saxondale. "I have come upon quite another business, but a most unpleasant one, and to tell your ladyship the truth, I know not how to break it to you. Yet why should I not? Doubtless you will be enabled to explain it. God grant that you will be so!"

"Pray tell me, my dear friend, what all this means? You are rendering me exceedingly uneasy."

"Listen then," resumed the doctor, "while I explain myself. You know, Lady Saxondale, the passionate devotion I have ever entertained for all those pursuits which are connected with the mysteries of my profession, and that amongst them, that of anatomical research has not been the least. For many years past, I have, however, practised this branch but little. Excuse me for touching upon such topics, but it is necessary. The other night a dead body was brought to my house, for occasionally I do return to that pursuit which was once the most favourite of all. Well, then, Lady Saxondale, a body was brought to my house. It was the corpse of a female, an elderly one, and the moment I beheld it, I was smitten with a suspicion that the deceased had not come fairly by her death. It bore the external evidences of poison, but not of any common poison, — a poison of a very subtle and peculiar nature, the evidences of which could only be known to the experienced eye. And my suspicion proved correct, for anatomical research showed me that this woman had died by that very poison which I myself had succeeded in eliminating some weeks back, and which I showed to you on the night you visited me at my house."

Lady Saxondale had listened in speechless consternation to the physician's words, but it was with a consternation that was felt inwardly rather than shown outwardly, so that he himself observed not the full effects of what he had said.

"Well," he resumed, "you may suppose, Lady Saxon-



dale, that I was horrified on making this discovery, — nay, more than horrified, I was bewildered and dismayed. To no human being had I ever given the smallest phial of that poison. I never eliminated it but twice. On the first occasion, the bottle which contained it was broken along with several other, as you must remember, on that night when you visited me in Conduit Street.”

“I do remember. It was through my carelessness or awkwardness,” said Lady Saxondale, “and you know how sorry I was. But pray proceed.”

“On the second occasion when I eliminated the poison, I put my own seal upon the cork of the bottle, and I locked it up in a drawer in my laboratory. That bottle is still there; the cork has not been tampered with, the seal has never been broken. And yet, as sure as I am speaking to you now, that woman died of the very poison which I discovered. That it could have been obtained elsewhere was impossible. I am too intimately acquainted with all the fruits of chemical research to admit the supposition for a moment that any other experimentalist has succeeded in eliminating this poison, which is far more powerful than Prussic acid. You may conceive, therefore, how bewildered, how perplexed, how dismayed I was.”

“Naturally so, my dear Doctor Ferney,” observed Lady Saxondale, who was herself far more dismayed than ever the physician could have been, although she concealed the outward expression of her terror with a wonderful dissimulation of a mere ordinary interest in what he was reciting.

“I at once repaired,” resumed the doctor, “to the person who had procured for me the corpse. From him I obtained the name which was on the coffin of the stolen body. Again I must ask you to forgive me the necessity of touching upon details so indelicate, so nauseating to yourself —”

“Make no apology, doctor,” said Lady Saxondale, with every appearance of the utmost affability, “but continue your strange and exciting narrative.”

“Provided with the name of the woman,” continued the physician, “I on the following day, when having an hour’s leisure, instituted the requisite inquiries at the parochial registrar’s office, and discovered that this woman, Mabel Stewart, died at Saxondale House. I then searched a file of newspapers, and found that an inquest had sat upon the

body, and that the verdict attributed her death to apoplexy. Now, Lady Saxondale," added the doctor, "there is something horribly and fearfully mysterious in the death of that woman."

"You astonish me, my dear Doctor Ferney," cried her ladyship, who had no need to affect dismay, for she had only to suffer the real consternation she had felt to appear from behind the mask of dissimulation. "Could the unhappy woman have committed suicide?"

"If so, the phial containing the poison must have been found by her side," responded the physician, "but the evidence given on the inquest clearly proved that no such discovery took place. Death must have been too instantaneous to allow her even a moment's respite to conceal the phial. So soon as one drop — one single drop of that colourless fluid — touched her throat life was extinct. It is clear beyond the possibility of doubt — too horribly clear indeed — that Mabel Stewart was murdered."

"Murdered," ejaculated Lady Saxondale, "and beneath my roof!"

"It was even so," rejoined the doctor, in a mournful voice. "But how could the poison have been obtained? Ah, God forgive me if I wrong you, as I am sure I must, but a frightful suspicion arose in my mind — Indeed, it was the only possible means of accounting for an incident which would otherwise be utterly inexplicable —"

"Name that suspicion: what was it, Doctor Ferney?" and for the second time on the evening of which we are speaking did Lady Saxondale's voice sound hollow and sepulchral to her own ears.

"I dare not name that suspicion," murmured the physician. "My God! when I look at you, how can I possibly name it?"

"But you must, doctor, for I see that there is something to explain away."

"Until this night — as you are aware — I knew not that Mrs. Smith and Lady Saxondale were identical," continued the physician, in a slow and hesitating manner. "But I feared that she who I believed to be Mrs. Smith had taken the phial from my laboratory on that night when she visited me, and that she had carelessly or thoughtlessly communicated the nature of the poison to some one else at Saxondale

House, and hence the catastrophe. Therefore, now that I find Mrs. Smith identified with Lady Saxondale, you can full well understand with what diffidence it is that I am compelled to repeat my suspicion to your face, that your ladyship took away that bottle of poison with you on that particular night."

"Doctor Ferney, can you believe me capable of having used the venom for a murderous purpose?" and Lady Saxondale spoke in a voice of mild and melancholy rebuke, for she knew the physician's character too well to assume indignation with him.

"Oh, tell me that you took the phial," he said, with far greater excitement than it was his wont to display, "and that it must have fallen into villainous and unscrupulous hands. Tell me this — tell me anything that will still enable me to contemplate you on that high pedestal which you have ever occupied in my mind."

"Well, then, my dear Doctor Ferney," said her ladyship, taking his hand, and looking in an appealing manner up into his countenance, "I must plead guilty to that little act which you have named. I will not stigmatize myself with the commission of a theft, because in respect to a friend such as you, it cannot be regarded in that light, but it was through curiosity that I took it. You know how deeply interested I felt in your discoveries —"

"Ah! but now that I bethink me," interrupted Doctor Ferney, "I cannot feel otherwise than deeply, deeply grieved to hear that you did take that phial. The deed was not well," he continued, in a tone of exceeding mournfulness and with corresponding looks. "It almost makes me regret, Lady Saxondale, that I lent myself to that transaction which nineteen years ago —"

"For God's sake," murmured the unhappy woman, clasping her hands appealingly, and casting her shuddering looks around, "do not allude to it. The very walls have ears. Oh, my dear Doctor Ferney, did you not assure me but a short time back, at your house, that my secret was sacred, that it was my own mystery, into which you would never seek to penetrate? I beseech and implore that you will not fly from your word."

"But what am I to do in this present case? Let us think no more of the past for the moment. Here, Lady Saxondale,

has a foul murder come to my knowledge. It is a murder perpetrated by means of a venom which I myself discovered and I also am made the discoverer of the awful tragedy it has produced. The finger of God is in all this; it is Heaven itself which is prompting me on to bring to justice the perpetrator of that crime. What, then, I ask, am I to do? This crime was committed under your roof. God forbid that I should attribute it to you. No, it were impossible. If you then be guiltless, will you not aid me in fixing upon the guilty one?"

"Oh, but all this is most dreadful," murmured Lady Saxondale, still with clasped hands, still with appealing looks, still with ineffable anguish in every lineament of her pale countenance. "If an exposure be made, must I not confess that I purloined the phial of poison from your house? What will be thought of me? I shall be ruined. A lady who visits a single man stealthily, who is admitted by him into all the mysteries of his laboratory — Ah, Doctor Ferney, have mercy upon me — I beseech you to have mercy upon me! — or else take a dagger and plunge it into this bosom."

Lady Saxondale did not throw herself upon her knees as she thus spoke, but her anguish was truly unfeigned, — her inquietude was too great not to render her affliction genuine. As she sat by the physician's side upon the sofa, she leaned toward him with an agony of appeal in her looks, her attitude, and her gestures, and as she gave utterance to the closing words of her well-nigh frenzied speech, she pressed her hands convulsively to that bosom for which she invoked the dagger as an alternative rather than an exposure.

"Oh, my God! what am I to do?" murmured the physician, and half-averting his countenance, he raised one hand to his pale forehead. "What am I to do?"

"What are you to do?" cried Lady Saxondale. "Bury the subject in oblivion."

"I cannot — I dare not," responded Ferney, shaking his head solemnly, but with a look of the deepest affliction. "If I conceal my knowledge of this crime, I become as it were an accessory to it, and how shall I ever satisfy my own conscience? But tell me, Lady Saxondale, do your suspicions fall upon any one in your household? Reflect, consider, to whom did you ever impart the secret of that subtle poison?"

You must have spoken of it to some one; tell me who it was. For the voice of that murdered woman cries up to Heaven for vengeance, and Heaven itself has marked me as its instrument in bringing the murderer to justice. Nay, more, does it not almost seem as if there were retribution in all this? As if I had penetrated too deeply into the mysteries of nature, had dragged forth unholy secrets, had tasted of the forbidden tree of knowledge, and am now to be punished for my fault? For think you not, Lady Saxondale, that it will be a cruel ordeal for me to proclaim all this to the knowledge of justice and involve your name in the transaction?"

"Doctor Ferney," said her ladyship, now suddenly recalling to mind her predetermination to assert her empire over him through the medium of that love of which she knew herself to be the object, "I believe you once entertained something like a feeling of friendship toward me, perhaps more than friendship —"

"Yes, yes; it was more — it is more," interrupted the physician, "for the sentiment is deathless. Need I tell you that from the first moment I beheld you at my mother's house nineteen years ago your image has never been absent from my mind? You know it — you know it. I gave you that assurance the other day, when you visited my house, and it is the truth, as I repeat it again this evening. But there is a duty, Lady Saxondale, which I have to perform, and though my own heart should break in accomplishing that duty, though it should crush me down with sorrow into the dust to drag your name before the tribunals of the country, yet what alternative have I? Alas! that duty must be performed. Tell me, therefore, on whom must our suspicions settle themselves?"

"Doctor Ferney," said her ladyship, "do not tell me that you ever entertained the slightest love for me. No, no, it is impossible, you could not. If you had, you would not torment me thus now. God God! do you not comprehend the immensity of the evil you will work?"

"I see but two things which can tell against you," answered the doctor. "The first is that you visited my house. Surely the purity of your own life, and my unsullied reputation, will combine to disarm scandal in that respect? And after all, may not a lady visit a physician? Then, as

for your taking the phial, the deed can be well explained as arising from the curiosity of the moment. It is not a watch, nor a purse, nor a jewel, nor anything valuable, and Lady Saxondale need not fear the positive imputation of dishonesty on that account."

"Nevertheless, I conjure you, my dear Doctor Ferney, not to urge this matter. Yes, I entreat, I implore you," continued Lady Saxondale, in accents of the most earnest pleading, "not to bring it before the world."

"Oh, what would you have me think?" exclaimed the physician, suddenly fastening looks of mingled horror and uncertainty upon Lady Saxondale. "No, no, suffer not such a terrible suspicion to remain in my mind. For your own sake, therefore, lose not a moment in furnishing the clue to the unravelment of this mystery."

"But that suspicion which has struck you," said her ladyship, aghast and trembling.

"It is a hideous one, and every moment does it become stronger," rejoined Ferney. "Indeed, there is an excitement in my mind such as for years I have not experienced. Would to Heaven that all this had not occurred."

"Doctor Ferney," said her ladyship, in tones that were now really hollow and sepulchral, not to her own ear alone, but to that of the physician, "you are dragging me on to a revelation which I shudder to contemplate."

"Oh, then my suspicion is confirmed," murmured the medical man, in accents that were low, deep, and full of horror.

"If you have ever loved me, Doctor Ferney," said the wretched Lady Saxondale, sinking upon her knees before him, "could you find it in your heart to send me to the scaffold?"

There was a burst of anguish from Doctor Ferney's lips, and, starting from his seat, he began pacing the room to and fro in terrible agitation. Lady Saxondale, whom he had left kneeling at the sofa whence he had risen, slowly raised herself from that suppliant posture, and, advancing toward him, extended her arms, murmuring in half-smothered accents, "Mercy, mercy!"

The doctor stopped short. He gazed upon that woman whom he had loved so long, so truly, so enduringly; his thoughts were reflected back to those bygone years when he

had first seen her in the bloom of her youthful beauty; and as he beheld her now in the glory of her splendid womanhood, all the freshness of the passion which had been inspired then was resuscitated now. Yet shuddered he not as he reflected that this woman — the object of his love — was a murderess? Recoiled he not from the presence of her upon whose soul lay the weight of so tremendous a crime? He had felt shocked, but the sentiment of horror was absorbed in the profundity of that strange romantic passion which his heart cherished toward her. It was a passion stronger than himself, — a passion which had no hope and no aim, which subsisted not upon expectation, — but was in itself eternal, deathless, immortal. Yes, it was a love such as the human heart has seldom known, perhaps never knew before.

With intense anxiety did Lady Saxondale watch the features of the physician as they stood face to face in the middle of the room. Her experienced eye showed her that he was melting in her favour, and her heart bounded with a feeling of relief and the certainty of triumph.

“There must have been some terrible circumstances, Lady Saxondale,” he said, at length breaking silence, and speaking slowly, “to have led you on to such a deed as that.”

“Yes, terrible circumstances,” was the quick response, “but do not force me to give utterance to them.”

“One word!” ejaculated the doctor, as a thought suddenly struck him. “When you were at my mother’s house, you had a servant with you whom you called Mary. Was she this same one whose real name appears to have been Mabel?”

“The same,” responded Lady Saxondale.

“I begin to understand. She doubtless threatened some exposure with regard to that mystery the purpose of which I have sworn never to penetrate? And therein I will keep my word.”

“You have conjectured the whole truth,” was Lady Saxondale’s reply. “And now, my dear Doctor Ferney, may I still regard you as my warmest, my best friend? May I look upon you as my saviour? Oh, do not, do not hesitate to give me this assurance.”

“Lady Saxondale,” answered the physician, solemnly, “I fear that for you I am perilling my immortal soul.”

“What proof can I give you of my gratitude? Oh, tell me what proof?”

“There is nothing — nothing,” replied the doctor, in a grave and mournful voice. “I could not do you an injury, no, I could not. I feel that I must risk everything and dare everything alike here and hereafter, sooner than involve you in peril. But, oh, Lady Saxondale, for Heaven’s sake take warning by what has passed!”

“I will, I will!” she exclaimed. “Your advice shall not be lost upon me. Oh, Doctor Ferney, I am entirely in your hands, I am at your mercy, I am in your power. May I rely upon your solemn sacred promise not to betray me?”

“You may,” was his answer.

“But if a period of remorse should seize upon you,” resumed Lady Saxondale, still in the hurried voice of excitement, “if you should think better of this pledge that you have given —”

“Fear not,” he interrupted her, gently, but firmly; “from the past you may judge whether I am a man who will fly from his word. No, Lady Saxondale, even upon my death-bed will I keep your secret, and may Heaven forgive me for so doing!”

“The gratitude of my life is yours. And now that we may turn away from this sad, sad topic,” continued Lady Saxondale, “will you not accept the hospitality of the castle? Believe me, my dear Doctor Ferney, I could receive no more welcome guest than one who has proved himself so kind a friend to me.”

“No, Lady Saxondale,” he answered, not coldly nor distantly, but mournfully and gravely, “I must not remain here. The less we see of each other in the world, the better. You would feel embarrassed in my presence, knowing that I possessed this secret of yours. And I, — but no matter. Farewell.”

And with this abrupt adieu, Doctor Ferney grasped Lady Saxondale’s hand for a moment, and hurried from the room.

Thus terminated this strange scene, and a few minutes afterward, the physician was being borne away in the post-chaise from Saxondale Castle.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE JUDGE AND JURY SOCIETY

ON the same evening when the scene above described took place at the castle in Lincolnshire, Lord Saxondale was dining by himself at the mansion in Park Lane. He felt lonely, dull, and dispirited. He had broken with the friend whom he liked best of all his acquaintances, indeed, the only one with whom he had ever been exceedingly intimate for, notwithstanding his rank, his position and his wealth, there were very few young men in his own sphere who had chosen to associate much with him. It was not that his pride was too overweening, that his bearing was too arrogant, or his manners too supercilious, but because he was altogether considered a disagreeable and uncompanionable young man. So far as his arrogance, his vanity, his conceit, and his insufferable pride were concerned, there were many young scions of the aristocracy who possessed all those faults; indeed few were without them, but then they had some redeeming qualities, or at least some which met each other's approval, whereas Edmund Saxondale had none of these. He was generally looked upon as a miserable coxcomb, without courage to back up the pride which he assumed. On two or three occasions, when in the society of young men, he had put up with insults which every one else would have indignantly resented, and thus he had drawn down upon himself the contempt of those who would otherwise have gladly sought his society for his rank and his money. An allusion has been made in a recent chapter to the last insult of the kind which he had received without seeking what in fashionable life is termed "satisfaction," and as this was the most flagrant instance that had occurred in respect to him, he had become more talked about than ever as a down-

right coward. On the day after his breach with Emily Archer and Lord Harold Staunton he had visited a billiard-room in Bond Street, where he found himself, if not exactly cut, at least treated with such marked coldness by the gentlemen present that not even his vanity could blind his eyes to the circumstance, and he had speedily left the place in bitterest mortification.

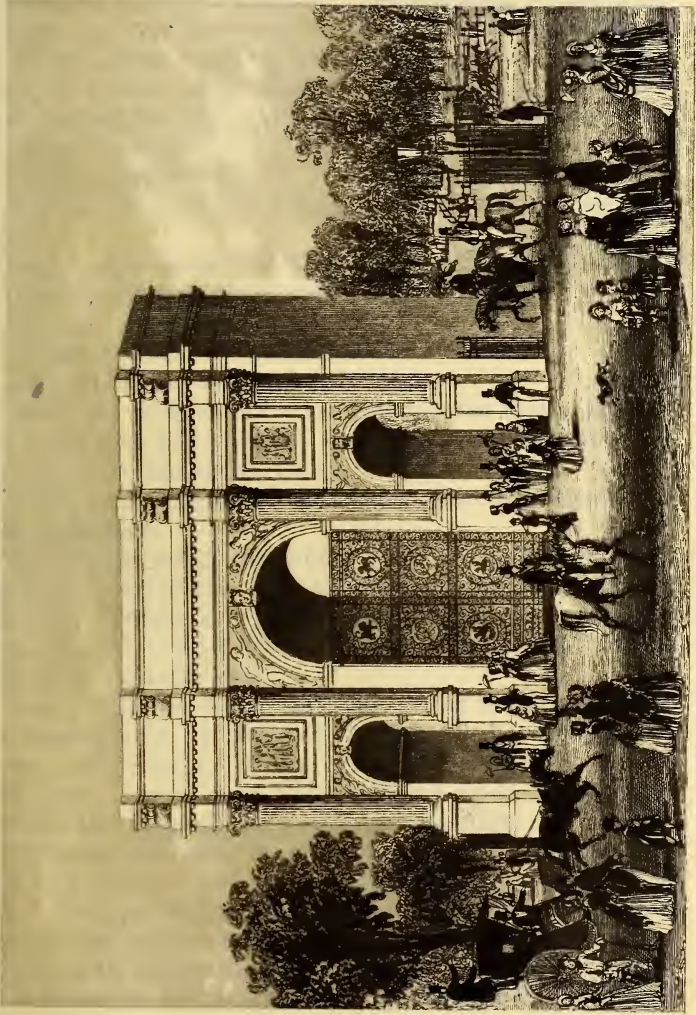
We now find him, as stated at the commencement of this chapter, dining alone at Saxondale House. He had written in the morning to two or three acquaintances to invite them to dinner, but from each he had received a letter of refusal, couched in terms coldly courteous, and without alleging any reason for thus declining. No wonder, therefore, was it that he felt dispirited and discontented. Addicted though he was to wine, he could not enjoy it now. He knew not what to do with himself. This was the third day since his breach with Emily, and he had remained indoors almost entirely since the little demonstration at the billiard-table. He was horribly *ennuyé*; he knew not what to do with himself. He had no intellectual resources, and even the last three-volume novel issued from some West End publisher's establishment failed to amuse him. He now missed both Harold Staunton and Emily Archer. He regretted having quarrelled with them. He was ignorant that his late mistress had left London, — equally ignorant of the terrible fate which had befallen her, inasmuch as there had not as yet been time for an account of the tragedy to appear in the London newspapers.

As he sat sipping his wine, more from habit than because he really liked it on the present occasion, he said to himself, "I have an uncommon great mind to go and see Emily, and endeavour to make it up with her. What if she was really unfaithful to me? She is only like the rest of them, and I certainly could not find a handsomer mistress. Besides, after all, she was an amusing girl enough, and we got on very well together till that cursed affair took place. I was in a terrible rage at the time, but it was enough to make me so. Yes, I will go and see her, for this is such precious dull work. I shall be glad to make it up with her, even if she had behaved twice as badly."

Having come to this resolution, Lord Saxondale issued forth, and taking a cab from the nearest stand in Oxford



MARBLE ARCH, OXFORD STREET  
*Photogravure from an old engraving*





Street, he proceeded to Holloway. Not knowing exactly how his visit might terminate, he ordered the cabman to wait for further instructions. Indeed, he fancied that Emily was not at home, from the circumstance of no lights appearing in the front windows. On knocking at the door, the summons was answered by the cook, who was dressed out in her gayest apparel, for she had the coachman, the groom, and some other friends to sup with her and make merry during her mistress's absence, — that mistress who was never to return!

“Is Miss Archer within?” asked Saxondale.

“No, my lord, missus has gone out of town,” was the reply.

“Gone out of town,” he exclaimed. “When was that?”

“The morning after you was last here, my lord.”

“And the maid gone with her?”

The response was in the affirmative.

“And where has she gone to?”

“Well, my lord, to tell your lordship the truth, she has gone down into Lincolnshire, and from what the maid told me, I think to Saxondale Castle.”

“With Lord Harold?” demanded Edmund, more and more astonished.

“Oh, no, my lord,” replied the cook. “The fact is, there was a terrible row after you left t’other night, for it seems that Lord Harold had got up-stairs quite unbeknown to missus, and she called him all kinds of names, so that he went off in high dudgeon.”

“Ah, is this the case!” said the young nobleman; then, in a musing tone, he observed, “After all, I was wrong to quarrel with Emily. However, I must think of what’s to be done. I shall most likely call here again to-morrow,” and with this intimation he took his departure.

Reëntering the cab, he ordered the driver to take him back into London, and while rolling along, he said to himself, “Perhaps Emily fancied that I should cut off into Lincolnshire, and she has gone to look after me. Or perhaps she means to complain to my mother of the treatment she has received at my hands. And yet she would hardly be such a fool as to run on a wild-goose chase, without being previously certain that I had left London, and as to carrying her complaints to my lady-mother, that is most unlike

Emily Archer. No, there is something in all this I can't understand. Shall I cut into Lincolnshire after her? Or shall I wait until she comes back? I think I had better wait, for we might cross each other. Yes, I will wait."

Having come to this resolve, Lord Saxondale turned his thoughts upon another subject. This was neither more nor less than the important matter of how he was to pass the evening. He revolved in his mind all the various places of amusement, dismissing them, however, one after the other until he suddenly recollected that there was one of which he had heard a great deal, which he and Lord Harold had frequently thought of visiting, but which somehow or another had escaped the honour of their presence.

Thrusting his head out of the window, he said to the cabman, "Drive to the Garrick's Head in Bow Street."

In due course Lord Saxondale reached the far-famed hostelry, and dismissing the cab, he made his way up into a spacious room, where a numerous company was assembled, and where the Judge and Jury Society held its sittings. One portion of the room was fitted up in miniature imitation of a court of justice. There was the bench, with the little desk for the judge, there was the table for the barristers, there was the witness-box, and there was a particular table set exclusively apart for the accommodation of those acting as jurymen. The door of this room was kept by an usher wearing the official robe, and whose aspect was as grave and serious as befitted the functions he had to fulfil.

At the numerous tables in this apartment, the visitors were seated, discussing cigars, and drinking the liquors suited to their respective means or tastes. Some were indulging in wine, others were paying their respects to the various compounds of which brandy, gin, rum and whiskey severally formed the chief ingredients, while others, again, were slaking their thirst with the excellent malt liquor dispensed at that house. There was a general air of blitheness, a making up of the mind to enter into the enjoyments of the evening, and a pervasive feeling of certainty that these would prove of the richest and raciest description. Lord Saxondale seated himself at a table near the judicial bench, and called for a bottle of champagne, — an order which was highly satisfactory to the waiter, and convinced



the guests who heard it that the newcomer was "a cut above the generality of them."

Three or four individuals in gowns, wigs, and white bands, and looking as if they had just arrived from Westminster Hall, now entered the apartment and took their seats at the table appropriated to the barristers. They carried in their hands bundles of papers duly tied around with red tape, and having as completely the air of "briefs" as if their connection with John Doe and Richard Roe were an actual fact instead of an agreeable fiction. In a most lawyer-like style, too, did these gentlemen who performed the part of barristers untie the tapes, arrange their papers before them, take great dips of ink with long, feathery pens, and make endorsements upon their pseudo-briefs, writing down imaginary fees in real figures.

Presently the usher of the court threw the door wide open, shouting, in a stentorian voice, "Silence and hats off, for the lord chief baron!"

These mandates were at once complied with, but there was a general sensation as the object of this ceremony, ascending the stairs, made his appearance, if not as a real judge, at least in the garb and with the gravity of one. This was Mr. Nicholson, the landlord of the tavern, and the presiding genius of the Judge and Jury Society. No ordinary character in his way is the personage just introduced. He is a man of good intellectual acquirements, of agreeable manners, and of great conversational powers. He has a readiness of wit, a facility of good-natured sarcasm, and a tact in seizing upon any passing incident to render it available for his purposes, which admirably qualify him for the judicial part which he thus enacts. He is a really clever man, and as ready at his pen as with his tongue. In private life he bears the character of a liberality, a generosity, and a kindness of heart which have often made him lose sight of his own interests in ministering to the wants of others. Lord Chief Baron Nicholson is therefore not only "a capital fellow" in the man-about-town acceptance of the term, but in its most true and literal meaning. In personal appearance he is short and stout, — a living evidence of the good qualities of his own larder. Of convivial disposition, his ample countenance beams with a natural *bonhomie* which he cannot possibly subdue even when putting on the gravity

of the judge; at all events if he were a real judge, and presided at the Old Bailey, it would need but a single glance at his countenance to convince the culprit brought before him that justice would assuredly be tempered with mercy.

But to return to our narrative: the lord chief baron entered the apartment which we have above described, and with measured steps he ascended to the judicial bench. There he bowed to the bar, and the bar bowed to him, so that if it were not for the evidences of conviviality abounding upon the several tables, the spectators might really have fancied themselves in the presence of all the real ceremony and grave formality of a court of justice.

Having deposited himself upon the bench, the lord chief baron exclaimed, "Waiter!"

"Yes, my lord," replied one of his own tavern functionaries.

"A glass of brandy and water and a cigar," said the great legal luminary, and thereupon a general laugh ensued throughout the room.

When the judicial wants were duly supplied, and the Havana in the judicial lips was emitting its fragrant vapours, the clerk of the court announced the case that was for trial. It was a civil action that was thus to occupy attention, and a number of the guests having been sworn in as jurymen, one of the gentlemen officiating as the barristers opened the proceedings. It is not our purpose to give any description of the subject-matter of the trial, because in a mere narrative form it would lose the greater portion of its interest. But we must observe that the persons officiating as barristers acquitted themselves with no ordinary degree of talent, delivering speeches which for their easy and continuous flow might have made the orators the subject of envy on the part of many a stammering, stuttering, thick-pated practitioner at Westminster Hall. Witnesses were examined, and these kept the company in a continual roar of laughter. From time to time the lord chief baron himself seasoned the proceedings with some witty interjections, which added to the general merriment. But the cream of the whole affair was the judicial summing up. Sparkling wit, exquisite humour, sly sarcasm, and a perfect assumption of the air and manner of the real judge characterized the lord chief baron's part of the performance. There was one incident that told admirably. It happened that the in-

dividuals acting as jurymen drank somewhat more than was good for them, and in plain terms grew very intoxicated. The lord chief baron addressed them as an intelligent and enlightened body of men, — men representing the wisdom of the country, men who indeed for the time being constituted “the country,” the matter at issue between the plaintiff and defendant being, in legal parlance, “tried by God and their country.” The solemn gravity with which the lord chief baron thus addressed his drunken jury, and the vacant stare as well as the tipsy swaying to and fro with which the said jurymen listened to the great functionary, formed by no means the least ludicrous portion of the comedy.

When we observe that though these proceedings lasted two hours and a half, without for a single moment flagging into dulness or waning into insipidity, and when we add that from first to last the spectators experienced unfailing amusement, those of our readers who have never visited the Judge and Jury Society will be enabled to understand how well sustained the spirit and interest of the proceedings must be.

Lord Saxondale waited until the end, when he adjourned to the supper-room below; and there he invited the lord chief baron, the barristers, the clerk of the court, and the witnesses, to sup with him. The conviviality was kept up until a somewhat late hour, and if it had not been that a couple of waiters conveyed Lord Saxondale into a cab, he never could have reached it of his own accord.

Edmund slept until a late hour on the following day, and when he descended to the breakfast-parlour, it was with a racking headache and an accompanying depression of spirits. The morning newspapers lay upon the table. He took up one, and almost the very first announcement upon which his eyes fell was that of a horrible and mysterious murder committed in Lincolnshire. He read on, and callous, indifferent, emotionless though he naturally was, it was nevertheless with dismay and horror that he thus learned the particulars of the frightful tragedy which had occurred on the bank of the Trent. The journal concluded its account by stating that the whole affair was involved in the deepest mystery, suspicion attaching to no known person. And mysterious was it indeed to Edmund Saxon-

dale, nor could he of course form the slightest conjecture as to the author or authors of the crime.

Having hastily dressed himself, he proceeded without delay to Evergreen Villa. The intelligence had already reached the cook, the groom, and the coachman, the newspaper having likewise been their informant. Consternation and dismay prevailed at the villa, and indeed great was the excitement throughout the neighbourhood, it being known that the mistress of the house and her attendant maid had met with their death under such mysterious circumstances in Lincolnshire. Some relations of the unfortunate Emily Archer, and who dwelt in London, made their appearance at the villa soon after Lord Saxondale's arrival there, and they took possession of the house and all the property it contained. After some little deliberation, it was decided that one of them — an uncle — should proceed without delay into Lincolnshire, and bring up the corpses for the purposes of respectable interment.

Dispirited, and with a gloom sitting heavily upon his soul, Edmund quitted the villa and returned to Saxondale House, his mind filled with the awful tragedy which had taken place under such extraordinary and unaccountable circumstances.

## CHAPTER VII

### MR. GUNTHORPE'S VISITS

IN the neighbourhood of Stamford Hill was a handsome residence, situated in the midst of spacious grounds, and commanding a beautiful view of all the surrounding scenery. This house, after remaining unoccupied for some time, had within the last three weeks become the abode of Mr. Gunthorpe. The moment he had decided upon taking it, he lost no time in fitting it up in a very handsome manner. Everything this gentleman did might appear to the shallow observer to be done on the impulse of the moment, but it was not so. The key to the reading of his character was this: that he made up his mind quickly, yet not without as much deliberation as the incident of the moment might deserve, and when once he had resolved how to proceed, he lost no time in carrying out his plans. Thus, the very day after he had taken Stamford Manor, — as it was called, — wagon-loads of the costliest furniture arrived at the place. He did not fit up the house by degrees, nor even take a week to do it. His orders were given at the moment to upholsterers whose warehouses furnished proofs of their competency for the commission, and as money to Mr. Gunthorpe was no object, his will and pleasure were promptly executed.

A few days after his return from Lincolnshire, and at about eleven o'clock in the forenoon, Mr. Gunthorpe entered his carriage, and drove to a pretty little cottage situated at no great distance from the manor. The moment his modest equipage stopped at the door, little Charley Leyden, nicely dressed, and full of joyous spirits, bounded forth to welcome the benefactor of his mother and sister. Henrietta herself was likewise speedily seen upon the threshold to greet Mr. Gunthorpe, and the old gentleman was introduced

into a neat little parlour, where Mrs. Leyden, considerably improved in health, received him with a degree of warmth which was due to one who had dragged her forth from the depths of poverty.

"I am come to have half an hour's chat with you, Mrs. Leyden," said Mr. Gunthorpe, "respecting a certain matter you spoke to me about some days ago," and he glanced slyly toward Henrietta, who, blushing deeply, rose to leave the room. "No, you needn't go!" cried the old gentleman. "On the contrary, you are a very necessary person to the present conference. But you, Master Charley, can run out and play in the garden till you are sent for," he added, patting the child kindly upon the cheek.

"Oh, do let me stay," said Charley. "I am so fond of being where you are. I did not much like you at first," he went on to observe with boyish ingenuousness, "but since I knew you better —"

"Hush, Charley, hush!" interrupted Mrs. Leyden, somewhat severely. "You should not speak in this manner."

"My dear madam, let him speak as he will," said Mr. Gunthorpe, "everything he utters comes up from his heart. You are a good little boy, Charley, and here is something to buy a toy with," he added, placing a five-shilling piece in his hand.

"But I would rather stay with you than have that, if you mean me to go away," said the child, pouting his pretty lips and looking as if he were going to cry.

"You must run out and play a little by yourself for the present," said Mr. Gunthorpe, kissing him, "and if you do, you shall come and stay a whole day with me at my house."

Charley's countenance now brightened up, and he willingly left the room, taking the crown piece with him.

"Now, my dear girl," said Mr. Gunthorpe, turning to Henrietta, "I am going to devote my attention to your affairs, for you see I have constituted myself your guardian, as it were, and therefore I must attend to your interest. Now, don't blush and look confused, Henrietta; there is nothing to be ashamed of in an honourable love, and nobody will be more delighted than myself to behold these bright prospects realized. I presume, madam," he continued, turning toward Mrs. Leyden, "that you have not as yet

been to see this young man who claims to be the heir of the title and estates of Everton?"

"If you remember, Mr. Gunthorpe," said Mrs. Leyden, "you counselled me to take no step in the matter until you had time to look into it yourself."

"True! I recollect. It was the best course to be adopted. But I suppose, young miss, that you have occasionally visited that cottage which you tell me is so picturesquely situated at no great distance hence?"

"Henrietta has called there three or four times," observed Mrs. Leyden. "I believe that you consented that she should do so?"

"Oh, certainly; I saw no objection," said Mr. Gunthorpe. "That Mrs. Chandos of whom Henrietta spoke did her a great service in delivering her from Beech-tree Lodge. And by the bye, I am quite anxious to behold this heroine. But I thought you told me they were going off in such a violent hurry into the country, somewhere down into Wales, and that is a fortnight ago."

"Yes, but Adolphus — I mean the true Lord Everton," said Henrietta, hesitating and blushing, "has been so very unwell again that they were compelled to postpone their journey, although it was with great reluctance, for they were most anxious —"

"Yes, naturally so," interrupted Mr. Gunthorpe.

"It is Lady Everton in Wales," observed Henrietta, "that they are going to see."

"Yes, naturally so," repeated the old gentleman, and he looked abstracted, but quickly recovering himself, he said, "And now tell me, Henrietta, the more you see of this young man —"

"The more she finds that she likes him," replied Mrs. Leyden, speaking on behalf of her daughter, who again seemed full of confusion.

"Well, that's natural also," cried Mr. Gunthorpe. "But you tell me that he has been ill again?"

"His intellects have completely recovered their healthy tone," responded Henrietta, "but his physical strength is not so fully restored. When the medical man was informed that he meditated this long journey, he forbade it for the present. Enough was told to the physician to make him understand that it was a journey for an object likely to be

attended with no ordinary degree of excitement, and therefore he insisted upon Adolphus postponing it for two or three weeks, that he might acquire physical as well as mental strength sufficient for the occasion."

"And he did wisely," said Mr. Gunthorpe.

"Mrs. Chandos and her brother are exceedingly kind to him."

"Her brother?" said Mr. Gunthorpe. "I do not recollect your having before mentioned this brother. Who is he? What is he? I hope, for his own sake, that your Adolphus has fallen into good hands?"

"Oh, yes, there cannot be the slightest doubt of it!" exclaimed Henrietta. "Mrs. Chandos behaves to him as if she were a sister, and Francis Paton —"

"Eh, what name did you say?" demanded Mr. Gunthorpe, with a sort of start, as if he had not caught the words from the young girl's lips.

"Francis Paton," she repeated. "He is quite a youth, not more than eighteen —"

"Ah! And pray what age may his sister, this Mrs. Chandos, be?"

"About twenty-six," answered Henrietta.

"Twenty-six, and her brother eighteen?" said Mr. Gunthorpe, in a musing tone. "What is this Francis Paton? Nothing, I suppose. He is doubtless well off?"

"His sister Mrs. Chandos appears comfortably circumstanced, but her brother Frank," continued Henrietta, "is totally dependent on her. For I believe that he has been a page in the service of Lady Saxondale —"

"What?" ejaculated Mr. Gunthorpe, "a page in the service of Lady Saxondale? But, however, I shall go and see these persons at once. Don't think, Henrietta, my dear girl," he added, in a kind voice, and stopping short when about to leave the room with a precipitation which he often manifested, and which would have helped to lead persons to suppose that he was of an impulsive character, "do not think, I say, that I am going to find out objections and raise imaginary obstacles in the way of your happiness. No such thing. I hope most sincerely, for your sake, that all you have told me will turn out perfectly correct."

"Oh, my dear sir," cried Miss Leyden, "I am incapable of telling you an untruth!"



"I know it," said Mr. Gunthorpe. "I did not mean that I was going to inquire whether you had told me the truth, but whether everything is as you have been led to believe it, whether, in short, this young man's lofty notions are real and not visionary. I dare say, however, they are real enough, for I myself happen to know something of his uncle, or of him whom he believes to be his uncle, whichever it may be, and what I do know of that man is not altogether to his credit," added Mr. Gunthorpe, with a degree of bitterness that he was not often wont to display. "Many, many years have elapsed since he and I met. He was plain Mr. Everton then. But perhaps you will be surprised, Henrietta, when I tell you that I have seen your Adolphus, granting him to be the same —"

"You have seen him?" ejaculated Henrietta.

"Yes, but it was in his childhood, many years ago. He was then a beautiful boy, with dark eyes and hair —"

"He has dark eyes and hair," said Henrietta, with a smile and a blush, — the smile being one of joy, for the innocent maiden thought that the identity was thus completely established between her Adolphus and the one of whom Mr. Gunthorpe was speaking.

"I think," said the old gentleman, in a grave and solemn voice, "that I should recognize his lineaments, though more than sixteen years have elapsed since I beheld him, and then he was but twelve years old."

"Sixteen and twelve are twenty-eight, and Adolphus is twenty-eight," cried Henrietta, with increasing satisfaction.

"Ah, I see that you love him," said Mr. Gunthorpe, "and no matter whether he be the real Lord Everton or not, if he is a worthy young man —"

"Alas! consider all his sufferings," murmured Henrietta, the tears starting into her eyes. "For sixteen years was he the inmate of a place that to him was a prison. He has seen too little of life to have learned any of its evil ways."

"That captivity," observed Mr. Gunthorpe, with a deeper gravity than before, "is in itself almost a sufficient proof that he is the real Lord Everton. Oh, what guilt does that man — his uncle — have to answer for! But I must now delay not. Farewell for the present. I shall call again on my way homeward, as I dare say a certain young lady,"

he added, looking archly at Henrietta, "will be anxious to know the result of my interview."

Thus speaking, Mr. Gunthorpe quitted the room, and was hurrying forth to his carriage, when he recollected that he was not exactly acquainted with the whereabouts of the cottage to which he was about to proceed. He therefore returned for the requisite explanation, which Henrietta speedily gave him. He then entered his vehicle, having directed the coachman whither to proceed. The distance was not long, and in a short time the equipage drove up to the front of Lady Bess's picturesque cottage.

We should here remind the reader that Henrietta had not informed either her mother or Mr. Gunthorpe of the one incident on that memorable night of her release from Beech-tree Lodge which had for the time being filled her bosom with injurious suspicions against Lady Bess, whom she only knew as Mrs. Chandos. Consequently Mr. Gunthorpe was unacquainted with anything to the prejudice of this Amazonian heroine. And the reader must likewise recollect that Lady Bess had, by her sophistry, explained away those suspicions from Henrietta's mind, on the first occasion when the young girl called at the cottage.

But to continue our tale. When Mr. Gunthorpe's carriage drove up to the door, Rosa, the servant-woman, immediately came forth, and on the old gentleman giving his name, he was at once introduced into the tastefully furnished little parlour, for that name was known at the cottage, and honourably known, too, on account of all that Henrietta Leyden had said in connection with it. Elizabeth Chandos and her brother Francis Paton were alone together in the parlour at the time when Mr. Gunthorpe was thus introduced. They rose to receive him, but they were struck by the singular degree of interest with which he surveyed them. He did not speak a word; his lips moved; it was evident that something unspoken was wavering upon them, but to which he could not give utterance. To their further surprise, mingled with alarm, he tottered to a seat, and sank upon it, saying, "A glass of water — give me a glass of water — I am ill."

There was a decanter on the little sideboard, and Lady Bess, hastening to fill a tumbler, presented it to Mr. Gunthorpe, who merely drank a few drops, and then, speedily

recovering, said, "Forgive the trouble I am occasioning, but the heat of the weather is quite overpowering. I felt as if I were about to faint."

"Do you feel better now, sir?" asked Lady Bess, in a kind voice. "Is there anything we can do for you? Frank, run and get up some wine —"

"No, do not give yourself the trouble," exclaimed Mr. Gunthorpe. "I never touch it in the middle of the day — Besides, I am altogether well now. Where is your guest, — Lord Everton, I mean —"

"He is in his own room," said Frank. "I will fetch him. He was with us a few minutes back."

"No, do not call him immediately," said Mr. Gunthorpe. "I wish to say a few words to you two," and he again looked first at Lady Bess, then at Francis Paton, then back again at the Amazonian lady, with a singular interest in his gaze. "You rendered an immense service to a young girl in whom I am interested," he continued, after a pause, taking Lady Bess's hand and pressing it warmly — most warmly — in his own. "Accept my best thanks for what you did upon the occasion. And now give me your hand, Francis Paton," he said, and when he received that hand, he pressed it as kindly and as fervently as he had done the sister's.

Lady Bess and Frank had heard from Henrietta that Mr. Gunthorpe had strange ways about him, but possessed the most generous of hearts; and thus they were by no means annoyed at whatsoever eccentricity of conduct he appeared to display on this occasion. They felt that he was a gentleman with whom they could at once find themselves on a friendly and familiar footing; they even experienced sentiments which seemed to draw them toward him, and give them pleasure at the kindness with which he pressed their hands and bent his looks upon them. But then they had heard such excellent accounts of him from Henrietta, and therefore it appeared perfectly natural that they should like, and even love, anybody who was good to that artless young maiden whom they both loved and liked as a sister.

"Now, I dare say you will think me a very strange person," said Mr. Gunthorpe, "but I am sure you will not fancy me an impertinent one, when I ask you a few questions. Be assured it is entirely in your own interest that I shall

interrogate you. You, Francis Paton, have been a page at Lady Saxondale's, have you not?"

"I have, sir, and likewise at court," responded the youth.

"At court?" ejaculated Mr. Gunthorpe. "Ah, indeed? And pray by whose interest did you obtain that post?"

Frank glanced at his sister to ascertain from her looks what reply he should make, and she at once said for him, "There is every reason to believe, Mr. Gunthorpe, that it was through Lord Petersfield's interest my brother obtained his appointment in the royal household, but it is absolutely certain that through that nobleman's recommendation he was introduced into the service of Lady Saxondale."

"Lord Petersfield, eh?" said Mr. Gunthorpe, in a musing tone. "But I suppose you have some prospects, — money to receive, or something of that sort, — have you not, Frank?"

"Nothing, that I am aware of," was the youth's reply, and now both he and his sister surveyed Mr. Gunthorpe with a feeling of increasing interest, for they could not think that these questions were put without some serious motive.

"Nothing, eh?" he said, with a peculiar and incomprehensible look. "But you, Elizabeth — You see that I make myself quite at home with you, calling you by your Christian names — However, you must at once regard me as your friend, from all that Henrietta has told me I wish you to look upon me as such, But I was about to ask some question: it was addressed to you, Elizabeth. I suppose you have received a fortune, eh? Come, tell me all about it now?"

Lady Bess blushed deeply, and, turning away in confusion, evidently knew not what answer to make.

"Elizabeth," said Mr. Gunthorpe, starting from his chair and taking her hand, "look me in the face, and tell me that as a woman you have never done aught which has conjured up that blush to your cheeks."

"On my soul, Mr. Gunthorpe," replied Lady Bess, at once speaking with the dignity of maiden purity and feminine virtue in its most real and best sense, "as a woman I have never done aught for which I need blush."

Mr. Gunthorpe wrung her hand with effusion, and both she and her brother were surprised to observe the tears

trickle down his cheeks, not only surprised, but affected also, for it was singular that this old man — a complete stranger to them — should take such an evident interest in their circumstances, both moral and worldly. But hastily dashing away those tears, Mr. Gunthorpe resumed his seat, and for a few moments remained wrapped up in deep thought.

“ Well,” he suddenly resumed, turning toward Lady Bess, “ about yourself? You had a fortune, I suppose? ”

“ I received some money,” she answered, still with a visible unwillingness to be thus questioned.

“ Oh, you received some money? ” repeated Mr. Gunthorpe. “ Would you mind telling me how much? I can assure you that I ask not from mere curiosity. ”

“ Then I will tell you, sir,” responded Lady Bess. “ I received five thousand pounds. ”

“ Five thousand pounds! no more? ” said Mr. Gunthorpe. “ Are you sure? Pray tell me the exact truth, without reserve. ”

“ That is the exact truth,” replied Lady Bess, with increasing curiosity and surprise at this interrogatory. “ But I should add, in fairness to a certain individual, that I have latterly received a hundred pounds quarterly, through an attorney in London, ”

“ And that individual to whom you allude? ” said Mr. Gunthorpe, somewhat eagerly, “ pray tell me his name. ”

“ I do not know wherefore I should conceal it,” observed the Amazonian lady, “ for you can have none but a good motive in thus questioning me. ”

“ Certainly not. On my soul, as a living man,” exclaimed Mr. Gunthorpe, vehemently, “ my motive is a good one. The name of that individual? ”

“ Sir John Marston,” rejoined Elizabeth.

“ Ah, the villain! ” muttered the old gentleman, in a tone of deep execration. “ But now another question, my dear Elizabeth, for so you must permit me to call you. You have been married. You are married, — your husband, I presume as a matter of course his name is Chandos? ”

Lady Bess blushed up to the very hair of her head, and uttered not a word.

“ My dear sir,” said Francis Paton, approaching Mr. Gunthorpe and bending down toward him, “ pardon me

for hinting that your words touch upon topics not altogether agreeable to my sister."

"Poor boy — poor girl! I would not willingly or wilfully distress either of you," said the old gentleman, in a tremulous voice that showed he was much moved. "Elizabeth, believe what I say, I would not wantonly cause you pain. You have assured me that as a woman you can look without a blush upon your past life, therefore why not speak of your husband? If he be dead, and you deplore his loss, I can sympathize with you, but if he be alive and separated from you, it can scarcely be from any fault of your own, if your life has been pure and chaste? And that it has been so, I feel convinced, for there is something in your look which corroborates your solemn affirmation."

"Oh, yes, Mr. Gunthorpe, most sacredly can I repeat that assurance," exclaimed Lady Bess. Then, as her voice suddenly sank into a lower and graver tone, she said, "My life has had its faults, but that which woman generally commits first has never tainted my name," and she averted her blushing countenance as she spoke.

"My sister has been married, Mr. Gunthorpe," whispered Francis Paton, "but she has never lived with her husband for a single day, no, nor for an hour, nor a minute. She is the same as if the marriage ceremony had never been performed at all."

"This is most remarkable," said the old gentleman, gazing in profoundest surprise upon that handsome creature, of superb shape, who stood with half-averted countenance at a little distance from where he was seated. "But your husband, Elizabeth," he continued, "pray do not hesitate to speak to me upon this head. What was he? Where is he?"

"There is such an earnestness in your words, Mr. Gunthorpe," replied the lady, now bending her magnificent eyes upon him again, "that I cannot help answering your questions. The man whom I married bore not the name of Chandos." Then, after a few moments' hesitation, she said, "I would tell you what his real name is, but that I should perhaps be doing an injury to a young lady of whom I have heard some good things, and nothing bad."

"Whatever necessity there may be for secrecy and confidence, Elizabeth," observed Mr. Gunthorpe, solemnly,

“that necessity shall be respected by me. I am a man of honour.”

“Oh, you need not give me this assurance,” exclaimed Lady Bess; “your conduct to Henrietta and her mother made me esteem you before I knew you. And now there is something which impels me to give you my confidence and to reply to all your questions. If I chose to assume the title,” she added, after another brief pause, “I could call myself the Marchioness of Villebelle.”

“Villebelle?” ejaculated Mr. Gunthorpe. “Ah, I comprehend. He eloped some short time back with the Honourable Miss Constance Farefield, Lady Saxondale’s daughter.”

“And he has married her,” rejoined Lady Bess.

“Married her?” cried Mr. Gunthorpe, in astonishment. “But if he were previously married to you?”

“He was,” she observed, “but I released him. I never loved him — I cared not for him. I have never known what love is,” she added, in a softer and gentler voice. “But if he loved, I could pity him. And he did love. I met him a few weeks ago, after a long, long separation. I had never seen him since the day which united our hands at the altar. How could I consider that mock ceremony binding? It was a marriage and no marriage. Well, sir, we met, as I have already told you, and it was a few weeks back. He unbosomed all his secrets to me, and I voluntarily offered to place in his hands whatsoever papers existed in mine as the proofs of our marriage.”

“And you did so?” said Mr. Gunthorpe.

“Yes. But I did not choose to meet him again; I therefore gave him an appointment for a particular night and at a particular place. This was at King’s Cross, and I despatched to him a messenger with the papers of which I have spoken. He has married Lady Saxondale’s younger daughter. They have gone to Madrid, and I hope that they will be happy.”

“But this is wonderful as a romance,” said Mr. Gunthorpe. “You are a singular being, Elizabeth. I have not been quite an hour yet in your society, and I have discovered many excellent traits in your character,” and he spoke with a sincerity and an earnestness that showed how deeply interested he really was in the object of his eulogies.

“Accept my gratitude, dear sir,” she answered, “for the kind language you address to me.”

"Kind, Elizabeth!" ejaculated Mr. Gunthorpe. "But I must subdue these emotions for the present," he murmured to himself; then, after a brief interval of reflection, he said, "There are many, many more questions that I should wish to ask you, but I am fearful of appearing too obtrusive at present. Many mysteries are evidently surrounding you both."

"And which, if I mistake not, Mr. Gunthorpe," said Lady Bess, accosting the old gentleman and looking earnestly in his countenance, "methinks that you could clear up if you would. Yes, I am convinced of it."

At this moment the door of the parlour opened, and the invalid appeared upon the threshold.

"Adolphus!" ejaculated Mr. Gunthorpe the instant he caught sight of the young nobleman's countenance.

"What! you know him?" said Lady Bess, with increased surprise. "What is the meaning of all this? Who are you, Mr. Gunthorpe? Pray speak—tell us—keep us not in suspense—"

"I knew Adolphus when he was a boy," said the old gentleman, his voice again becoming tremulous and his looks expressive of deep inward emotion, as he seized the invalid's hand and pressed it warmly.

Adolphus had been naturally surprised at so fervid a greeting from a stranger, but the moment he learned, by Lady Bess's words, that the old gentleman was Mr. Gunthorpe, of whom Henrietta had often spoken, he expressed the most enthusiastic delight at making his acquaintance. Mr. Gunthorpe gazed upon him long and earnestly, and then said, in a solemn voice, "Yes, assuredly you are the true and rightful Lord Everton."

"There cannot be a doubt of it," observed Lady Bess; "we have proofs the most positive. Well did Adolphus recognize the portrait of his mother."

"The portrait of Lady Everton?" said Mr. Gunthorpe. "Have you it here? If so, permit me to see it."

"It is here," said Elizabeth, unlocking a writing-desk and producing the picture which she had torn from the book at Lord Petersfield's house.

Mr. Gunthorpe took it from her hand, and hastened to the window, where he contemplated that portrait for some minutes. His back was turned toward Adolphus, Elizabeth,



and Frank during the time that he was thus occupied, but that his gaze was intent, and that he studied the picture earnestly, was evident from the circumstance that his head moved not during those minutes. As he turned away from the window and gave back the portrait to Lady Bess, she observed that there was the mark of a tear-drop upon it, and she felt more convinced than even at first that Mr. Gunthorpe was in some way or another intimately yet mysteriously connected with the circumstances relating to the past and which the present was rapidly developing.

"My dear young friend," said the old gentleman, addressing himself to Adolphus, "the principal object of my visit here to-day was to speak to you upon a certain delicate matter. I am indeed glad that I came," he continued, flinging a rapid glance upon Elizabeth and Frank, "for I have heard things which I little expected to hear, and which have interested me profoundly. But upon those points we shall touch no more to-day. For the present let me speak to you, Adolphus, relative to your own affairs. Do not regard me as a stranger; I am not one. When you were a boy, I knew you well, but you doubtless recollect me not. I am so much altered," and these last words were uttered mournfully.

"My dear sir," whispered Elizabeth Chandos, drawing Mr. Gunthorpe aside, "it pains Adolphus to dwell too long upon the past. If you will, I am perfectly disposed to submit to you all the proofs I have obtained in respect to the atrocious guilt of his uncle, the usurping Lord Everton. Come with me into another room."

Mr. Gunthorpe accordingly followed Lady Bess to the opposite parlour, and when they were alone together, she narrated to him all that she had learned from the lips of Adolphus relative to the incidents of his earlier years, and how he was carried off from Everton Park in the middle of the night, just before his father, General Lord Everton, was expected home from India. She likewise explained how on that very same night the corpse of another boy of the same age was substituted for the living heir. Mr. Gunthorpe rose from his seat at this part of the narrative, and paced to and fro in the little apartment in a state of the utmost excitement.

"I knew that Everton," alluding to the uncle, "was a villain," he said, "but still I thought him not capable of

such monstrous guilt as this. By Heaven, there is no punishment too great for such a miscreant! How is it, Elizabeth, that you have not invoked the aid of justice ere now?"

"Ah! my dear sir," responded Lady Bess, in a tone of deep melancholy, "because there are reasons which induce me to seek the settlement of all this without exposure to the world."

"And those reasons?" asked Mr. Gunthorpe, with a look of anxiety and suspense.

"I fear," replied Elizabeth Chandos, slowly, "that this bad man is acquainted with secrets relative to one whose honour and good name must be spared."

"And that one?" cried Mr. Gunthorpe, vehemently.

"Lady Everton, — the mother of Adolphus," rejoined Lady Bess. "But not to Adolphus yet have I revealed what I know or, rather, suspect —"

"But to me, Elizabeth, to me, I say," interrupted Mr. Gunthorpe, with a voice and look of solemn adjuration; "to me must you tell everything. I did not think of entering further into explanations this day, but what you have been saying renders it necessary. Tell me, then, my dear Elizabeth, tell me, I beseech you, what your suspicions are, or what your knowledge is?"

"I will, Mr. Gunthorpe," responded the Amazonian lady, deeply impressed with the conviction that he had not merely grave reasons but even some mysterious right thus to question her. Then, in a low and solemn voice, she added, "My belief is, Mr. Gunthorpe, that Lady Everton is my own mother, and therefore the mother of Frank also."

Mr. Gunthorpe said nothing, but he looked strangely at Lady Bess. Indeed, shrewd and penetrating though she was, she could not comprehend the nature of that look, but at least she felt assured that it was fraught with a kind interest for her.

"Yes, that indeed is a grave consideration," he observed, after a long pause. "Elizabeth, you are acting most wisely, most prudently; you are acting in a way that does you infinite honour. Yes, my dear Elizabeth, the good name of Lady Everton must be screened, must be protected, and therefore her vile brother-in-law must be dealt cautiously with. You will admit me to your counsels; you will suffer me to advise with you relative to each consecutive step

you may take. I see that you are gifted with the soundest sense and the most mature judgment."

"Be assured, sir," responded the lady, still under the influence of that unaccountable power which Mr. Gunthorpe had in so brief a space of time acquired over her, "I shall be only too happy to have a gentleman of your wisdom and goodness to succour and counsel me."

"And now one more word," said Mr. Gunthorpe, looking her very hard in the face. "You suspect who your mother is: have you likewise found any clue to the name of your father?"

Lady Bess started at this question, and she gazed upon Mr. Gunthorpe with amazement and intense curiosity. How did he know that she was ever ignorant of her father's name? Not a word to that effect had been spoken since he entered the house; not a word to that effect had she ever uttered to Henrietta; not a word to that effect had she ever breathed to a soul who, so far as she could see, might have mentioned it to Mr. Gunthorpe. How then could he know it? Who was he, this Mr. Gunthorpe, that had become so suddenly interested in her affairs, and evidently knew more than she could dream of?

"Ah, I see what is passing in your mind," he said, "but you must not become the questioner now. Perhaps the time will shortly come when I shall have strange things to tell you, but that moment is not now present. Again I ask you, Elizabeth, — and I conjure you to respond, — have you any idea who is your father?"

"Wait one moment, sir," she said, and immediately left the room.

In less than a minute she returned, bearing a letter which she handed to him, saying, "Read this. It was written to me from Dover, by the Marquis of Villebelle, who met Sir John Marston there."

"Ah, Sir John Marston at Dover?" observed Mr. Gunthorpe, as he opened the letter. Then, having hastily scanned its contents, he slowly folded it up again, returned it to Elizabeth, and began to pace to and fro in great agitation.

She watched him without saying a word, for there was something in his looks and his manner which made her feel a species of awe, as if there were sanctity in his emotions, — a sanctity upon which she dared not obtrude.

“ We have said enough for to-day, Elizabeth,” he suddenly exclaimed, stopping short and taking her hand. “ There is much more I wish to learn from your lips,—the entire history of your past life, the history also of your brother Frank, but it must be postponed. You must think over all that has taken place within the two hours past; you must study to know me better. Then you will have the fullest confidence in me, and you will speak without reserve. I know—I feel that it is too much to expect you to open your heart entirely to me who am a comparative stranger unto you. In a day or two you shall see me again, but take no step in the meantime without making me aware of it. And now one word more ere we leave this room to return into the other. You have no funds—I think you told me—beyond a quarterly allowance of a hundred pounds, and your brother has nothing. You have Adolphus to maintain—In short, doubtless you are not too well off. Give me pen, ink, and paper.”

Mr. Gunthorpe spoke these last words with the tone of a man who was accustomed to command, and to be obeyed likewise the instant he commanded. Elizabeth Chandos, still under that mystic and unaccountable influence which gave him an empire over her, placed writing materials before him, and seating himself at the table, he wrote something on a slip of paper.

“ There,” he said, flinging down the pen and starting up from the chair, “ you will accept that as a proof of the cordial friendship I have offered you. Now let us go into the other room,” and without suffering her to wait and see what he had written upon the paper, he led her forth from the parlour.

They entered the opposite one, where they had left Adolphus and Frank, and Mr. Gunthorpe, at once accosting the former, said, “ I now know all that regards you, and you are beyond doubt the rightful Lord Everton. I said so just now. I remember your features. In me shall you find a friend.”

Adolphus pressed the old gentleman's hand with grateful fervour, the tears trickling down his cheeks.

“ And now,” said Mr. Gunthorpe, with an arch smile, “ have you no message to send to Henrietta? Ah! that names fills your countenance with animation. Well, my

dear Adolphus, the girl is worthy of you, and she has already learned to love you. God grant that you may be happy! If I do not come again to see you to-morrow, I shall send some kind message by Henrietta, to furnish her with an excuse for calling at the cottage."

With these words, the old gentleman took an affectionate farewell of Adolphus, Elizabeth, and Frank, and hurrying forth, gave some brief instructions to his coachman. Then, waving his hand to those who stood upon the threshold, he entered the carriage, which immediately drove away.

The three proceeded to the parlour where he had left the slip of paper lying upon the table. It was a cheque upon Mr. Gunthorpe's banker for five thousand pounds. Then more than ever did Elizabeth, Frank, and Adolphus wonder who Mr. Gunthorpe could be.

## CHAPTER VIII

### APPREHENSIONS

LORD PETERSFIELD was seated in his library at about three o'clock in the afternoon, looking over a number of papers connected with his diplomatic avocations of past years, and wondering whether certain overtures which he had recently been making to the Ministers then in power would result according to his wishes. His desire was to obtain an important embassy, which, according to rumour, would soon be vacant, and he was furbishing up his rusty ideas by the aid of the papers that he was so deeply conning. In the middle of his occupation a footman entered, and presenting him with a card, said, "This gentleman requests an immediate interview with your lordship."

"Sir John Marston?" said Lord Petersfield, who seldom suffered himself to be surprised out of his diplomatic gravity. "Well, let him walk up," and yet he was far from liking this visit.

In a few minutes the baronet made his appearance. He advanced with outstretched hand, but the nobleman received him somewhat coldly, and eyed him with a certain degree of suspicion.

"Many years have elapsed since you and I met, my lord," said the baronet, gazing upon him as if to mark the extent to which the ravages of time had gone in respect to the nobleman's person.

"It may be many years, Sir John Marston," said Lord Petersfield, with his habitual diplomatic caution, "but I am not prepared to say how many, indeed I should not like to venture a conjecture without careful consideration."

"Your lordship appears to receive me somewhat coldly," said the baronet.

“ No, not coldly,” rejoined Petersfield, “ but I am not as yet assured, — that is to say, I have not yet had leisure to make up my mind whether you are Sir John Marston or not, and I should not like to come to a hasty conclusion.”

“ What nonsense is this, Petersfield? ” exclaimed Marston, with a movement of impatience; then, as he threw himself upon a seat, he said, “ Come, throw off this diplomatic cautiousness and reserve of yours, for we have to speak upon important business, I can tell you.”

“ Well, then,” said the diplomatist, “ granting that you are Sir John Marston, and considering from the corroborative evidence of your printed card, coupled with your own deliberate averment, that you may be so — ”

“ Why, you know I am,” ejaculated Marston, stamping his foot with another paroxysm of impatience. “ What the devil makes you go on in this rigmarole style? Surely a matter of some sixteen years or so has not so changed me that you do not recognize me? ”

“ Personal appearance is not always a trustworthy credential,” remarked Lord Petersfield. “ But still, as I was saying — ”

“ The deuce take what you were saying! ” interrupted the baronet. “ I will very soon give you a proof that I am that selfsame Sir John Marston — Lady Everton’s brother — with whom you and the present Lord Everton did a certain business.”

“ Enough! ” said his lordship, now looking anxiously around; then rising from his seat, he advanced to the door, opened it, looked cautiously out, and satisfying himself that there were no eavesdroppers, closed it again. “ Now, Sir John Marston, what business has procured me the honour — I might perhaps say the pleasure — of this visit? ”

“ That very same business to which I have already alluded,” responded the baronet. “ Do you know, my lord, that a certain young lady has discovered a clue — ”

“ Eh, what? ” ejaculated his lordship, now speaking rapidly enough, and his diplomatic countenance, suddenly losing all its gravity, became expressive of the utmost agitation. “ Do you mean Elizabeth Paton, — or the Marchioness of Villebelle, or whatever she may call herself? ”

“ I do,” replied Sir John, “ and if I be not very much

mistaken, she at the present moment bears the name of Mrs. Chandos."

"You are right, Sir John, you are right. Lady Saxondale and Marlow both told me the other day that Frank Paton, whom I placed with her ladyship, had found a sister in that woman. But do you know —"

"I know that she is a female highwayman," interrupted the baronet. "It is a most extraordinary thing that I should be staying at Dover when her adventure at the Admiral's Head took place. I heard something of it at the time, but little thought that Mrs. Chandos — the heroine of that adventure — and our Elizabeth Paton were one and the same person. I do not read the local newspaper habitually, and therefore the account, which gave a full description of her personal appearance, escaped my notice. But yesterday I accidentally lighted upon the particular number of the Dover newspaper containing that report, and as I read on, I was struck with the conviction that Elizabeth Paton is Mrs. Chandos."

"And you are right," responded Petersfield. "I have been told that she is Frank's sister. But what of it? And what connection have her misdoings with any clue —"

"Who said that there was a connection?" interrupted the baronet. "I tell you that she does possess a clue. You know that Villebelle has married Constance Farefield."

"Yes, I am aware of it," answered Lord Petersfield. "Indeed, to tell you the truth, I delicately dropped to Lady Saxondale a hint, many months ago, that the marquis had a wife living. Of course I did not say how I knew it; I pretended to have heard some such thing rumoured when I was in Paris —"

"Well, but you see the marriage has taken place," continued Sir John Marston. "Elizabeth released Villebelle from all engagement toward her, from all bonds or ties — that is to say, so far as she was able. I should have stopped the marriage most effectually, had not Villebelle, when at Dover, whispered in my ear a certain name, which convinced me with startling effect that Elizabeth does possess a clue to past events that may prove dangerous enough for us."

"And that clue?" asked Lord Petersfield, all his diplomatic reserve having given place to intense anxiety.



“The name of Lady Everton was breathed in my ears,” rejoined the baronet.

“Ah! this is awkward,” said Petersfield. “But what did you do? What have you done?”

“What could I do? I did not then know where Elizabeth was, nor did I know that she and Mrs. Chandos were one and the same. I thought of doing a thousand things, of hunting her out, of locking her up in a madhouse, if I found her, or even of making away with her if necessary.”

“Sir John Marston!” exclaimed Petersfield, becoming white as a sheet.

“Ah! you may affect horror, my lord,” resumed the baronet, “but I was prepared for anything desperate. Yet where was I to search for her? All I knew was that she had recently been to Robson — that’s my attorney, you know — to receive some money I allow her. So I wrote to Robson to ask if he knew where she lived. His reply was that he did not even know whether she was in London. So I remained fretting and fidgeting and chafing at Dover, not knowing what on earth to do. At last, as I tell you, the Dover paper of some weeks back, containing the account of that business, fell into my hands; then I saw at once that Elizabeth was the female highwayman who stopped Marlow and Malton, and that she lived somewhere near Edmonton. So I came up to London to-day, and have only just arrived. My first visit is paid to you, that we may consult together.”

“Do you happen to have the Dover paper about you?” asked Petersfield, “for I know no more of Marlow’s adventure than what he told me at the time.”

“Yes, here it is,” returned Sir John Marston, producing the journal.

Lord Petersfield took it and commenced reading at the column indicated by the baronet, but as he continued the perusal, his features began to express a growing amazement, and suddenly rapping his clenched hand upon the table, he ejaculated, “Then, by Heaven, it was she!”

“What do you mean?” asked the baronet, hastily.

“I mean that Elizabeth has been here, that she has paid a visit to this house,” responded Lord Petersfield, in consternation. “I never could fancy what the meaning of that strange creature’s intrusion could be. I set her down as

mad. Marlow never happened to describe her person to me—”

“ But did you not recollect her? ” inquired Sir John.

“ I never saw her since her earliest childhood,” answered the nobleman. “ When I took Frank to school at Southampton, I carefully avoided seeing Elizabeth. She was then sixteen, and therefore if she had seen me, she would have remembered me again, which I was naturally anxious to avoid. Ah! this is indeed most threatening. What could she have come hither for? I can't make it out. It was assuredly she. The description in this newspaper is lifelike: handsome but largely chiseled features, full lips, somewhat coarse and richly red, teeth white as ivory, olive complexion, a somewhat bold and hardy gaze, a voice strong, but not harsh, and with flutelike tones— Yes, to be sure, it is the same. It is beyond all doubt.”

“ But upon what pretence did she come? ” demanded the baronet. “ Consider— reflect. You must tax your memory; it is important we should know. It may enable us to form an idea of the extent of the clue which she possesses.”

“ Ah! a suspicion strikes me,” ejaculated Petersfield. “ On that very same day, I recollect full well now, her brother Frank was here, and he happened to see that portrait of Lady Everton which was published in the ‘Court Beauties.’ Stop a moment.”

With these words Lord Petersfield hurried from the room, but in less than a minute he returned, holding a book open in his hand, and advancing up to the baronet, he showed him where a leaf had been abstracted, exclaiming, “ Yes, it is gone.”

“ Then rest assured; my lord,” replied Sir John Marston, “ that they are thoroughly upon the right track, and having discovered who their mother is, they will discover all the rest. There will be a terrific exposure. And now, what is to be done? ”

“ What is to be done indeed? ” said Lord Petersfield, pacing the room in considerable agitation, all his studied reserve being scattered to the winds, and his natural feelings triumphing over cold artificiality.

“ Yes, what is to be done? ” repeated the baronet. “ You are rich, my lord, you have feathered your nest well in various diplomatic services, and you can perhaps afford to

disgorge. But with me it is very different. I have no more than I know what to do with, and if I were to give up my share I should be a ruined man. Indeed, it was only to keep the woman quiet and enable her to have enough to live upon, that I have allowed her this four hundred a year for a little time past. I was fearful that if she fell into poverty she might begin talking to people of the transaction of that marriage, and thus one thing might have led on to another, resulting in the fullest exposure. But I repeat that if I am called upon to refund, I may as well go and drown myself afterward."

"Besides, the exposure, the disgrace, the damning infamy!" ejaculated Lord Petersfield. "Would to God I had never done it!"

"Ah! you were something like myself in those times, my lord," said Marston, bitterly; "too fond of the gaming-table."

"And Lady Petersfield," continued the nobleman, not heeding the baronet's acerbic interjection. "What a blow for her! She who suspects it not; she who has not an idea of all this! And with her diabolical temper too— Why, it will be enough to make me blow my brains out."

"A pretty couple we shall be, then," said Marston, with that bitter, mocking laugh in which despair sometimes breaks forth. "I to drown myself, you to blow your brains out! But what is to be done? It is no use your walking up and down the room like this. Pray resume some of your diplomatic cunning as soon as ever you like. The sooner, too, the better. Fortunately we know where Elizabeth is, at a cottage near Edmonton. The report in the Dover newspaper lets us know that much. Now, then, decide. Shall we lock her up in a madhouse? Or shall we do that other thing, you know what I mean?"

"Do not allude to it, Sir John Marston!" replied Lord Petersfield, impatiently. "I am not so bad as that."

"But I am bad enough for anything," exclaimed Marston, "under such circumstances. I tell you what, Petersfield, an idea has struck me! Let you and I go and lay in wait in the neighbourhood of her residence, and when she comes out, we will shoot her dead. If you are afraid to fire the pistol, I am not. Then we will swear she tried to rob us, and the respectability of your name, your high position,

your rank, all will give a colouring to the statement. We may afterward devise some means to dispose of the boy Frank."

"Sir John Marston, are you mad?" ejaculated the nobleman, becoming white as a sheet.

The baronet was about to reply, when the door opened, and a footman entered, bearing a card, and intimating that the gentleman whose name it described sought an immediate interview.

"Mr. Gunthorpe?" said Lord Petersfield, instantaneously recovering his self-possession on the entrance of the servant, and therewith his habitual reserve and caution. "I do not think — but of course I should not like to say positively — that I am acquainted with any one bearing the name of Gunthorpe. However he had better come up; Sir John Marston, you can retire into my private cabinet for a few minutes."

The baronet accordingly proceeded into a small adjoining room which Lord Petersfield indicated, and almost immediately afterward Mr. Gunthorpe made his appearance. Lord Petersfield bowed coldly and stiffly, for he thought that his visitor was some citizen dwelling on the eastern side of Temple Bar, and his lordship had a most haughty contempt and supreme disgust for everybody of that description.

Mr. Gunthorpe stared very hard at the nobleman, and then said, "I presume that I am addressing Lord Petersfield?"

"Really, Mr. Gunthorpe, I am not prepared, — that is to say, I do not think I ought to answer a question so pointedly put. I may be Lord Petersfield, and indeed, after due deliberation, I think I may venture to say that I am, with every proviso requisite under such circumstances."

Mr. Gunthorpe first looked surprised, then indignant, and then disgusted at the nobleman's answer, and deliberately taking a seat, he said, "You had better sit down, my lord, for I desire to have a very serious conversation with you."

"And pray, Mr. Gunthorpe, who may you be?" asked the nobleman, as he gravely and slowly deposited himself in his armchair. "Don't be in a hurry to answer, take time to reflect."

"It needs no time for an honest man to proclaim himself

such," was Mr. Gunthorpe's response, and he looked with a strange significance at Lord Petersfield.

"Your answer is ambiguous," said the nobleman; "it admits of a double meaning. It may be intended to imply a consciousness of your own honesty, or it may be an indirect and not ungraceful tribute to mine."

"Humph!" said Mr. Gunthorpe. "I can assure your lordship I was very far from intending the latter construction to be put upon my words at all. However, this is no occasion for childish trifling. Lord Petersfield, is there nothing upon your conscience with which you can reproach yourself?"

This was indeed a home-thrust question put to the diplomatist, and coming so quickly upon the disagreeable business he had been discussing with Sir John Marston, there can be no wonder that Lord Petersfield should suddenly turn pale and look confused.

"But little more than sixteen years have elapsed," continued Mr. Gunthorpe, again looking very hard in Lord Petersfield's face, "since a certain nobleman who believed that in you he possessed a sincere and faithful friend —"

"Ah!" gasped Petersfield, sinking back in his chair, but in a sudden paroxysm of excitement, he exclaimed, "Who are you, Mr. Gunthorpe?"

"The intimate friend of that nobleman," was the reply solemnly and firmly given, "and one who will see that the wrong be righted. All the circumstances of the past are known to me —"

"Mr. Gunthorpe," interrupted Petersfield, in an imploring tone, "I beseech you to deal mercifully — I will make every reparation. Where is that nobleman? You did well not to mention his name, for the very walls have ears."

"Yes, and doors too," said Mr. Gunthorpe, whose keen eye had caught sight of one gently opening an inch or two opposite to that by which he had entered, and as he spoke, he rose from his seat, walked straight up to that door, and pulling it completely open, beheld the baronet retreating from it, having evidently been listening.

A half-suppressed ejaculation escaped Mr. Gunthorpe's lips, for he instantaneously recognized Sir John Marston, on whose person the ravages of time had not been sufficient to prevent such recognition. But not choosing, for some

reason of his own, to show that he had thus recognized him, Mr. Gunthorpe turned around to Lord Petersfield, demanding sternly, "Who is your lordship's eavesdropper?"

"I am Sir John Marston," the baronet at once said, for Lord Petersfield, again sinking back aghast in his seat, could not utter a word. "You are Mr. Gunthorpe, as I understand, and I have heard you touch upon a certain delicate matter. Perhaps, therefore, I may be admitted to the conference?"

"Most assuredly," rejoined the old gentleman, with accents of significant bitterness, "for if you are Sir John Marston, you are as much interested in it as Lord Petersfield himself."

"Granted!" exclaimed the baronet, and he spoke with a degree of insolent hardihood which made Lord Petersfield think that he had devised some means of averting the threatened exposure.

"Well, then, Sir John Marston," resumed Mr. Gunthorpe, "inasmuch as you have been listening at that door, I need not repeat the words I have already spoken to Lord Petersfield. But as the friend and confidant of a certain nobleman," he continued, accentuating his words, "I demand an account of the stewardship of you, Lord Petersfield, — of you also, Sir John Marston, — in respect to the sum of one hundred thousand pounds deposited in your joint hands sixteen years ago, for the benefit of Elizabeth and Francis Paton."

"And are we to understand," said Marston, "that there is a very delicate anxiety and tender interest entertained in a certain quarter with regard to these said persons Elizabeth and Francis?"

"Most assuredly!" responded Mr. Gunthorpe, with a stern look. "How dare you assume, by your very tone and manner, that it can be otherwise?"

"I assume nothing of the sort," replied the baronet. "I will ask one question. Have you, Mr. Gunthorpe, as the friend and confidant of a certain nobleman, seen these persons Elizabeth and Francis?"

"I have — I have seen them both; it is barely an hour since I left them. That they have been wronged — cruelly, scandalously wronged — is but too evident, but they themselves are unconscious of the extent —"

“And pray, Mr. Gunthorpe,” inquired Marston, with a sardonic smile upon his countenance, “did Elizabeth make known to you the pleasant pursuits in which she has recently been engaged?”

“What mean you, sir?” cried Mr. Gunthorpe, angrily. “I have every reason to believe —”

“Believe nothing without being convinced,” interrupted Marston. “Here, take and read this document.”

As he thus spoke, the baronet spread open the Dover newspaper before Mr. Gunthorpe and the old gentleman began to read the column pointed out to him. Gradually did a strange excitement come over him; he grew pale as death, subdued ejaculations escaped his lips, his agitation was extreme. Sir John Marston threw a significant look at Lord Petersfield, — a look in which a sardonic triumph was blended with a conviction of their own safety.

Mr. Gunthorpe finished reading the report, drew his hand across his brow, as if with a pang of ineffable mental agony, and then looked at the paper again. He longed to start up in a fury and denounce the whole affair as a fraud or a delusion; he longed to proclaim his conviction that the Mrs. Chandos of Dover was not the Elizabeth in whom he was interested, and a different being from Mrs. Chandos the highway-woman. But when he reflected that from Henrietta’s lips he had heard how Elizabeth had appeared in male attire when she rescued that young girl from Beech-tree Lodge, he was staggered, he was confounded. And the description, too, which Marlow had given before the Dover magistrate of the female highwayman, tallied so completely with the portrait which the newspaper report drew of the Mrs. Chandos who appeared as a prisoner on the occasion that it was impossible to doubt. Even the extraordinary nature of the evidence given at that investigation before the mayor of Dover, though to all appearance establishing an *alibi*, could not possibly prove satisfactory to a man of Mr. Gunthorpe’s shrewdness and intelligence. Alas, yes! he could come to no other conclusion than the one fatal to the character of Elizabeth Paton. And this idea was sadly and terribly confirmed, when he recalled to mind her own words uttered to him ere now, that although as a woman she was pure and chaste, yet that her life had not been free from faults. The poor old gentleman was

overwhelmed, almost annihilated, and after remaining in utter consternation and dismay for a few minutes, he gave vent to his grief in tears.

"That will be a shocking account," observed Sir John Marston, with an ill-subdued malignity, "for you to forward to that nobleman whose friend and confidant you are."

"Villain!" ejaculated Mr. Gunthorpe, suddenly dashing away the tears from his eyes and turning his indignant looks upon the baronet, "all this must be your work, and yours also, my lord. Had you both performed your duty toward that young woman, she never could have been forced into such ways as these. But there shall be vengeance and punishment for your iniquities."

Thus speaking, Mr. Gunthorpe sprang up from his seat, and was hurriedly quitting the room, when Sir John Marston called out, "Stop, you had better do nothing rash! Remember, the honour of Lady Everton may be at stake."

Mr. Gunthorpe was struck by the circumstance thus announced, and which for the moment he had forgotten. He did therefore stop short, and returning to the chair he had so abruptly left, sat down and reflected for upwards of a minute.

"I find," he said at length, "that I have to deal with villains of no ordinary stamp. Yes, you are right, Sir John Marston; there can be no exposure, no vengeance. But rest assured that punishment of another kind will overtake both yourself and your accomplice, Lord Petersfield. Your conscience, Sir John Marston, and yours likewise, my lord, will not suffer you to remain for ever indifferent to this signal iniquity which you have perpetrated. I leave you, therefore, to the enjoyment of your ill-gotten gains, to the pangs of remorse which sooner or later will inevitably overtake you. I leave you to all the consequences of a guilt which Heaven cannot suffer to go unpunished."

Having thus spoken in accents of a withering bitterness, Mr. Gunthorpe rose from his seat and quitted the room.

"There, you see how splendidly I have managed it!" exclaimed Sir John Marston, the moment the door closed behind the old gentleman. "We are safe — we are safe. I feel more at ease than I have done for a long, long time past."

Lord Petersfield, now beginning to breathe freely, re-



marked, "Yes, the affair has indeed taken a turn which I had little anticipated."

"The idea struck me all in a moment," observed Sir John, "as I listened at that door. I can't tell how it was, but it occurred to me, somehow or another, that the visit of this Mr. Gunthorpe was connected with the business we had been talking on. I suppose it was because that business was uppermost in my thoughts at the time. However, such was my impression, and it induced me to listen. Thus you see, Petersfield, that while you, with all your diplomatic astuteness, would have suffered yourself to be crushed down to the dust by that old bully, I got rid of him by riding the high horse and taking the matter with an air of hardihood and effrontery."

"It is indeed fortunate," observed Petersfield, "that we have got rid of this unpleasant affair so easily. But think you we shall hear no more of it?"

"I am confident we shall not," replied Marston. "I will stake my existence upon it. This Gunthorpe is evidently deep in a certain nobleman's secrets. Did you see how he was affected? That was at the idea of having to shock his friend, — this certain nobleman," added Marston, malignantly, — "with an account of Elizabeth's ways of life. And then, too, there is the necessity of saving Lady Everton's name from exposure and disgrace, which is another safeguard for us. Had the matter rested alone with Elizabeth and Frank, we might not have got out of it so comfortably. But as it is, we are safe, and need trouble ourselves no more upon the matter. I shall even go to Robson and tell him that for the future he need not pay the quarterly allowance to Elizabeth. It will be four hundred a year in my pocket, and thus altogether my visit to London has terminated most fortunately instead of inauspiciously."

"But who is this Mr. Gunthorpe, think you?" asked Lord Petersfield.

"No matter who he is," rejoined Marston; "he has ceased to become an object of terror for us."

With these words the baronet took his leave of the nobleman, and quitted the house in high glee and joyous triumph at the result of the whole adventure.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE NOBLEMAN AND THE LAWYER

ABOUT half an hour after Sir John Marston had taken his departure from Lord Petersfield's presence, Mr. Malton was announced. This gentleman, as our readers will recollect, was the junior and more grave and steady partner of the eminent legal firm, and though perhaps he possessed not the same sharp-witted qualities as Mr. Marlow, yet he had none of that gentleman's excitability, which often merged into rashness.

"Well, Malton," said Petersfield, who, being very intimate with the lawyers, treated them with a corresponding familiarity, "what has brought you hither this afternoon? Some new freak of Saxondale's?"

"No, my lord; my business on the present occasion," responded Malton, "regards her ladyship, and as you are so old standing a friend of the family, Mr. Marlow and I have deemed it to be our duty to consult you in the present case."

"And pray what is it?" asked his lordship, looking awfully grave and important at what he took to be a compliment paid to his wisdom and judgment.

"It is an unpleasant business," said Mr. Malton. "Perchance your lordship may have heard of a certain William Deveril?"

"Without committing myself in too positive a manner," replied the nobleman, "I think I may venture to state that I have heard of such a person. Nay, more, I will go so far as to admit that I have seen him at Lady Saxondale's house, and I believe — but I would not pledge myself beyond the possibility of retraction — that he taught the young ladies some particular style of painting."

"Precisely so, my lord. Does it also happen that you have

heard a certain tale respecting his behaviour to her ladyship?" inquired the attorney.

"This is a very pointed question, Malton," answered Lord Petersfield, "and though not in the habit of replying without due deliberation, I think that in the present case I may admit that I have heard something of the kind."

"It is relative to this I wish to consult your lordship. Mr. Deveril, it appears, denies the truth of the story altogether, and a gentleman, who has taken up the matter very warmly on his behalf, is about to instruct his attorney to bring an action for defamation against Lady Saxondale."

"You had better, Malton, tell me the name of that gentleman. But do not speak too hastily; reflect on what you are going to say, you might mention a wrong name. I once knew a person, answering too quickly, give the name of Noakes instead of Brogson. So pray be careful."

"There is no need of reflection, my lord," responded the attorney, with a smile. "The gentleman's name is Gunthorpe."

"Ah, Gunthorpe!" ejaculated the nobleman, with a start, for his name had now become an ominous and inauspicious one for him.

"Yes, my lord. Do you know him?"

"Know him, Malton? I should not like to speak so positively as to avow that I know him, but he was certainly here upon a little private business an hour back."

"Mr. Gunthorpe here?" exclaimed Mr. Malton. "And did he not mention this circumstance to your lordship? For of course he must know that your lordship is a friend of the Saxondale family."

"He did not mention the circumstance, Malton. I think that I may go so far as to assure you that he did not, — I am certain that I may."

"Well, then, I must explain how the matter stands. Some time back — as much as a fortnight ago — Mr. Gunthorpe came to our office, and explained his business, as I have already intimated to your lordship. He agreed to suspend all proceedings for one week, on condition that we would write to her ladyship upon the subject. It however appears that business has prevented Mr. Gunthorpe from returning to us until yesterday, and then he came to inquire what we proposed to do on behalf of her ladyship in the mat-

ter. Now, we have received two or three letters from her ladyship with reference thereto, and the last one, which came to hand yesterday morning, bade us defend any action that might be brought against her ladyship, as she adhered to her original statement, and defied Mr. Deveril to asperse her good name."

"Well, then, Malton," said Lord Petersfield, "I suppose you must defend the action."

"But consider, my lord, the inconvenience of dragging her ladyship's name before the tribunals on such a subject. Your lordship is well aware of the wickedness of the world, and there will be found plenty of persons ready enough to take Deveril's part."

"But what is your opinion, Malton?" inquired the nobleman, "and what does Deveril allege?"

The lawyer proceeded to explain in detail the particulars of that interview which had taken place with Mr. Gunthorpe in Parliament Street, and which was duly chronicled in our narrative.

"More than ever," continued Malton, "did Mr. Gunthorpe insist yesterday upon what he had previously stated. He warns us, if we value Lady Saxondale's reputation, not to let her go to trial. He says that he possesses evidence the nature of which we little suspect, and which will prove damnatory to her ladyship. He declares that he has no particular desire to bring this matter before the public, but that his only object is to clear up his young friend Deveril's reputation. I must confess that he spoke so fairly, and at the same time in a tone of such solemn warning, that both Marlow and myself entertain serious apprehensions concerning the matter."

"Do you mean me to understand," asked Lord Petersfield, "that you think it quite possible Mr. Deveril's version may be the right one, and Lady Saxondale's the erroneous one? Don't speak hastily; take time to consider —"

"I have considered the matter, and very seriously," responded Malton. "At first both myself and Marlow felt indignant at the slur thus thrown upon her ladyship's reputation; we thought of the purity of her life, the untarnished character she has maintained, the dignified virtue which has appeared to place her beyond the reach even of suspicion. But Mr. Gunthorpe so pointedly and emphat-

ically assured us that he possessed the means, not merely of proving Deveril's case, but likewise of ruining her ladyship's fair fame beyond the possibility of redemption, that Marlow and I scarcely know what to think. In short, we resolved to consult your lordship in this most delicate and unpleasant matter. Heaven forbid that I," Mr. Malton went on to say, "should lend myself to unworthy or unjust suspicions, but we do know, Lord Petersfield, that women sometimes take strange whims and caprices into their heads, and if it should have happened that Lady Saxondale, in a moment of weakness, spoke or looked tenderly to this young man, who, as your lordship well knows, is of extraordinary beauty — In a word, my lord, we are all frail beings in this world."

Lord Petersfield, when looking inward to the depths of his own conscience, knew full well that Mr. Malton had just given utterance to a solemn truth; and the circumstances of his own position naturally led him to reflect that it was quite possible, and even probable, that Lady Saxondale had laid herself open to grave aspersions. There was he, Lord Petersfield, a man who had filled high diplomatic offices, whose honour and integrity frequently became the subject of compliment on the part of his brother peers in the Upper House, who was occasionally alluded to in certain newspapers as a man of unimpeachable rectitude, and who, in money affairs was looked upon by all who knew him as an individual of scrupulous nicety, — there he was, occupying this proud position, and yet harbouring the secret consciousness that he was a vile plunderer of orphans, a base betrayer of the confidence which a generous friendship had reposed in him, the accomplice of men of infamous character in the doing of infamous deeds. Such he knew himself to be, while the world at large thought him so very different. Might not the case be somewhat similar with Lady Saxondale? Might not all the pride of her virtue be a mere outward assumption, a mask, a hypocrisy, a deceit? Besides, did not Lord Petersfield himself know enough of the world — particularly of that aristocratic sphere in which he moved — to be well aware that female frailties were often hidden beneath a consummate dissimulation? And was there not within his own knowledge the special case of Lady Everton, — that case in all the ramifying results of which he had been so mixed up?

These varied reflections swept rapidly through the mind of Lord Petersfield, as Mr. Malton had been speaking, and for upwards of a minute he remained silent.

"Well, my dear sir," he at length said, "there may be something worthy of consideration in your remarks. But do you not see that it is a very difficult matter to deal with? Assuredly, Lady Saxondale must not be permitted to rush headlong into disgrace. She may not know the nature of the evidence that her opponents are possessed of against her. Persons — as you of course are even better aware than myself — frequently go to law with the confident hope that everything which is really damnatory to themselves is unknown to their opponents."

"Just so, my lord," said Mr. Malton, "and then, when it all comes out, and they find themselves overwhelmed with disgrace and confusion, they bitterly regret their folly in having persevered with law. I was thinking that if your lordship would only write a pressing letter to Lady Saxondale — or what would be much better, proceed into Lincolnshire, and obtain a personal interview — you might, with that delicacy and tact which your lordship knows so well how to use, induce her ladyship to empower Marlow and myself to compromise this matter."

"I cannot possibly give an immediate answer," said the nobleman. "It requires deliberation; it is something to be pondered upon; I could not undertake anything rash."

"But the affair is urgent, my lord," said Mr. Malton. "In two or three days, unless we are prepared to do something, Mr. Gunthorpe's attorney will commence proceedings."

"Well, my dear sir, I must take the rest of this day to consider the matter," rejoined Lord Petersfield, "and I will let you know to-morrow. If I decide upon proceeding into Lincolnshire —"

"You will in that case," added Malton, wishing to nail the nobleman to this particular course, "start to-morrow morning?"

"Start, Mr. Malton?" observed the diplomatist, looking very grave and very suspicious. "I never start. I never do anything in a hurry. I do not start, as you term it; I take my departure."

"I beg your lordship's pardon for having used so im-

proper a term," said the lawyer, "I will be more guarded in future."

At this moment the footman entered, bearing a large official-looking packet with an enormous seal. Lord Petersfield took it from the silver salver on which it was presented, placed it solemnly before him, and waited until the servant had withdrawn before he broke the seal. Then he opened the despatch, looked slowly around the room to convince himself that there was nobody but Malton present with him, and lastly fixed his eyes upon the lawyer himself, as if to acquire the additional certainty that this gentleman was not prepared to take any undue advantage of the packet being opened in his presence. Malton perfectly understood what was passing in the mind of the cautious diplomatist, and he could not help smiling as he rose to take his leave. But the nobleman bade him remain for a few minutes until he had examined the despatch. Mr. Malton accordingly resumed his seat, while Lord Petersfield slowly and solemnly perused the contents of the document he had just received. Having done this, he folded it up again, placed it in the envelope, tied a piece of red tape around the packet, and then deliberately endorsed it with the day of the month and the very hour at which he had received it.

"It is as I thought," said his lordship, "when I begged you to remain. I have just received an announcement — and when I tell you this, Malton, it is with the deliberate conviction that I am justified in so telling you — that I cannot possibly proceed into Lincolnshire. All I can do is to write to Lady Saxondale. Her Majesty's Ministers, having every confidence in my ability, caution, and wariness, have selected me for a special mission to the imperial court of Vienna. It is not altogether unexpected. I think I may go so far as to state that I did positively expect it —"

Again the door opened, and the footman said, "Please, your lordship, Lord Saxondale requests a few minutes' interview with your lordship."

"Let Lord Saxondale be introduced," said the nobleman.

"Well, you see," exclaimed Edmund, as he entered the room, "I can't stand this sort of thing any longer, and so I have resolved to go abroad."

Lord Petersfield looked positively aghast at what he considered to be the precipitate and reckless manner in which

the young nobleman spoke, while his dignity was offended by the omission of those ceremonial phrases and compliments with which he expected that every visit should invariably commence. Mr. Malton was also surprised at the abrupt and ejaculatory language that Edmund made use of.

"Sit down," said Lord Petersfield, pompously indicating a chair; "and when you have recovered breath and are perfectly master of your thoughts, have the goodness to explain what sort of thing it is you cannot stand."

"Why, I am sick of London life," exclaimed Saxondale, flinging himself upon one chair and putting his legs up on another. "I wish I had accepted your lordship's proposal of a few weeks back, about being attached to that foreign embassy, you know. Of course you are well aware from that list of debts I sent in, that poor Emily Archer and I were on very intimate terms together, and also as a matter of course, you have read the account in the newspapers of her mysterious death."

"I have no doubt," said Lord Petersfield, gravely, "that she was about to pay a visit to Saxondale Castle at the time, perhaps thinking you were there, or perhaps to see her ladyship for some purpose —"

"Well, I can't say," interrupted Edmund, "and I don't like talking of the business; it has upset me very much. Besides, I am so precious dull all by myself in Park Lane."

"Then wherefore," inquired Mr. Malton, "do you not join the family circle down in Lincolnshire? I understand that Lady Macdonald and Lady Florina Staunton are there."

"No, they came back to town yesterday," observed Edmund. "I learned it by accident. My valet happened to see them arrive."

"And pray, Lord Saxondale," asked Petersfield, severely, "have you not been this day to pay your respects to that lady who is affianced to you?"

"Can't say that I have," responded Edmund. "But I shall go there presently. The fact is, I am very much afraid Florina must have learned on what terms I was with poor Emily, and if so, all will be up in that quarter. I wish to go abroad for a few months, and therefore I came to tell your lordship that I will accept of that post —"

"It is no longer vacant," remarked Petersfield, "but if you are serious, Edmund, you can accompany me. For her



Majesty's Ministers have entrusted me with a special mission to Vienna."

"And when do you propose to leave?" asked Saxondale, making a slight grimace at the thought of accompanying his guardian.

"In three days," returned Lord Petersfield, "But if you really purpose to go with me, you must make up your mind to-morrow."

"It's made up at once. I will go," exclaimed Edmund, "and there's my hand upon it."

Lord Petersfield just took the tips of Edmund's fingers in a cold grasp, and began to give him some advice, which the young nobleman did not think it worth while to wait for, and bidding both his lordship and Mr. Malton good-bye, he quitted the room.

## CHAPTER X

### THE DISCARDED SUITOR

WE must now return to Mr. Gunthorpe, whom we left at the moment when he departed from the presence of Lord Petersfield and Sir John Marston. Returning to his carriage, which was waiting, the old gentleman ordered himself to be driven to Lady Macdonald's house in Cavendish Square, but as the vehicle proceeded thither, he felt almost inclined to issue a fresh instruction and postpone his visit to Lady Macdonald until the following day. He felt anxious — deeply anxious — to return to Lady Bess's cottage, but on mature reflection he resolved to let the interval of a night pass, so that he should have ample leisure to compose the feelings which had been so cruelly tortured, and thus prepare himself for an interview which he foresaw would be attended with painful circumstances. He therefore allowed the carriage to proceed toward Cavendish Square, and by the time it had reached Lady Macdonald's residence, Mr. Gunthorpe had so far regained his wonted composure that whatever he felt inwardly was no longer reflected in his countenance.

That his visit at Lady Macdonald's had been expected was evident from the circumstance that the moment he announced his name he was conducted into a parlour, where her ladyship immediately joined him. Florina was not present at this interview, which lasted for upwards of an hour. Mr. Gunthorpe and Lady Macdonald had much to talk upon, but we cannot at present explain the nature of their discourse. Suffice it to say that at the expiration of the colloquy, Mr. Gunthorpe accompanied Lady Macdonald up into the drawing-room, where Florina was seated. This young lady, rising from her chair, hastened forward to betso

the most cordial welcome upon her lover's much-valued friend, and it was even with a species of paternal kindness that the old gentleman treated Florina.

"Now, I dare say," he exclaimed, making her sit beside him upon a sofa, "that you are very anxious indeed to know what has taken place between me and your aunt? Well, I think, my dear Florina — for so you must permit me to call you — that your aunt will give you the welcome intelligence that she is perfectly satisfied with a certain young gentleman's rectitude of conduct."

"Ah, Mr. Gunthorpe," murmured Florina, with blushes upon her cheeks and the light of joy dancing in her beauteous eyes, "how can I sufficiently thank you for having thus cleared up the character of one —"

"Whom you love so dearly, eh?" interrupted Mr. Gunthorpe. "Ah! you need not throw that dismayed look at your aunt. She will not reproach you for having kept this love a secret from her. She knows everything now."

"Yes, dearest Florina," said Lady Macdonald, speaking with a most affectionate kindness, "Mr. Gunthorpe has told me everything, and I shall not chide you. To tell you the truth, for the last two or three weeks I have myself entertained serious misgivings as to whether your happiness was being truly and really consulted by this engagement with Lord Saxondale. But now I can hesitate no longer in giving you the assurance that it must be broken off."

"Oh, my dear aunt," exclaimed the beauteous girl, bounding from her seat and embracing Lady Macdonald fervently. "You know not what happiness your words have given me. It was only in obedience to your wishes that I ever consented to receive a suit all along so odious to me."

"We will say no more upon that part of the subject, my dear Flo," interrupted her ladyship. "Mr. Gunthorpe has made me fully aware of the impropriety and imprudence of opposing the natural current of the heart's affections. Besides, Florina, I have ceased to entertain any respect for Lady Saxondale. I have heard such sad things concerning her — But you are already acquainted with them all; Mr. Deveril has informed you of everything."

"And Mr. Deveril will receive permission," added Mr. Gunthorpe, "to pay his respects to you, Florina, at your aunt's house."

Need we say that a still sunnier joy than her eyes had already shown now danced in those beauteous orbs, or that still deeper blushes appeared upon Florina's cheeks? This was indeed a moment of happiness well and amply repaying her for any past sorrows she had endured. Again did she embrace her aunt, and then returning to her seat by Mr. Gunthorpe's side, she took his hand, and pressed it gratefully to her lips.

"But what about my poor brother?" she said, after a pause, and while a cloud suddenly gathered upon her brow.

"Where is he at this moment?" demanded Mr. Gunthorpe. "Oh, I recollect. Your aunt told me just now: he remains at Saxondale Castle, having been thrown from a horse about a week back. But fortunately he has received no serious hurt. Now, Florina, the conduct of your brother is far from satisfactory to those who are interested in him, but he must be left to his own course for the present."

"Ah, I have the most serious apprehensions on his account!" exclaimed Florina. "I fear lest that wicked woman, Lady Saxondale —"

"Well, but we must talk no more upon that subject now," interrupted Mr. Gunthorpe. "From all I know of your brother, he is not a man to be either persuaded or coerced into one particular course when he has set his mind on another. However, do not be afraid that he will be altogether lost sight of —"

At this moment the door opened, and a domestic entered to announce that Lord Saxondale had just called. Both Lady Macdonald and Florina threw quick glances of inquiry upon Mr. Gunthorpe to ascertain from his looks what course he would recommend, and he at once made a sign that the young nobleman should be shown up.

"It will be as well," he said, when the domestic had quitted the room, "that this stripling should be frankly dealt with at once, and as the opportunity presents itself, let the explanation take place in my presence. You, Lady Macdonald, must speak, but rest assured that I shall come to your rescue, if he dares display any of his flippant impertinence."

Scarcely had Mr. Gunthorpe finished speaking, when the door opened again, and Lord Saxondale was announced. Apprehensive, as the reader has already seen, that his affair with Emily Archer might be known in Cavendish Square,

he had determined to put a bold face on the matter, and therefore he was entering the room with a jaunty free and easy look and manner, when he was taken considerably aback on beholding Mr. Gunthorpe. For knowing that the old gentleman had been in Lincolnshire at the time of the murder, he could not help fancying that his presence at Lady Macdonald's on this occasion was to give some explanation or warning not altogether favourable to his (Saxondale's) engagement with Florina. He therefore started, and stopped short for a moment, but quickly recovering his effrontery, he exclaimed, "Ah, Mr. Gunthorpe! What, are you here?"

"You see that I am," responded the old gentleman, "and this time, Lord Saxondale, I do not think that you will threaten to have me kicked out of the house, as you did when last we met, which was in Park Lane."

"Oh, never mind the past," ejaculated the young nobleman, looking somewhat confused, however. Then advancing toward the young lady, he extended his hand, saying, "Well, Flo, so you have got back from Lincolnshire?"

She did not accept the proffered hand, and her look remained grave, but no word passed her lips.

"Cool, eh?" muttered Lord Saxondale to himself; then turning toward the aunt, he said, "And how is your ladyship? Why, what the deuce is the matter? You all seem so uncommonly serious."

"Perhaps your lordship will sit down," interrupted Lady Macdonald, pointing to a chair at a little distance from the group, "for it is necessary that you should receive a certain explanation from my lips."

Edmund took the chair accordingly, and endeavoured to assume, or, rather, to persevere in the assumption of an offhand and unconcerned manner, but he nevertheless felt confused and uneasy.

"My lord," continued Lady Macdonald, "from some additional particulars which have appeared in the newspapers relative to a certain lamentable tragedy — and which particulars cannot have escaped your notice — it is but too evident that one of the unfortunate victims had for several weeks past been living under your protection."

"Well, what of it?" ejaculated Edmund. "I am not married to Flo yet, and of course should have cut the concern

as soon as we were married. These things are always done by young men, and I don't suppose you want to make me an exception to the general rule."

"It is not to argue the point, Lord Saxondale," said Mr. Gunthorpe, with a severe look, "that her ladyship was addressing you, but to make a certain announcement which it is needful you should hear."

"Oh, I can guess what's coming!" cried Edmund, snapshily, "but I am not to be put off so easy, I can tell you. What the deuce, Mr. Gunthorpe, have you got to do with the business? Why are you poking your nose in the affair? And by the bye, if you have been telling any tales about me, I can tell one about you. That day you dined with Lord Harold in Jermyn Street, didn't you get most blazing drunk?"

"No, sir," responded Mr. Gunthorpe, sternly; "I affected to be overcome with liquor, in order that I might see the extent to which Lord Harold and yourself would go in your endeavours to enmesh me in your snares. If Lord Harold showed you the next day the letter which I sent him, you must have seen full well that not for a single moment was I made your dupe. I suffered myself to be robbed of a few thousand pounds for a certain reason of my own — But of that no matter. You would now do well to attend to what Lady Macdonald may have to say."

"Well, then, what is it?" demanded Edmund, his lips trembling with rage, as he bent his spiteful looks upon Florina's aunt, while the young damsel herself sat by Mr. Gunthorpe's side, grave and serious, and with her eyes bent down.

"I do not wish, Lord Saxondale," resumed Lady Macdonald, "to touch more than is necessary upon that lamentable occurrence, which, if you possess any heart at all, must have affected you. But it is necessary for me to state that I consider your conduct in maintaining such a connection while formally engaged to my niece to have been most disgraceful. Therefore, you cannot be surprised when I request that you will consider her engagement with yourself to exist no longer."

"Indeed, I shall consider nothing of the sort," he exclaimed, flippantly. "I am well aware that Flo loves me, — I am sure of it, — though she may be offended at the moment."

“Lady Florina Staunton,” said the aunt, with severe tone and look, “has only been kept in the room during this unpleasant scene that she may, if necessary, give from her own lips an assurance entirely corroborative of mine.”

“What,” ejaculated Edmund, “do you mean to tell me, Flo, that you don’t love me? I’m sure you won’t say that?”

“I am compelled to speak plainly and frankly in this matter,” replied the young maiden, with a modest dignity. “I am desirous, Lord Saxondale, that the engagement should be broken off between us.”

“It is you who have done this mischief!” cried the nobleman, starting up from his seat and addressing Mr. Gunthorpe menacingly. “You are poking your nose in everywhere, — bullying my mother in the first place, and now thrusting yourself into my affairs. What the deuce does it all mean? And pray who are you?”

“Lord Saxondale,” said the old gentleman, slowly rising from the sofa and bending a stern look upon the aristocratic stripling, “it is altogether useless for you to affect the airs of the bully with me. If you dare to talk thus in the presence of one of your own sex, it is not difficult to imagine what your conduct would be before these ladies, were they unprotected and alone.”

“Oh, don’t take things up quite so sharp,” ejaculated Edmund, overawed by the old gentleman’s demeanour. Then turning to Lady Macdonald, he said, “I hope you will forgive me for the past, I don’t want to break off with Flo, I am very fond of her, and I will turn over a new leaf and be quite steady. Indeed, I mean to leave London for two or three months. I have just been with Lord Petersfield, who is going as ambassador extraordinary to Vienna, and I am to accompany him. The fact is, I am heartily sick of the life I have been leading, and want change of scene, but if you desire it, Lady Macdonald, I will stay in London, and show you that I can become more steady.”

“I am glad, Edmund,” said her ladyship, in a kinder tone than she had before used, “to hear you talk in this manner, and I do most sincerely hope that you will reform. I think you would do well to absent yourself for a time, especially as you are going with your guardian Lord Petersfield, a nobleman of such high honour and integrity — ”

Here a suppressed ejaculation from Mr. Gunthorpe drew

all attention toward him, but he suddenly fell into a fit of coughing so as to cover the abrupt paroxysm of grief and rage into which that eulogy upon Lord Petersfield had thrown him.

"Yes, Edmund," continued Lady Macdonald, "you will do well to proceed to the Continent. But the decision which you have heard pronounced is irrevocable, and from this moment you must look upon Florina only as a mere acquaintance. I shall to-morrow write to Lady Saxondale to inform her that the engagement is broken off."

Edmund turned abruptly away, muttered some threatening words to Mr. Gunthorpe, who heeded them not, and flung himself out of the room, banging the door violently behind him. A few minutes afterward Mr. Gunthorpe himself took his departure, and entering his carriage, ordered it to drive to William Deveril's villa near the Regent's Park.

He found our young hero and Angela walking together in their little garden. The beautiful maiden was now fully acquainted with her brother's love for Florina, and we need scarcely say that she entertained the most fervent hope it would be crowned with happiness. They knew that Mr. Gunthorpe had written to Lady Macdonald at Saxondale Castle, knew also that in this letter he had made an appointment to call upon her at her own house in Cavendish Square on that particular afternoon of which we are speaking, and they therefore expected that he would call at their villa on his way back to Stamford Hill. Nor were they disappointed, for at about five o'clock in the evening, their worthy old friend made his appearance. Most cordial was the greeting he received from the brother and sister; they conducted him into their tastefully furnished parlour, and he gladly accepted of some refreshments, for he had taken nothing since he left his own house in the morning.

Not a single word to William and Angela did Mr. Gunthorpe breathe of the circumstances which had so deeply saddened him that day, but when he had taken a glass of wine and a mouthful of food, he proceeded to speak upon the subject for which he had specially called on the present occasion.

"I told you, my dear young friends," he said, "that I wrote four days back to Lady Macdonald at Saxondale Castle, explaining to her sufficient to make her comprehend the necessity of withdrawing herself and her niece at once



from Lady Saxondale's society. Lady Macdonald, not choosing to break with Lady Saxondale abruptly until she should have received fuller particulars from my lips, proffered some pretext to account for the speedy departure of herself and Florina from the castle. They arrived in town yesterday, and just now, according to an intimation which I gave Lady Macdonald in my letter, I called in Cavendish Square. Need I tell you, William, that you now stand higher in Lady Macdonald's opinion than ever? Need I assure you that she is fully convinced of your innocence and of Lady Saxondale's guilt? But there is one piece of intelligence which I must hasten to give you, which is, that the engagement is broken off with Lord Saxondale, and you are now the accepted suitor of Lady Florina Staunton."

A cry of joy, fervid and enthusiastic, burst from the lips of William Deveril as he threw himself upon his knees, and taking Mr. Gunthorpe's hand, pressed it between both his own. Tears of mingled gratitude and delight trickled from the dark eyes of the lovely Angela, and Mr. Gunthorpe was deeply affected by the scene of happiness which he thus witnessed and of which he was the author.

He soon afterward took his departure, but on his way back to his own mansion at Stamford Hill, he stopped for a few moments at Mrs. Leyden's dwelling to inform Henrietta that he was perfectly satisfied with the result of his interview with Adolphus at Mrs. Chandos's cottage, and that she had every hope of bliss to anticipate from that young nobleman's love. Thus did the old gentleman, while his own heart was secretly devoured with care, busy himself to promote the happiness of others, and to a certain extent it was a relief to his own sorrows that he was enabled to do so.

At eleven o'clock on the following day, Mr. Gunthorpe's carriage again drew up in front of the picturesque cottage near Edmonton. Elizabeth immediately came forth to welcome the old gentleman, and she informed him that her brother and Adolphus had gone out together for a long ramble in the neighbouring lanes and fields.

"I am glad of it," said Mr. Gunthorpe, kindly but mournfully, "for I wish to have a serious, a very serious conversation with you. Will you be enabled to give me two or three hours of your time this morning?"

"Yes, assuredly," responded Elizabeth; but she was

struck by the mournfulness of Mr. Gunthorpe's look and manner, and the truth flashed in unto her mind.

The old gentleman dismissed his carriage for the present, bidding the coachman return at two o'clock, and he then entered the parlour with Lady Bess.

Closing the door, she looked him full in the face, but yet with an expression of profound sorrow and humiliation on her features, saying, "Mr. Gunthorpe, do you not despise me? Do you not scorn and loathe me?"

"My God, no!" he ejaculated, with a strange excitement, and taking her hand, he pressed it long and warmly, while the tears ran down his cheeks. "You suspect, Elizabeth, that I have learned something concerning you."

"Yes, I see it in your manner, I know that you have," she answered, weeping. "But how is it possible that you could come near me again? How is it that you can thus demonstrate so much kind and generous feeling toward me? Who are you, Mr. Gunthorpe? Tell me who you are! That is a question which I have asked myself a thousand times since you were here yesterday, a question that I must ask a thousand times again until you solve it."

"I cannot now, Elizabeth," replied the old gentleman. "But shortly, very shortly, I may do so. Suffice it for you to know that I entertain the warmest and sincerest interest in your behalf."

"Oh, that proof of munificence which you left with me yesterday!" exclaimed Lady Bess. "It is a fortune. But see, I have not dared to avail myself of your bounty. I give it you back again, for now that you know all, you must feel how thoroughly unworthy I am of your kindness," and as she spoke, she drew forth from her bosom the cheque which Mr. Gunthorpe had left on the preceding day.

"Keep it, Elizabeth, keep it, it is yours," he said, gently pushing back her hand which held the draft. "Would to Heaven that ten thousand times the amount would redeem the past!"

"Ah, would that I could redeem it!" ejaculated Elizabeth. "But at least I may atone for it, and most solemn is my resolve to make such atonement."

"I came not to reproach you, my dear Elizabeth," said Mr. Gunthorpe, still profoundly affected, "but to hear from your lips the narrative of that past for which you

promise atonement. I am sure you will not refuse me your confidence."

"No, not for worlds," cried Lady Bess, with unfeigned sincerity. "Your goodness toward me demands it, and I feel also, without knowing why, that you have a right to expect it. Most sacredly do I assure you, Mr. Gunthorpe, that my mind was made up to tell you everything the next time you called, even though you should not have elsewhere discovered that dread secret which has filled you with so much generous affliction on my behalf. Oh, but I have been haunted by the fear, ever since you left this house yesterday, that you would never return! I was seized with a presentiment that you were going somewhere to make inquiries that would bring to your knowledge this sad phase in my eventful life; and methought that if you did thus learn it, you would cast me out with scorn and loathing from your memory."

"No, Elizabeth, I could not do that," said Mr. Gunthorpe, "and that I could not, the proof is that I am here again to-day. And now that I have given you the assurance that it is not my purpose to reproach you, I beg you will delay not, my dear Elizabeth, in lifting the veil that covers the mystery of your life. Conceal nothing from me. Whatsoever you may have to confess will not draw vituperation from my lips; nothing but sympathy shall flow thence. You have not known me long, but perhaps you have seen enough of me to trust in this assurance?"

"If any encouragement were wanting," said Elizabeth, deeply moved, "to induce me to make the fullest revelations, it has just been given in these kind words that you have spoken."

She seated herself near Mr. Gunthorpe, and in a calm, firm voice commenced her narrative in the following manner.

## CHAPTER XI

### COMMENCEMENT OF LADY BESS'S HISTORY

“THE earliest period of existence to which my memory can be carried back is connected with this cottage. Here I dwelt in my infancy, with an elderly lady named Mrs. Burnaby, whom I was taught to regard as my grandmother. She was moderately off, and kept one servant. She herself instructed me in the rudiments of education; I was fond of learning, and progressed rapidly under her supervision. She was indeed very kind to me, behaving with all the affection of a near and fond relative. When I was about eight years old, — I remember the incident as well as if it had only occurred yesterday, — Mrs. Burnaby told me that she was going upon a little journey, that she might be absent a couple of days, and that I was to be a very good girl and mind what the female servant said during her absence.

“She did remain away two days, and it was late in the evening when she returned. She was accompanied by a nurse carrying a little baby, and she told me that this little baby was my brother. I was too young to reflect upon such matters at that time, and therefore I did not think it at all extraordinary. Indeed, all my feelings were those of an enthusiastic joy at having this little brother. It was a wet-nurse who had charge of him, and I was told that his name was Francis. At the expiration of some months — I suppose nine or ten — the wet-nurse went away, and a girl from the neighbourhood was hired to take charge of little Frank. He thrived apace, and when he was able to run alone, he became a companion for me. Full well do I remember the childish delight with which I used to lead him when we walked out with Mrs. Burnaby or the nurse-maid; and as years went by and he became more companionable for me

still, I loved him with the sincerest affection. He was not a strong or healthy child, but delicate and interesting, endowed with that remarkable beauty which has accompanied his growth and which characterizes him now. I myself, on the other hand, was a strong, vigorous girl, tall for my age, and totally unacquainted with even a day's indisposition. When Frank was old enough to commence learning, Mrs. Burnaby instructed him as she did me, and it gave me the sincerest delight to assist my little brother in his lessons.

"Time wore on, and the incident I am about to relate happened in the year 1832. I was then fourteen and Frank was six. One morning Mrs. Burnaby told us that we were to be dressed in our Sunday apparel, and accompany her on a little journey. Presently a vehicle, which had been ordered from Edmonton, drove up to the door; we entered it, and proceeded to some village about ten miles distant, but I did not know the name. There we stopped at a tavern, where a splendid carriage, attended by servants in a gorgeous livery, was waiting. Mrs. Burnaby, myself, and Frank took our places in this carriage, and it drove away. Speedily turning out of the main road, it entered a by one, running through some beautiful sylvan scenery. At the expiration of an hour a superb mansion appeared at a little distance. It was situated upon a gentle eminence, in the middle of a park, where numerous deer were frisking about. It was a beautiful day in the middle of summer; the trees and fields were of the liveliest green, the ornamental waters in that park reflected the unclouded blue of heaven, and swans were floating in stately gracefulness upon the limpid lake. Altogether it was a scene which delighted me at the time, and made an indelible impression upon me.

"Through this park did the carriage proceed, until it drove up to the entrance of the mansion, where it stopped. Mrs. Burnaby alighted with us; an elderly female, looking like a housekeeper, received us as we descended from the vehicle, and a kind greeting took place between her and Mrs. Burnaby. They were evidently old acquaintances. The housekeeper, for so I shall call her, bestowed great attention on Frank and me, and seemed surprised that I should have grown such a tall girl. Perhaps she paid me some little compliments with an admiring good-nature, but these I pass over.

We were conducted up a magnificent staircase, to a bed-chamber, where a lady lay ill in the couch. She was very beautiful, though pale with sickness; she appeared to be about thirty-three years of age. There were two other ladies with her, much younger than herself, one being but little past twenty, and the other nineteen. I do not think they were sisters, for although they were both very beautiful, there was no family resemblance between them. Nor do I think they were any relation to the lady who was ill, — at least so far as I could judge by the way in which they addressed her. I must however observe that neither the invalid lady nor these two younger ones called each other by any name the whole time that Frank and I were there, this reserve being doubtless a necessary but melancholy precaution to prevent us from obtaining any clue as to who they were.

“The sick lady embraced me and Frank with the utmost tenderness, and wept over us. She contemplated us with a look which I can never forget, a look of mournful fondness and sorrowing love, a look which, young though I was, nevertheless made me think that there must be some secret tie connecting my brother and myself with this lady. After remaining upwards of an hour with her, she bade us a most affectionate farewell. She gave me some advice as to my future conduct, and hinted that I was shortly to be removed from Mrs. Burnaby’s and placed at school, but she assured me that I had friends in the world who would ever be watchful over my interests. Again and again did she press me and Frank to her bosom, and although I have no doubt she exerted all her energies to restrain her emotions as much as possible, yet she could not prevent them from finding an issue. Mrs. Burnaby and the housekeeper conducted us back to the carriage, and the latter female kissed us both most kindly at parting. I should observe that the two young ladies already mentioned had likewise lavished affectionate endearments upon us. The handsome carriage took us back to the village, where we entered the hired vehicle and were borne home to the cottage.

“On the following day preparations were commenced toward fitting me out for a boarding-school. I grieved sadly when I found that I was to be separated from my dearly beloved brother, but Mrs. Burnaby consoled me with the

assurance that when he was old enough he should join me in the same establishment. At the expiration of eight or ten days, the housekeeper from that splendid mansion arrived at the cottage. The moment of parting had now come, and full well do I remember the bitter, bitter tears I shed when separating from Frank and Mrs. Burnaby. The housekeeper took me into London in a hired vehicle, and thence we proceeded by coach to Southampton. There I was placed at the establishment of Mr. and Mrs. Jennings. It was a very large one, and was divided into two distinct compartments, one for boys and one for girls, the master presiding over the former and the mistress over the latter. There it was that the housekeeper left me, kissing me affectionately when she went away, and giving me a well-filled purse for pocket-money. I was well treated at this school; that is to say, I experienced no unkindness. But I need scarcely observe that I very much missed the tender care of her whom I had been taught to believe was my grandmother. Mrs. Burnaby frequently wrote kind and encouraging letters to me, and occasionally sent me little presents. I expected to go home to her at the holidays, and was sadly distressed when I was informed that I must remain at school. I wrote to Mrs. Burnaby imploring her to have me home, and telling her how much I longed to see my dear brother Frank. She wrote me back a letter full of kindness, but assuring me that circumstances compelled her to keep me at school, and enjoining me to make myself as happy as I possibly could. Frank sometimes wrote in his own little way, and I remember how I used to weep over those letters. Ah, I had been told to make myself happy, but I could not; and during the holidays, when most of the other children were away at their homes, I often used to weep and sob as if my heart would break.

“ At the expiration of very nearly two years, I was one day most agreeably surprised by the presence of my brother. He told me that Mrs. Burnaby was dead, and that she was not our grandmother, — indeed, that she was no relation at all. He was not dressed in black; but when I spoke to the school-mistress on the subject, she told me that we were neither of us to be put into mourning. I was much afflicted at hearing of the good old lady's death, and I felt shocked at this prohibition from putting on a suitable apparel, for

notwithstanding I now learned that there was not the remotest degree of kinship between her and us, yet I thought that having so long regarded her in another light, it would have been but decent to exhibit a proper respect for her memory. Frank told me that a gentleman, whose name he did not know, had brought him to school; and it appeared that this gentleman, or, rather, nobleman, took his departure immediately, and did not ask to see me.

“ Frank likewise told me that about ten months back he had been taken to a large building in London, where he had seen that lady again, and that she was then in perfect health. On that occasion he had for the first time beheld the nobleman who afterward brought him to school, for that he was a nobleman could be conjectured from the circumstance that he had worn a star upon his breast when Frank saw him first of all. My brother likewise told me that on the previous day — that before he arrived at the school, and which was ten months after his visit to the lady at the great building in London — this same nobleman, after taking possession of Mrs. Burnaby’s papers and letters, had conducted him to the splendid mansion in the park, where he saw the lady a third time, and also those two young ladies previously mentioned. The lady whom he had been taken specially to see wept over him, murmuring that perhaps she should never see him more, and she cut off a lock of his hair. He was then consigned to the charge of that nobleman who brought him to the school at Southampton. Such was the substance of the information which Frank gave me, and amidst my grief at the death of poor Mrs. Burnaby, it was a source of comfort to have my brother beneath the same roof with myself.

“ At the time of which I am now speaking he was eight and I was sixteen. He of course lived in the department of the establishment allotted to the boys, while I dwelt in that appropriated to the female scholars. We however saw each other for a short time every day, and for several hours on Sunday. I was therefore now much happier than I had been when at this school by myself, and I did my best to make my poor brother happy also. We were well provided with clothes by the master and mistress according as we wanted them, and we were likewise allowed a sufficiency of pocket-money. I think that Mr. and Mrs. Jennings sus-



pected there was some strange mystery connected with us, but they evidently were not acquainted with it, or at least not in all its particulars, for Mrs. Jennings frequently questioned me in respect to my former reminiscences. I used to answer her with frankness, in the hope that she would perhaps be led to tell me something. But she never did.

“I must here observe that amongst the female scholars at this school there was one named Catherine Marshall. She was four years younger than myself, a fine, tall, well-made, and beautiful creature as ever I beheld. She was possessed of a merry and joyous disposition, innocently mischievous, if I may use the term, and full of frolicsome gaiety. My spirits were naturally good, notwithstanding the many depressing circumstances by which I was surrounded. Kate and I soon formed a sincere friendship for each other. When the school walked out we were always together. We sat together in the schoolroom, and as she was somewhat idle and disliked learning, I was wont to assist her with her lessons. She was a kind-hearted, generous-minded girl, and I loved her dearly. I must add that her father, Mr. Marshall, kept a tavern at Dover, but being well off, he was enabled to give his daughters a good education. For Kate had two sisters younger than herself, and they were at school, I believe, at Dover, the mother not liking to have them all sent away from home.

“I have said that I was sixteen when my brother came to this school. About a year afterward Mrs. Jennings told me that I was no longer to consider myself a scholar, but was to occupy the place of junior teacher, with the ultimate view of qualifying myself as a governess, by which profession I was to earn my bread. Thus time passed on, and when I was twenty, Mrs. Jennings informed me that I was to make my preparations to enter, in the above capacity, a family that was about to visit the Continent. Kate Marshall at that time, she being sixteen, left the school. We exchanged some little mementos of our friendship, and she made me promise that if ever I had an opportunity I would pay her a visit at Dover. But the most anguished separation was from my dear brother Frank, and when the moment for parting came, we embraced again and again, unable to tear ourselves away from each other's arms. At length we did separate, and never shall I forget the excruciating

poignancy of my affliction at that moment. My boxes were conveyed to the hotel where the family was stopping, but before I took leave of Mr. and Mrs. Jennings I besought them to treat my dear brother with all possible kindness, as I knew that he would be inconsolable at my loss. They promised that they would, and they showed some degree of feeling on parting from me.

“The family into which I now entered was that of Sir John Marston. He was then about fifty years of age; Lady Marston was two years his junior. They had a niece with them, a Mrs. Lloyd, who was a widow and had two children. She was about thirty years old, and her children, both girls, were respectively twelve and ten. It was these two children of whose education I was to take charge. As I have already said, this family was staying at a hotel, and from what I learned, they had only arrived from London two days previously. How they heard of me, how I became engaged to enter into their service, how long the negotiation had been carried on, in short, all circumstances leading to my entrance into this family, were totally unknown to me, and of course I did not ask the question.

“On the following day we embarked on board a steam-packet bound for Havre de Grace, and there I found that the Marstons had a house ready provided to receive them, and where they had previously been dwelling for some time. It was there that we accordingly took up our abode, and I entered upon my duties as governess to Mrs. Lloyd’s children. Under no circumstances is the occupation of a teacher a very pleasurable one, but mine was rendered doubly annoying by the disagreeable temper of my two pupils, and by the difficulty I experienced in giving Mrs. Lloyd satisfaction. She was constantly interfering and finding fault. Her children were rude, pert, and forward when I commenced with them, and vainly did I endeavour to improve their manners and dispositions. If I spoke harshly to them, they raised such a storm of crying, shrieking, screaming, and yelling that the whole house grew alarmed, and I was blamed for their ill conduct. In short, I soon found that I had entered into a kind of purgatory, and that the life I had led at the Southampton school was paradise compared to it. Sir John Marston often scolded me most brutally. Lady Marston treated me with the supremest contempt; indeed,

she was kinder far to her menials than to myself. Mrs. Lloyd, as I have already said, was constantly finding fault. If I corrected the children when they did wrong, or if I let them have their own way, I was equally liable to blame, and thus I found my situation rapidly becoming intolerable. The domestics, seeing how I was treated by their master and the two ladies, followed their example, so that I could scarcely get even the most necessary services performed, and had to a great extent to do menial things for myself. I wrote frequently to Frank, but I never in my letters mentioned to him how thoroughly unhappy I was.

“ Thus some months passed away, and at length, as my ideas began to grow enlarged and my experience of the world increased, I began to ask myself why I should put up with so much ill-treatment. I reasoned that if my qualifications were such as to enable me to obtain my bread at all, they would avail for the purpose in some other family than Sir John Marston's, and inspired by these reflections, I felt a certain independence of spirit growing up within me. When once this spirit had sprung into existence, or, rather, when the natural strength of my mind began thus to develop itself, I assumed a loftier bearing toward those around me. One day, when the children had been guilty of some exceeding act of rudeness, I chastised them with great severity. Their cries brought up their mother, Mrs. Lloyd, and she began abusing me with her usual violence. I desired her not to address me in such language, told her that she was no lady, but only fit for a fishwife, and gave her plainly and frankly to understand that so long as I had the charge of her daughters I was thenceforth determined to punish them whenever they deserved it. She hastened away to tell her uncle, Sir John Marston, who rushed up to the nursery furious with rage. When he began storming at me I told him he was a cowardly bully, and that he would not dare behave thus to one of his own sex. He blustered and fumed, endeavouring to break my spirit, and he even raised his hand to strike me, when I snatched up a footstool and hurled it at his head. It struck him a severe blow, but tranquillized him in a moment, and he quitted the nursery without another word.

“ Thus far I was victorious. But presently I had to encounter the self-sufficient insolence of Lady Marston, for

as I passed her on the stairs she turned up her nose, muttering something about 'a beggarly upstart.' I at once told her that I had not the slightest doubt she was precisely what she had dared to call me, and white with rage, she hurried away. I was now perfectly triumphant. I felt glowing within me a spirit such as I had never known before, and the consciousness that I possessed it made me happy. I suddenly felt myself above all petty tyrannies, and totally independent of my tyrants. I was therefore encouraged to prosecute the warfare against the servants, and when, that very same day, an impertinent minx of a housemaid refused to do something I bade her, I bestowed upon her such a sound box on the ears that she was as much dismayed as hurt. She did not any longer refuse to follow my orders, and during all the rest of the time I was in Sir John Marston's family, I experienced no overt impertinence on the part of the domestics.

"The effect which all these various proceedings produced was perfectly astonishing; the treatment I subsequently experienced was widely different from that I had before known. I was left to manage the children as I thought fit, and the domestics obeyed my orders. But still I was resolved to take the earliest opportunity of quitting a situation which I disliked and a family that I detested. I secretly made inquiries if other English families living in Havre required a governess, but could hear of nothing satisfactory. At length I resolved to give Sir John Marston notice to leave him, and wend my way back to England. Thereupon he gave me to understand that I was bound to him by those who had the power to bind me, until I should attain the age of twenty-one. It only wanted three months of that period, and I therefore determined to await it patiently. But still I wondered who the persons could be that exercised this invisible but powerful influence over my destinies.

"About two months after that conversation with Sir John Marston the family removed from Havre to Paris, and we took up our abode at a hotel, the baronet alleging that he purposed to look out for a suitable residence, as he meant to fix himself permanently, or at all events for some time, in the French capital. I cared nothing about his arrangements, looking forward to the end of another month

as the period of my emancipation. And now I come to the most extraordinary incident in my checkered life. It was on the morning after the attainment of my twenty-first year that I requested an interview with Sir John Marston, in order to receive whatsoever amount of money was due to me and take my leave. The request for an audience was granted, and when I repaired to the room in which he was seated alone, he manifested the most extraordinary courtesy. Desiring me to be seated, he addressed me in such a tone of urbanity and kindness that I could scarcely believe he was the same individual who used to treat me with such ruffian brutality. He commenced by stating that he was sorry if any past circumstances had rendered me unhappy while in his family, but attributed them all to hastiness of temper, for which he professed a profound sorrow. He then questioned me — as indeed he had often done before — very minutely relative to my reminiscences of the earlier portion of my life; and thinking that now I had attained my majority, and was going to leave him, he might have something important to communicate, I spoke without reserve. He then proceeded to make me the most extraordinary proposal, and although he opened his mind with cautious slowness, feeling his way, as it were, with the most wary circumlocution, yet the proposition, when fully developed, struck me speechless with wonder for some minutes. It was to the effect that if I would consent to marry a certain person whom he had selected he would present me with a sum of five thousand pounds; but that he did not require me to live with this husband of his choice a day nor an hour nor a minute. On the contrary, he stipulated, as a part of his proposition, that we were to separate immediately after the ceremony and see each other no more. When I had recovered from the astonishment into which this proposal had thrown me I speedily reflected that it was one which, singular and indelicate though it appeared, I should nevertheless do well to accept. To a person who was about to leave a situation with only a few pounds in her pocket, and utterly uncertain how soon she could procure another, without any known friends, too, in the whole wide world, the offer of five thousand pounds was magnificently tempting. Indeed, it was a temptation too brilliant and dazzling to be refused. I therefore speedily made up my mind to accept the offer.

But having no very high opinion of Sir John Marston's integrity, I insisted upon receiving the money before I would conclude the strange bargain. He told me that the moment the ceremony was over I should have to sign a certain paper, without reading its contents, and that the object which he had in view would not be answered unless I affixed my name to that document. He therefore proposed that immediately after the ceremony, and previous to the signing of the paper, the money should be placed in my hands. To this I consented, and Sir John Marston then told me that in a couple of hours the bridegroom would be there. I returned to my own chamber, and he immediately issued from the hotel.

"When I was alone, — the children being at the time with their mother, Mrs. Lloyd, — I reflected upon the step I was about to take. That Sir John Marston had some deep, selfish purpose to serve, there could be no doubt, but what it was, seemed impossible for me to fathom. If I rejected his proposal, how should I better myself? If a large sum of money were due to me, and he only meant to pay me a part, what measures could I take for obtaining the whole? Where was I to look for the source of such money? To whom was I to address myself for information or complaint? I was profoundly anxious to escape from the thralldom of a governess's life, and here was a little fortune within my reach. All things considered, and all the circumstances being well weighed, I resolved to persevere. Thus making up my mind with coolness and firmness, I maintained a remarkable equanimity of mind, experiencing no nervousness nor anxiety nor excitement. I looked upon the whole affair as a purely business transaction, and was prepared to go through with it in that sense.

"It was a little after nine o'clock in the morning when the interview between me and Sir John Marston had occurred; it was about half-past eleven when Lady Marston and Mrs. Lloyd entered my chamber and bade me accompany them to another room. They knew what was about to take place, and spoke to me encouragingly on the subject. They were evidently fearful that I should retract my promise, and they addressed me in terms sickeningly fawning and coaxing. I gave them to understand that I required no such show of false friendship on their part, that I had made up

my mind how to act, in order to serve my own views, and that if by so doing I served theirs at the same time, it was through no love that I bore them. Soon afterward Sir John Marston made his appearance, accompanied by a very handsome young Frenchman who spoke English perfectly, and whom he introduced to me as the Marquis of Villebelle. So I was to become a marchioness. This did not, however, flatter my pride in the slightest degree, for I cared nothing about artificial rank and the nauseating blazonry of titles. Nor did the agreeable person of the young marquis produce any tender impression upon my heart; and notwithstanding his good looks, his graceful bearing, and his elegant manners, I remained perfectly willing to carry out the baronet's conditions to their utmost limit, and separate from my intended husband the moment the ceremony should have been performed. Besides, I should have loathed myself if all in a moment I could have made up my mind to fall into the arms of a man whom I had never seen before, and whom, therefore, I had not been led to love.

“ Well, to proceed with my narrative. No preparations in the shape of apparel were made for this singular wedding. The white veil, the virgin dress, the orange-blossoms, and the bouquet were all wanting. I was well but plainly attired, and with no one single indication that I was about to become a bride. Indeed, the other inmates of the hotel remained in perfect ignorance that any such ceremony was contemplated. Sir John and Lady Marston, Mrs. Lloyd, the Marquis of Villebelle, and myself entered a carriage hired for the occasion, and proceeded to the British Embassy, where my hand was duly united in marriage to that of the French nobleman. The chaplain who solemnized the rite gave me a certificate, which I secured about my person. We then returned to the carriage, and drove back to the hotel. There I at once took leave of the marquis, and repaired to the room where Sir John Marston and I had held the conversation three hours back.

“ In about twenty minutes he joined me, accompanied by an elderly French gentleman, dressed in black, and whom he introduced to me as a notary public. This functionary produced several papers, and requested me to show him the marriage certificate. I did so, whereupon he filled up a couple of papers attesting that this certificate had been

exhibited to him, and one of these duplicates he handed to me, bidding me keep it. He then produced another document, of which he likewise had a duplicate, and which set forth that for certain reasons of a delicate character, known only to the persons interested, a separation had been agreed upon between my husband and myself, I retaining all rights over whatsoever property I might be entitled to. These papers I had to sign, and one of them was also left in my possession. Next the notary produced a still more elaborate document, and then Sir John Marston, interposing, said in French that 'the Marchioness of Villebelle was already acquainted with its contents, and it was not necessary to read it.' I was very much inclined to demur to this, but Sir John threw upon me a look which seemed to say that I was completely in his power as to the five thousand pounds, and not knowing but that I might have really been so, and indeed more than half-fancying I was, I held my peace. Thereupon Sir John drew forth his pocketbook, counted down the amount of five thousand pounds in French bank-notes, and placed them near me. I signed the document, over which a large piece of blotting-paper was thrown so that I could not catch the slightest glimpse of its contents, for I have no doubt that the notary was secretly in the baronet's pay, bribed to manage the business thus cautiously. I should observe that all the documents were in the French language, with which I am perfectly acquainted. The notary then took his departure, and I possessed myself of my five thousand pounds.

"I now intimated to Sir John Marston that I was about to quit his family at once, to which he made no objection. But he bade me wait a few minutes while he gave me a word of caution. This was to the effect that if I consulted my own interests I should do well not to mention to any persons whose friendship I might thereafter form the peculiar circumstances under which my marriage was contracted, and he even hinted that some fraud had been committed, in which I was more or less an accomplice. I began to grow frightened, for it did not occur to me at the time that this might be merely a device on his part to intimidate me into secrecy. He however assured me that I should be perfectly safe, provided I kept my own counsel, and he further intimated that if ever I wished to communicate with him, and



should be unacquainted with his address, a letter directed to him through his English attorney, Mr. Robson, of Saville Row, London, would reach him. He told me that he had changed his mind about settling himself in Paris, and that he purposed to travel about on the Continent for some time to come. I now took leave of him. He gave me his hand at parting, and hoped that I experienced no lingering ill-will toward him. I said frankly enough that I had little cause to entertain a friendly feeling, but that as for a permanent rancour, mine was not a disposition to cherish it. On leaving Sir John, I proceeded to my own chamber to finish my arrangements for departure, and while I was thus occupied, Lady Marston and Mrs. Lloyd came to bid me farewell. I treated them precisely as I had Sir John; and having taken leave of the two girls, I entered a hackney-coach, ordering the driver to take me to another hotel. I however purposed that my stay there should be brief, inasmuch as I resolved to set off on the following day on my return to England, for I longed to embrace my brother Frank.

“I have already stated that since I left Southampton I regularly corresponded with him. A year had now elapsed since I left him there, and by the last letter I received I knew he was still at the seminary. I sent to make inquiries relative to the hour at which the diligence started for Havre on the following morning, and while the porter of the hotel was gone I began to ruminate seriously upon my position. There was I, a young and unprotected woman, only twenty-one years of age, and just launched, so to speak, upon the wide world. I could not marry, even if I should meet with any one to gain my affections; and I felt that at my age, and not being particularly bad-looking, I should find myself exposed to offers and overtures alike honourable and dishonourable. I was prepared to accept neither, but I naturally shrank from the chance of encountering them. It therefore occurred to me that if I passed as a married woman there would be in that title a certain protection for myself and a safeguard for my reputation. But I did not choose to adopt my husband's name, or receive the reflection of his rank. I scorned and hated the marriage, on account of the circumstances attending it, and I despised aristocratic distinctions. I therefore resolved to remain a plain civilian, and I deliberated what

name I should take; for if passing as a married woman I could not, of course, retain my maiden name of Paton. On the table in my room at the hotel to which I had removed were some English novels, placed there for the use of those guests who chose to avail themselves of such reading. I thought to myself that I would leave my future name to a sort of lottery, and taking up one of the volumes, I determined to adopt the first name that should meet my eye, if it were not an ugly one. In this manner did I come to dub myself Mrs. Chandos. It was by this name that I now had my passport made out; and on the following morning, at nine o'clock, I took my place in the coupé of the diligence for Havre. This compartment of a French stage-coach is made for three persons, and my two companions were elderly French ladies who were also going to Havre. I was well pleased with their companionship, for they were very agreeable persons, and the day passed quickly enough, notwithstanding the tediousness of travelling by diligence on the Continent.

“It was in the middle of the night, and while we were still at a considerable distance from Havre de Grace, that the diligence was suddenly attacked by a body of armed robbers, who were so numerous and so formidable that resistance on the part of the male passengers, the guard, or the postilions was out of the question. It was in a lonely spot where the deed took place, and the banditti went to work in a most deliberate manner. They unpacked all the boxes to search for money, jewelry, or other valuables, and my five thousand pounds, which I had deposited inside my trunk, was appropriated by the plunderers. In short, they carried off everything worth taking from all the passengers, — purses, watches, even to the very earrings of the females. The two elderly ladies who were my companions were terribly frightened, but I retained my presence of mind; for although deeply annoyed and afflicted by the loss of my money, yet I saw that no attempt would be made upon our lives. When the robbers had done their work they suffered the diligence to proceed, and in the morning I thus arrived, absolutely penniless, at Havre.”

## CHAPTER XII

### CONTINUATION OF LADY BESS'S HISTORY

“ I TOOK up my quarters at a hotel, and reflected upon what course I should now pursue. I learned on inquiry that there would be no steam-packet for Southampton for the next two days; but even if there were, and if by parting with some of my clothes I could raise money enough to pay my fare, what was the use of presenting myself in a pauperized condition to my poor brother? I knew that he had no funds wherewith to assist me, and, moreover, I shrank from the idea of afflicting him by an account of my misfortunes. What was I to do? My position was most embarrassing. I did not, however, suffer myself to be completely cast down. The same spirit which had animated me in dealing with the petty tyrants of the family which I had so recently left inspired me now with courage to meet my misfortunes. At first I thought of writing at once to Sir John Marston, telling him how I was situated and requesting his pecuniary assistance. But when I reflected on the independent manner in which I had left him, my soul recoiled from the idea of such self-humiliation. The only course open to me appeared to be that of obtaining a situation as a governess, and this I thought would not be so very difficult, as there were many English residents in Havre, as well as respectable French tradesmen, who knew that I had been a year with Sir John Marston's family. I accordingly set about instituting immediate inquiries. The robbery of the diligence was of course generally known in Havre, and it being likewise known that I was one of the victims, my position excited some degree of sympathy.

“ An English lady, named Knight, who had recently been left a widow, and had several children, was staying at Havre

at the time, and she offered to receive me as a governess. She frankly told me that she was not very well off, and that she could not afford to give me a handsome salary, but my circumstances did not permit me to be overparticular, and I therefore accepted her proposition. She was a woman of about forty; her eldest son, whose Christian name was James, was just one and twenty, and she had four other children, two boys and two girls, whose ages ranged from ten to eighteen. She was a good-natured person, somewhat weak-minded, and entirely under the empire of her son James, who, I must observe, was a handsome young man. Her husband had been dead about eight months; he was a merchant, but had left his circumstances in a less flourishing condition than had been expected from his mode of life.

“ He had some little property at Barcelona in Spain, and it required the widow’s presence there for her to take possession of it. She had arrived from England on her way thither; and, as I found, more from compassion in respect to myself than because her views were sufficiently settled to enable her to engage a governess at the time, she received me into her family.

“ In a few weeks we set off by the diligence toward the Spanish frontier. I soon found that James Knight had taken it into his head to make a conquest of me, if possible, and not in an honourable way. When unperceived by his mother, he besieged me with attentions, and even in her presence he sometimes looked and spoke in a manner that it was impossible to misunderstand. On these occasions I saw that she reproved him with a glance, for which, however, he cared but little. She was, however, soon satisfied that he received no encouragement from me, for I gave him to understand as plainly as I could that his attentions were most disagreeable. But he persevered in them, and on one occasion it became necessary for me to resent his impertinence with a sound box on the ears, which I hesitated not to bestow. He was of an evil disposition, treacherous, malignant, and spiteful to a degree; and finding that so far from making any tender impression on me, I treated him in this manner, he menaced me with his looks. For these, however, I cared but little, and deported myself toward him with aversion and contempt. He grew sullen and morose,

and I saw full well that he had conceived a bitter hatred against me.

“Under these circumstances was it that we arrived at Barcelona. I do not pause to say anything particular relative to the children entrusted to my charge, as I remained so short a time with Mrs. Knight, but I now come to the incident which caused me to leave her abruptly. On arriving at Barcelona, we took up our quarters at a hotel preparatory to the hiring of suitable apartments during the period that it would be requisite for Mrs. Knight to remain in that city. The very day after our arrival, and at about eight o'clock in the evening, Mrs. Knight discovered that some articles of jewelry had been abstracted from her trunk. This announcement was made in the presence of her son James, and he immediately turned toward me, asking, with a malignant look, ‘what I was doing in his mother’s chamber about an hour back.’ Instantaneously understanding the nature of the aspersion he intended to throw upon me, my indignation burst forth in no measured terms, for it was totally false that I had been to his mother’s room at all. He vowed that I had, and insisted that my boxes should be searched. This I at once assented to, whereupon Mrs. Knight, who, poor weak-minded woman, had begun to grow suspicious concerning me, led the way to my chamber, followed by her son and myself.

“On my way thither, the thought, the terrible thought, flashed to my mind that if James Knight were villain enough to accuse me thus wrongfully, he was also sufficiently treacherous and malignant to have placed the jewels in my box in order to ruin me. I beheld at a glance all the danger of my position, and in the swift, brief moments that were passing I revolved in my mind the two alternatives that lay before me, — either to dare the accusation boldly on the one hand, or to fly from it precipitately on the other. Though perfectly innocent, as God is my judge, yet I chose the latter alternative, for I could not endure the thought of being plunged into a prison. I therefore determined to escape.

“We entered my chamber, and in order to throw the treacherous young man entirely off his guard with respect to my intention, I affected not to entertain the slightest suspicion that the jewels would really be found in my box.

I was thus enabled, when he was busily engaged in turning out all the things, to snatch up a bonnet and shawl and glide from the room. Locking the door upon Mrs. Knight and her son, I slipped on the bonnet and shawl, reached the staircase, descended it rapidly, and issued forth from the hotel. It was now dusk, and I sped precipitately along the street, gained the postern, passed the fortifications without hindrance, and was soon on the wide open plain stretching toward the Catalonian Hills. I proceeded onward with but little relaxation of speed for nearly two hours, when I was compelled to sit down and rest. It was now a beautiful moonlit night, and I could see to a considerable distance. Three or four habitations were discernible amidst the sylvan scenery which formed a large portion of the landscape, but I dared not seek shelter at any of these, for fear that if information had been given to the Barcelonese police the entire neighbourhood might be scoured by those officers and I should be arrested. I therefore resolved to walk onward throughout the whole night, and thus place as great a distance as possible between myself and the city which I had left.

“ Having rested as long as I dared, I pursued my way again. I had purposely stricken out of the main road, and was plunging deeper and deeper into the wilds and fastnesses of Catalonia. I had read of the generous disposition and high-minded nature of the Catalans, and resolved, when morning dawned, and I had travelled far enough to be beyond the reach of pursuit, to stop at some cottage and ask for food and shelter, for I had a little money in my pocket, which I had received from Mrs. Knight. My spirits did not flag; indeed, there was something wildly romantic and exhilarating in this journey, amidst the bold and striking scenery which the powerful effulgence of moon and stars brought out in strong relief. It must not be however thought that I was indifferent to the suspicion of guilt in respect to the jewels, which would be naturally confirmed by my precipitate flight, but I resolved, so soon as I should have an opportunity, to write a letter containing the requisite explanations to Mrs. Knight, showing the infamous conduct of her son and how I had fled as the only alternative to escape prison.

“ I pressed courageously forward, stopping every now

and then to sit down upon a stone or a bank, but gallantly battling against increasing fatigue. Thus I continued my way till morning dawned, and now I was in the midst of all the characteristic scenery of the immense principality of Catalonia. Barren rocks and fertile valleys, groves of cork-trees, cascades and torrents, limpid streamlets and roaring waterfalls, these were the principal features which nature presented to my view. When the sun was rising over the Orient hills, I sat down upon the slope of an eminence, now no longer able to combat against the sense of fatigue. A smiling valley, intersected with a rivulet, spread itself out at my feet, and behind me the wild, barren hills rose in amphitheatrical grandeur. Not a habitation was to be seen. I had frequently slaked my thirst during the night's wanderings, for there had been no lack of springs and rivulets in the path which I had pursued, but I was now tortured with the gnawing pangs of hunger, and the dread apprehension began to creep shudderingly over me that it was possible for me to starve amidst these Catalonian wilds. My hope that I should reach some hospitable cottage appeared to be disappointed, and I felt that I must rest some hours before I could resume my wanderings with ease or speed.

“ While I was thus giving way to the disagreeable reflections that began to steal over me, I heard footsteps suddenly approaching from behind, and, starting up, I beheld a figure that I must describe. It was that of a man at least six feet high, symmetrically but strongly built, his form being alike muscular and elegant. He appeared to be about thirty years of age, and was perhaps one of the handsomest men I had ever seen in my whole life. His complexion, naturally of Spanish swarthyness, was more deeply bronzed by exposure to the scorching sun; but it had an olive clearness through which the warm blood could mantle upon that fine countenance. His eyes were dark, but full of fire, looking like jet that burns without losing its sable hue. His features were of the purely Grecian cast, and his teeth were truly splendid. His long, black hair, the least thing coarse, but glossy and curling naturally, and of remarkable luxuriance, fell upon his shoulders. He wore a moustache, but neither beard nor whiskers, and thus appeared even younger than he really was. He was dressed

in the picturesque Catalan costume, and carried a rifle in his hand. His belt was furnished with pistols and daggers, and by his side hung a straight sword of immense length. He might either have been a guerilla or a bandit chief, I knew not which at the moment, but I strongly suspected the latter.

“ I must here observe that this was the middle of September, 1839, and the Carlist war was just concluded. Don Carlos had passed with the bulk of his army into France, but Cabrera, one of his most famous generals, still continued in Spain at the head of a large body of troops. He was not, however, at that time in Catalonia, but I believe in the Basque Provinces, while Catalonia itself had become almost completely pacified. The Catalan whom I have described, and whom I thus encountered at sunrise in the midst of his own native wilds, stood gazing upon me for upwards of a minute in speechless astonishment. And no wonder that such should have been his feeling, for I doubtless appeared to him like a person dropped from the clouds in that lonely region. But blended with his look of surprise was an expression of admiration, and suspecting that I was not a Spanish woman, he at length addressed me in the French tongue. He spoke with mildness and courtesy, asking me whether I had not lost my way, and whether he could be of any assistance to me. I replied frankly that I had wandered the whole night, that I was exhausted with fatigue and famished with hunger, and that I required both repose and refreshment. Without asking another question, he courteously invited me to accompany him, assuring me of kind treatment.

“ I showed by my looks and manner that I put confidence in him, and he led the way up the eminence, until we reached a winding path which descended somewhat precipitately between two walls of rock, which grew higher and higher in proportion as we went lower and lower. The path continued its tortuous way almost completely around the hill, until it reached a valley on the opposite side; and there I beheld a little encampment, consisting of half a dozen tents pitched upon the bank of a streamlet. A fire was burning in the open air, and over it a caldron was suspended in the true gipsy fashion. A dozen men, dressed and armed in a manner similar to the individual who was guiding



me thither, were lounging about, most of them smoking; and four or five women, in the picturesque Catalan attire, added to the interest of the scene. These women were young and beautiful; the men were all fine athletic fellows, and the age of none appeared to exceed forty. I immediately became the object of curiosity and attention on the part of these persons, but the curiosity partook not of rudeness, while the attention was courteous and kind. Two of the young women spoke French, and thus I was enabled to understand what they said. I may here at once observe — what I did not discover till later in the day — that the individual who had brought me thither was the chief of this band, and was styled Don Diego Christoval; but what the occupations of the band itself were I did not so speedily ascertain. Don Christoval bade the women bustle about and supply me with refreshments. I was introduced into one of the tents, where bedding was stretched upon the ground, and there the two women who spoke French desired me to repose myself. This invitation I gratefully accepted. Hot coffee, eggs, biscuits, and butter, together with some cold meat, was speedily served up, and I made a copious meal. The women then bade me rest myself as long as I thought fit, promising that I should not be disturbed, for that the encampment would remain in that spot for some days. I thanked them for their kindness, and they left me, closing the canvas of the tent over the entrance.

“I slept soundly for several hours. Indeed, it was not till late in the afternoon that I awoke, and then I was completely refreshed. Presently the handsome countenance of one of the women peeped into the tent, and perceiving that I was awake, she pointed to certain arrangements which she had made for my comfort while I had been steeped in slumber. On a rudely constructed table all the necessary materials for ablutions and the toilet were spread; and as these details are not without their interest, I may add that I found a hair-brush, a comb, nail and tooth brushes, all completely new, together with fragrant Barcelonese soap, and perfumed oil for the hair. There was likewise a change of linen, and, in short, every care had been taken to minister to my wants and comforts. All this was cheering enough, and I could not help feeling rejoiced at having fallen into such comfortable quarters. The young woman, whose

name was Isabella, assisted me in my toilet, and when it was completed, she invited me to join the rest in partaking of the afternoon meal.

“ On issuing forth from the tent, I found a complete banquet spread upon the grass, the whole arrangements having the air of an English picnic. There were roast capons, masses of smoked ham, piles of sausages, huge pieces of cheese, vegetables, bread, biscuits, and quantities of grapes and other fruits. The caldron was again simmering over the fire, and this huge iron vessel contained the favourite Spanish comestible, called *pochero*, a sort of soup with quantities of various kinds of meat, poultry, and game. Plates, dishes, and all the requisite articles of crockery and cutlery were likewise at hand, and there was no deficiency of wine and spirits. The men and women of the band were already seated at the banquet, which they had not, however, commenced, courteously waiting for my appearance. Don Diego Christoval, rising up from the grass, doffed his cap in graceful salutation, and taking me by the hand, invited me to place myself next to him. We accordingly sat down, and the festival commenced. But little conversation took place during the repast, every one having an appetite so keen as to cause ample justice to be done to the good things above enumerated. When it was over, the men lighted their pipes, and lounging upon the grass, smoked and drank at their ease; but Don Diego, who, it appeared, was not addicted to the use of tobacco, proposed to me, if I were not still too much fatigued, to walk with him along the bank of the streamlet. Supposing that he wished to speak to me relative to my circumstances, I accepted the invitation, and we rambled away from the encampment.

“ At first he expressed a hope that I was satisfied with the attention shown me, and that I had found everything as comfortable as, considering the limited and rude nature of the arrangements, I could have expected. When I had given a suitable response, declaring my gratitude for the treatment I had received, he intimated that if I thought fit to give any explanation relative to the circumstances which had brought me into those wilds, he was prepared to listen; but he at the same time, with much mingled frankness and delicacy, assured me that if I preferred re-

maining silent upon the subject, he would not press me, nor should my treatment undergo any change so long as I might choose to remain with the band. I did not think fit to enter into full particulars relative to the jewels, but I gave him to understand that I had fled precipitately from Barcelona in order to escape a cruel persecution at the hands of the son of a lady in whose family I had occupied the position of a governess. Don Diego was perfectly satisfied with this explanation, and he asked what he could do to serve me. I replied that my object was to return to France. He said that it was his intention to remain for a few days in the present neighbourhood, but that afterward he and his band would be pushing their way toward the Pyrenees, and that if I thought fit to remain with them during this short interval, he would himself conduct me across the Pyrenean boundary into France.

“ I accepted this offer at once, and for several reasons. In the first place, I had not sufficient money to travel by any public conveyance, and I did not like to expose my necessitous position to Don Diego, or receive pecuniary assistance from him. In the second place, even if I had possessed ample funds, I should not have liked to trust myself to a public conveyance, for I knew not to what extent James Knight's malignity might have reached, and I thought it quite probable that he would give such publicity to the incident of the jewels that should lead to my arrest, if from a personal description I chanced to be recognized. Moreover, it would be impossible to travel without a passport, and mine would betray me to the authorities as the fugitive governess from Barcelona, supposing that James Knight had really made the matter public. In the third place, I was sufficiently interested in my new companions to entertain the wish of beholding somewhat more of their mode of life, in which there was a certain romantic charm for such a disposition as mine. These were the principal motives that at once prompted me to accept Christoval's proposal that I should remain for a few days with his band.

“ A week thus passed. Every morning at daybreak the men of the band, headed by Don Diego, set out from the encampment, and did not return until late in the afternoon, when they found the banquet ready prepared for them by

the women. These women were the wives, or perhaps the mistresses, of certain members of the band, but neither of them pertained to Don Diego. Their conduct was unexceptionably correct, and if they were not really wives, they at all events behaved with the discretion and decency of married women. When the men returned of a day, they were invariably laden with provisions of all kinds; and I noticed that of an evening, they all assembled in Don Diego's own tent, where they remained for about half an hour, either in consultation or else in dividing other things which they had obtained during the day in addition to the provisions and wine. That this latter business was really the one that occupied them on those occasions, I gradually began to suspect, for I often heard the sounds of chinking gold emanate from the chief's tent. Moreover, I began to notice that the women varied the articles of jewelry which they wore, and which were exceedingly costly and handsome.

“ In short, at the expiration of the week I acquired the certainty that I had fallen in with a horde of banditti. I therefore longed for the fulfilment of Don Diego's promise that he would conduct me into France. But the second week was entered upon, and nothing was said concerning the subject. I continued to receive the kindest attentions; and if I ever offered to assist the women in preparing the repasts, they would not suffer me to do any menial thing. They conceived the utmost friendship for me, and Isabella, the most beautiful of all, was unremitting in her attentions. Two or three times Christoval asked me to walk with him, but his manner was always that of respectful courtesy, mingled, however, with the evidences of a growing admiration. I found him to be a man of intelligent and cultivated mind. He was well read in Spanish and French literature; his manners were not merely gentlemanly, they were elegant, and his conversation was varied, amusing, and instructive.

“ At the expiration of the second week I took an opportunity of inquiring when he proposed to advance toward the Pyrenees, from which we were about forty miles distant. A cloud immediately gathered upon his countenance, and bending his dark eyes somewhat reproachfully upon me, he asked, in a mournful voice, if I were anxious to leave those who experienced so much delight and gratification

at my presence amongst them. I answered him frankly, that I was anxious to make my way back to England, in order to earn my livelihood by my own industry, instead of being a burden on the kindness of strangers. He assured me, with impassioned vehemence, that so far from being a burden, I was the most welcome of guests; and he added that circumstances would compel the band to remain in that same spot for another fortnight, during which he besought me to tarry amongst them. Perceiving that I was embarrassed how to answer, he addressed me gravely in the following manner:

“ ‘ It would be ridiculous, Señora Chandos, to suppose that you do not suspect what we are. I must, however, for my own sake, give you some explanations. In me you behold a Spanish nobleman, bearing the rank of count, and descended from one of the oldest families of Catalonia. But when I inherited my father's title, the family estate was so impoverished that I found myself a man of broken fortunes. I sold all that was left, and joined the cause of Don Carlos, with the rank of captain in his army. Whether I have conducted myself as a gallant cavalier is not for me to say; suffice it for my lips to proclaim that where the fight has ever been thickest, there was I to be found. The recent treachery of Maroto, in signing a capitulation with the queen's general Espartero, annihilated my royal master's cause. Two alternatives then became present to my contemplation, — either to throw down my arms and acknowledge Queen Isabella, or to fly into France. No, there was another course to be pursued, and that was to associate myself with a few men, gallant and desperate as I am, and adopt a wild, predatory life such as you behold us leading. The world will doubtless call us banditti, and we are so; but on entering upon this career, solemn oaths were registered amongst us, to the effect that we should never plunder the poor, but only the rich, and that on no occasion should we use unnecessary violence, much less spill human blood. Those were our oaths, and they have become our laws.

“ ‘ You now know, Señora, who and what we are, if, indeed, you were not previously aware of it. Perhaps you tremble lest we live in a constant state of danger, but this is not so. The queen's troops are still too much occupied in making head against Cabrera to overrun the wilds of Catalonia for

the extermination of such bands as that of which I am the chief, for there are many such bands at present scattered about the mountainous regions of this principality. For years to come may we safely continue our present pursuits. And now, perhaps, you will wonder wherefore, instead of adopting this course of life, I have not joined the forces still united under the command of General Cabrera. The explanation can be given in a few words. An insult I received at his hands, and which as a junior officer I could not at the time resent, has engendered so strong a feeling of personal dislike toward that chief that I could not serve under him.'

"Count Christoval ceased speaking, and I remained wrapped up in deep meditation. His narrative had touched me profoundly. I could not find it in my heart to blame him, scarcely think the worse of him, for having adopted this mode of life. Indeed, it was impossible to wonder that he had done so, and I knew, moreover, that these circumstances were invested in the eyes of Spaniards with much less moral degradation and dishonouring taints than in other countries. It was likewise a source of satisfaction and an infinite relief to my mind to learn that I was not the associate of blood-stained murderers, but that these men entertained, after their own fashion, certain notions of a correct and proper nature. I had received so much generous attention and delicate kindness at their hands, as well as on the part of the women, that I could not possibly insist upon quitting them at once without appearing ungrateful for all that hospitable treatment. Therefore, when my meditation was over, I intimated to Don Diego my willingness to abide with his band for another fortnight; but I was somewhat troubled when I beheld the glow of fervid delight and enthusiastic joy which suddenly animated his countenance, for I feared that he entertained toward me a sentiment which I could not possibly reciprocate. He saw that I was thus troubled, and again did the melancholy cloud settle upon his features. Then he hastened to change the conversation, and broke off into a lively strain of discourse mingled with anecdotes of the late Carlist warfare."

## CHAPTER XIII

### CONTINUATION OF LADY BESS'S HISTORY

“THE fortnight passed away, and during this interval I avoided as much as possible finding myself alone with Don Diego Christoval. He saw that such was my endeavour, and with a delicacy which I could not help appreciating he no longer asked me to join him in his evening ramble, though at meal-times his attentions toward me were most assiduous. When those two additional weeks had expired, I waited anxiously for some word or sign indicative of a removal, and I was well pleased when I heard Don Diego give orders one evening that on the following day we were to set out. Accordingly, at an early hour in the morning, the encampment was broken up; the horses which belonged to the band, and which were kept in an immense cave serving the purpose of a stable, were brought forth. There were steeds enough for us all, women included, and even then there remained a couple to serve as pack-horses for the conveyance of the tents and the baggage. We proceeded slowly, in consequence of the difficult nature of the ground which we had to traverse. I rode at the head, in company with Don Diego, and the time passed rapidly away, thus beguiled by his agreeable conversation. I could see that he loved me, that he entertained, indeed, a profound and adoring passion for me, but I reciprocated it not in the slightest degree. If ever there were a man capable of making an impression on my heart, it was Count Diego Christoval, but I experienced no tender feeling toward him. Even at the time I somewhat wondered at this, making it a subject of self-congratulation; and I thought mine was a heart altogether inaccessible to love, or else that I had never as yet encountered the individual who was to win

my affections. Most women, when the term of girlhood is past, form in their own minds the beau ideal that they hope to encounter in the course of time, and whom they feel that they can love, but I never indulged in such a dream, I had never thought upon the subject, I had never felt the slightest want to love or to be loved. Therefore the Spanish bandit fulfilled no preconceived ideal on my part, nor did his handsome person, his elegant manners, or his witching conversation produce a tender impression upon me.

“ We proceeded about twenty-five miles that day, and the journey terminated at a half-ruined tower, which stood concealed in the midst of a dense grove of cork-trees. It had been an immense wood, but hostile encounters between the Carlists and Christinos had taken place in that neighbourhood, and large quantities of the trees had been cut down to aid in throwing up defences and to be burned as firewood. The land roundabout indicated the scene of battles, being ploughed up in many directions by artillery and wagons. The blackened remnants of trees, half-burned, lay scattered about, and the horses' feet stumbled over cannon-balls and pieces of broken weapons. The tower itself was situated half-way up an eminence, which was of so peculiar a form as to be inaccessible behind, and thus it served as a background defence for the building. The cork-trees stretched up to within a few yards of the tower, which they well-nigh completely embowered in their verdure. There had been fighting at the tower, and the artillery had played upon the massive edifice, destroying at least half, but leaving the other portion comparatively uninjured.

“ There was some furniture in the tower, but the place having been pillaged, everything of value had disappeared. Nevertheless, there were sufficient means of rendering several rooms comfortable enough, and here did the band take up its quarters. One apartment served as a general room where the meals were taken in common, the same as at the encampment, and the others served as bedchambers. Of these the best within the tower was allotted to me. On our arrival I was both surprised and apprehensive at finding such pains taken to render the place habitable, for it struck me that so much trouble would scarcely be incurred if it were intended to pursue the journey on the following day, or even within two or three days. And two or three days did



pass without any intimation being given that we were to resume our march toward the Pyrenees. I did not choose to manifest any immediate impatience, because I felt that I had no right to make my own particular objects predominate over the views and interests of Don Diego Christoval and his band. I therefore maintained an outward appearance of cheerfulness, although I began to entertain some misgiving in respect to my position there. In short, I feared that the bandit chief was doing his best to keep me as long as he possibly could, and that I was virtually a prisoner. For when Christoval and his men went out on their predatory excursions, two of them invariably remained at the tower, ostensibly to act as a guard for the women, but I could not help fancying in reality to prevent my escape. Moreover, when I walked out, one of the women — Isabella generally — accompanied me, and one of the sentinels followed at a distance with the pretext of watching over us. But this had not been done when at the encampment, and I asked myself wherefore such precautions should be held necessary now.

“ A week had passed since our arrival at the tower, and there was no sign of a removal. I now purposely sought an opportunity of speaking to the count. He appeared to understand my wishes, and one day, returning home from the usual excursion much earlier than was his wont, he asked me to accompany him in a walk. It was now the close of October, and the weather was cold. We passed into the wood, and Don Diego speedily approached the subject which I was desirous of reaching. He said, ‘ I know what is passing in your mind, señora; you are impatient to leave us, — to leave me,’ he added, emphatically, ‘ and you think I am not behaving honourably or kindly toward you? Now, will you hear me? You are the first woman I ever loved in my life, and you will be the last. The sentiment with which you have smitten me is a deathless one. Not merely my happiness, but my very life, is in your hands, for if you were to leave me, I could not possibly survive your loss. This love of mine has rendered me desperate, so desperate indeed that it is making me act with duplicity and unkindness toward you. What is to be my fate? It is in your hands.’

“ It was impossible to be angry or indignant with that man; he spoke in language so fervid, and yet so replete

with delicate respect, his looks were filled with so much admiration mingled with so much despair, there was altogether such a blending of sincerity and pathos and manly appeal in his air, his words, and his manner that I experienced for him a boundless compassion. Knowing that he possessed a generous heart and certain lofty sentiments of honour, in spite of the lawless kind of life he was leading, I thought to touch and to move him by representing my assumed position as a real and veritable one. I accordingly addressed him in terms of impressive seriousness. I told him that I was a married woman, and was separated from my husband in consequence of the incompatibility of our dispositions, but that inasmuch as I could not on the one hand contract another alliance, I was equally resolute on the other never to lose sight of my honour and good name. The count looked much distressed, and reflected profoundly. At length he asked if it were impossible I could ever love him. I told him that while I felt deeply grateful for all the kindness I had experienced at his hands — and that although I should ever entertain a friendly remembrance of him — yet that my heart was incapable of experiencing a more tender sentiment. ‘To part from you,’ he said, in a mournful voice, ‘will be the same as laying violent hands upon myself; it will be an act of suicide, and I have not the courage to accomplish it. I beseech you to remain at the tower a short time longer. I will not insult myself so far as to assure you that I am incapable of any outrage toward you. If you would consent to live all your life with me as a sister, I should be happy. Mine is no gross and sensual passion; it is pure and ethereal; it is the strangest and most romantic love that ever yet filled the heart of man. So long as I can enjoy the light of your presence, so long as I can hear the music of your voice playing in my ears, so long as I am permitted to gaze upon you from time to time, and dwell upon the beauty of your countenance, therein shall all my ideas of earthly happiness be concentrated. Surely, señora, such a love as this is not be lightly repudiated? Surely you will take some compassion upon the man who proffers you such a love?’

“I answered that I would speak to him as if it were a sister addressing a brother, and I went on to represent that for his own sake the sooner we parted the better, that his

infatuation would only become the greater, his love the more intimately interwoven with his entire being, that the hour for parting must come at last, sooner or later, and that the longer it was postponed the more deeply would it be felt by him when it did come. He replied that he was aware of all this, that he had reasoned with himself a thousand times upon the subject during the few past weeks, but that he had not the courage to let me depart. He terminated by conjuring that I would remain one month longer, — only one month; that if I consented, he would act precisely in accordance with my wishes, that he would never obtrude himself on my presence, save when I chose to receive him, that he would not ask me to walk with him, unless I myself first signified my willingness, and to be brief, he used so many impassioned arguments and vehement entreaties that I knew not how to refuse. The thought struck me, too, that if I did refuse, the madness of his passion was such that he might be rendered desperate, and my position would be made far worse, and the idea simultaneously occurred to me that my best course would be to throw him off his guard so that I might escape. I therefore consented to remain another month at the tower. But I informed him that it was absolutely necessary I should communicate with my brother in England, who would be uneasy at my long silence. He said that if I would write to him, addressing my letter from the French town of Perpignan, in the Pyrenees, one of his men should proceed thither and post the letter, and that if my brother wrote back to me to the post-office in that same town, he would send again at the expiration of ten days to fetch the letter for me.

“ I gratefully accepted this proposal, and wrote to Frank at Southampton, desiring him to write back to me at Perpignan. I said nothing of my disagreeable adventure at Barcelona, nor of the strange company with whom I had been living for six weeks past, but I led him to believe that I was in a situation as governess in an English family. At the same time I wrote a letter to Mrs. Knight at Barcelona, explaining wherefore I had fled so precipitately, and telling her how the whole affair was a base conspiracy on the part of her wicked son to ruin me, in revenge because I had rejected his dishonourable overtures. This letter I sealed and enclosed it in the one to Frank, desiring him to post

it at Southampton, and alleging some excuse for wishing such a thing done. When my packet was in readiness, I gave it to the count, and he at once despatched a messenger with it to Perpignan. At the expiration of ten days I duly received Frank's answer from the school at Southampton, and therefore acquired the assurance that my own packet had been duly posted.

"I may here add that as my own garments were now wearing out, the messenger who had been sent to Perpignan brought back with him a quantity of stuffs of various materials suited for dresses, and these were presented to me by Isabella. On the one hand I could not help being touched by this delicate consideration on the part of Christoval, but on the other hand, the circumstance made me apprehend that he by no means intended to part from me at the expiration of the month. I therefore watched anxiously for an opportunity of escape, but this I feared I should not very readily find, for the entrance of the tower was guarded day and night by two sentinels, the men taking their turns, while from my own chamber window there was no possibility of flight, as it was too narrow for me to pass myself through it. To be brief, the month passed, and at the expiration of that time, Don Diego sought a private interview with me. His manner was as tender and as respectful as ever, but there was more firmness in his words and in his looks. He gave me to understand that he could not make up his mind to part with me, that I was dearer to him than life itself, that I need fear nothing at his hands, as he was perfectly contented to live on the same terms as at present, but that tyrannical, harsh, and unjustifiable though his conduct might be in retaining me a prisoner, he could not help doing so. I now remonstrated with him seriously, and for a moment angrily, but I saw that he was resolved, and from something which he let drop, it became evident enough that he hoped by persevering in his delicate attentions and tender assiduities to make a favourable impression in the course of time upon me. I made him comprehend that this hope would be cruelly disappointed, and that if he persisted in retaining me captive at the tower, his conduct would efface all the generous and hospitable treatment I had experienced at his hands. He was deeply moved by what I said, and yet he relented not in his resolve to keep me a prisoner there.

“ I must now pass over a period of about eight months and bring my narrative down to the month of June, 1840. During these eight months I remained at the tower. Every month was I permitted to write to Frank, the letter being posted at Perpignan, and as regularly was his answer brought thence for me. I continued to receive the utmost attention, kindness, and delicate treatment from Christoval, his men, and the women; my liberty was alone refused me. It is scarcely possible to comprehend the strange romantic passion of that man. He never forgot himself in my presence, never uttered a word to give me offence, never bent upon me a look which threatened me with insult. He never so much as took my hand, much less offered to carry it to his lips. He studied to the utmost of his power, apart from keeping me prisoner, to testify the devotedness of his passion. Often and often did I remonstrate, entreat, threaten, display indignation, and have recourse to prayers, all in their turn, but in vain. I have seen that man weep the bitterest tears when I have thus addressed him; I have seen him sob like a child as I have thrown myself at his feet and besought him to let me depart, but yet he had the courage and firmness to conquer his emotions sufficiently to make him refuse my prayer. And he too has thrown himself at my feet, but without so much as laying a finger upon my garments; he has besought and implored that I would lend a favourable ear to his tale of love, and consent to let a priest join our hands in marriage. When I renewed my representation that I was already married, he showed by his look that he could scarcely believe me, and yet he never said so in words. His appearance changed, he grew careworn, and though he relaxed not from those pursuits which belonged to his lawless life, yet in other respects he lost all energy, and roved about the personification of despondency and despair. I could not help pitying him, but I could not love him. Never, perhaps, in this world did man testify so wild, so romantic, so devoted, and enthusiastic a love, without inspiring a reciprocal feeling. But he did not. I repeat that I pitied him, even when most angry at this outrageous prisonage which I endured, but, no, I could not love him.

“ And during that interval of eight months, I had not the slightest opportunity of making even an attempt at escape. It is true that when out walking with Isabella, and followed

at a short distance by one of the band, I might have suddenly darted off, but could I hope that my limbs would prove swifter than those of the alert and athletic Catalan bandit? And I was resolved not to suffer the mortification of making any ineffectual endeavour to emancipate myself. I must frankly confess that at last I got so accustomed to this strange mode of life that it became far less irksome to me than might have been supposed. Indeed, I had few inducements to make me wish to return to the great world again, — that world in which I had already experienced some misfortunes. But still I longed — oh, most fervently longed — to embrace my beloved brother, and I was also fearful that should the Christino soldiers ever take the tower by surprise, there might be a general fusilade of all its inmates, men and women without discrimination, and my unfortunate self amongst them. For I knew full well that the most atrocious barbarities were committed by the Spanish soldiers, no mercy even being shown to females or innocent children. That Don Diego Christoval himself full well suspected my hope and idea of escaping, there cannot be the slightest doubt, and hence the precautions which he took to anticipate any endeavour of that kind on my part. Nevertheless, I was not made positively to feel that I was a prisoner; it was a sort of honourable captivity in which I was kept. For instance, the door of my chamber was never bolted outside at night, but then, although I was thus at liberty to quit my room if I chose, I could not have issued forth from the tower, as there were two sentinels ever posted at the entrance-door.

“ One day, after the return of the count and his band from a marauding expedition, they brought the intelligence, which they had gleaned at some distant village, that the captain-general of Catalonia had marched forth from Barcelona at the head of a considerable body of troops, with the intention of scouring the Catalan Hills and annihilating the guerilla and bandit hordes which infested those districts. It was likewise understood that the military commandant intended to divide his troops into five or six flying columns, with a view to carry on his operations in various parts of the principality at the same time. It was therefore a serious danger which now appeared to be imminent. I sought an opportunity of speaking alone with Christoval, and repre-

sented to him that if he really entertained toward me the devoted passion which he had professed, it was cruel to a degree to expose me to the chance of falling into the hands of the captain-general's troops. He bade me fear not, for that an incessant lookout would be kept, and on the first appearance of one of the flying columns in that immediate neighbourhood, it was his intention to remove with his band into the wild fastnesses of the Pyrenees, where they could remain until the present danger should be over. At the same time Don Diego assured me that if the peril became more serious than he could at that moment anticipate, he would at once send me under safe and honourable escort into France. He availed himself of that opportunity to fall upon his knees again in my presence, vowing that if I would consent to become his companion for the rest of our lives, he would at once take leave of his associates and fly away with me into another country. But still did I persevere in my refusal, for I was prepared to encounter all risks and meet all dangers, rather than surrender myself up to one whom I did not love.

“ For several days Don Diego himself, disguised in various garbs, penetrated to a distance to learn tidings relative to the movement of the captain-general's troops; and one evening, on his return to the tower, he brought intelligence of such importance that a council of the whole band was immediately called. In these deliberations the women were accustomed to be present, and on this occasion I was amongst them. I had already picked up the Spanish language with the utmost facility, though I could not converse in it with the same fluency and accuracy as I could in the French tongue. I nevertheless understood all that was said in my presence. It appeared from what Don Diego reported, that one of the flying columns was at a distance of about ten miles from the tower, and that it was commanded by a brigadier-general, to whom the son of the captain-general was attached as aide-de-camp. It further appeared that the officers had fixed their quarters at a little farmhouse, the occupants of which experienced a devoted friendship for Don Diego Christoval. At the council which sat to deliberate upon these particulars, a bold and daring project was started by Christoval himself. This was nothing less than to make a midnight attack upon the farmhouse,

carry off the son of the captain-general, and hold him as a hostage for the safety of the band. Nay, more, it was even calculated that an immense ransom might be obtained for his restoration. This proposal was received with enthusiastic acclaim by the members of the band, and the women themselves welcomed it with delight. It would have been a project of sheer madness were it not for the friendly disposition of the occupants of the farm; but under those circumstances it was one which presented every chance of being successfully carried out.

“Accordingly, a little before midnight, Christoval and ten of his followers — two remaining behind as sentinels — set out upon their expedition. During their absence I remained with the Catalan women in the common room of the tower, for I naturally felt anxious as to the result, and could not possibly retire to rest. I feared that in case of failure a pursuit might be instituted by the troops, and their arrival at the tower might promptly follow. Besides, although not entertaining the slightest affection for Don Diego, — and indeed having much reason to be displeased with him, — there was nevertheless a certain friendly feeling which I experienced toward him, at all events sufficient to render me anxious for his safety. The Catalan women chatted cheerfully and merrily; they appeared to be confident that the enterprise would be crowned with success. And they were right. For between two and three o'clock in the morning, Christoval and his men returned with the captain-general's son as their prisoner. He was a young man of about five and twenty, of middle height, slender, and well made. His countenance was not handsome, but might be termed prepossessing, and was invested with an air of mingled heroism and intelligence. He bore himself with a dignified hauteur, and was by no means cast down by the position in which he was placed. I should add, for the better understanding of what is to follow, that he was dressed in a blue frock coat, fitting tight to his person and buttoned up to the throat, plain dark trousers, and the usual Spanish shako. It appeared from what I subsequently learned that the capture of this young officer had been effected all in a moment, with the utmost ease, and without a shot being fired or a blow struck. From information secretly given to Don Diego by the farmer himself, the aide-de-camp, being



on duty all that night, was frequently passing between the farmhouse and the outposts of the column, which were at a little distance, at a suitable place for the bivouac; and totally unsuspecting that such a daring attempt would be made, the officer passed to and fro between the two points, alone and unattended, and smoking his cigar. Christoval and his band lay in ambush at a convenient spot sufficiently removed from the scene of danger, and watching their opportunity, they pounced upon the aide-de-camp, overpowered and gagged him in a moment, and hurried him away. When sufficiently distant from the troops, the gag was removed from his lips, and he was assured of honourable treatment if he attempted no resistance, which indeed he was not in a condition to offer. Under such circumstances was it that the enterprise had succeeded, and he was brought a captive to the tower.

“ On the following day he was compelled by Christoval to write a letter to the brigadier commanding the column, stating that he was captive in the hands of a guerilla party of Carlists, that the conditions of his release were immunity for themselves and the payment of a certain ransom money, that he requested the column might not advance farther in a northerly direction pending the negotiations for his release, — as if it did, his life would be sacrificed, — that he was unable to specify the place where he was retained captive, and he concluded by desiring that the bearer of his letter should be treated with a consideration due to the sanctity of a herald under such circumstances.

“ With this document Don Diego Christoval himself set off to the farmhouse, the quarters of the brigadier commanding the column. During his absence, the young officer remained a close prisoner at the tower. He sat smoking in what I have before described as the common room, and unbending toward the women, he chatted frankly and gaily with them. I was there for a portion of the time, and the officer, finding me to be an English woman, was naturally surprised at my presence with that lawless band. Isabella, for the kind purpose of screening me in case of any subsequent disaster, told him that I was a prisoner as well as himself, and this was the first time that the fact had ever been positively proclaimed in words. But it was now mentioned to serve, and not to annoy, and instead of being angry

or hurt, I felt grateful and pleased. The officer paid me much attention, mingled with the most courteous respect. I found him to be a generous-hearted, intelligent young man, and as he spoke French perfectly, I was enabled to converse with him. At the expiration of a few hours, Christoval returned. He announced that the brigadier had undertaken not to push his column any farther in a northerly direction, but that he himself was unable to conclude the negotiation for the prisoner's release, until he should have communicated with the captain-general, the young man's father; and as it was not precisely known in what part of the country he might be at the time, and couriers would have to seek him, it had been arranged that Don Diego Christoval should return to the farmhouse, the brigadier's headquarters, at the expiration of a week. Meanwhile it was understood that the captain-general's son should be treated with all possible respect and attention.

Accordingly, having communicated these results of his interview with the brigadier, Don Diego intimated to the officer that if he would pledge his word of honour not to escape, he might consider himself free to walk about, alone and at all hours, within one mile of the tower. This parole was promptly given, and the young officer now remained only in what might be termed an honourable captivity. Thus several days passed, during which the prisoner paid increased attention to me, or, rather, endeavoured to do so, but I suffered him to perceive that his assiduities were not acceptable. Indeed, I was most careful not to provoke Christoval's jealousy, apprehensive lest in a fit of desperation he might be led to adopt summary and violent measures to make me his own. Besides, the Spanish officer inspired me with no more tender interest than the count himself had done, and as I always despised a mere frivolous coquetry, I had not the least inclination to divert myself in that respect at the prisoner's expense.

"I must now proceed to observe that after the first day's prisonage he grew restless, and roved about in the vicinage of the tower, almost constantly smoking. I was told, too, that instead of going to bed when the others retired, he issued forth with his cigar in his mouth, and rambled in the wood till a late hour. He was suffered to do exactly as he chose, the utmost faith being reposed in his parole, — a

pledge which a Spanish officer was very seldom known to break, and the breach of which would dishonour him for ever, even in the opinion of his own most intimate friends. Six days had passed, and on the ensuing one, Christoval was to return to the brigadier. On the sixth night I did not hear the young officer go forth as usual between ten and eleven o'clock, to smoke his cigar in the wood. I lay awake, listening, for an idea had sprung up in my mind, and the longer I thought of it, the more consistent and feasible did it become. An hour passed, and all remained silent. I rose from my bed, hurried on a few articles of clothing, stole noiselessly out of my chamber, and listened at the door of the one occupied by the officer. I could hear the regular respiration of one who sleeps. Cautiously did I open his door, and again I listened. Yes, he slept. A candle was burning in the room. I stole in, he was in bed, and slumbering profoundly. I hastened to possess myself of his clothes, and perceiving a quantity of cigars scattered about on the table, took one of them. I was in mortal terror lest he should awake, but he did not, and I regained my own room safely and unobserved. Now for a bold enterprise. I hastened to apparel myself in the male costume I had thus self-appropriated; frock coat, trousers, boots, and shako, — I had taken them all, and I clothed myself therewith. Then, lighting the cigar and putting it in my mouth, I descended the stairs. The door of the common room was open, and the powerful moonlight streaming through the narrow window fell upon a bright object that lay on the table. It was a pistol, and I lost no time in securing it about my person. Again I listened; all was quiet. Oh, how my heart palpitated as I opened the door of the tower. It was a fine night in the month of June, but the shade of the embowering cork-trees intercepted the effulgence of moon and stars. The two sentinels were smoking their pipes and conversing together within half a dozen yards of the gate. I passed out, imitating as well as I could the gait and bearing of the Spanish officer, and smoking my cigar in the most approved style. It was a moment of acute suspense, but when I found that the sentinels moved not, and that I was proceeding onward without the slightest molestation, the enthusiasm of an indescribable joy flamed up within me. It was the intoxication of triumph. But still I did not lose my presence

of mind for a single moment, I did not hurry my pace until perfectly assured that I was beyond eye-shot of the sentinels.

“ When once, however, deep in the shade of the grove, I tossed away the cigar, which had well-nigh made me sick and left the most nauseating sensation behind. Then I did speed onward with all possible swiftness. Knowing, from all that had been said in my presence, in which direction the brigadier's column lay, I took precisely the opposite one, for I was fearful if I fell into the hands of the troops I might be sent to Barcelona on account of the jewel business. After making a slight circuit, so as to get clear of the eminence on the slope of which the tower stood, I took a northerly direction for the purpose of pushing my way toward the French frontier. As I caught the last glimpse of the old building whose summit appeared just above the trees, I thought to myself how boundless would be the rage and despair of Count Christoval when my flight should be discovered. But I was rejoiced at having effected my escape, and with as much speed as on the memorable night when I fled from Barcelona, did I pursue my way.

“ I had with me a little money, just the same sum in fact which I possessed when flying from the above-mentioned city, and I was resolved to obtain a change of apparel as soon as possible. I need hardly observe that I had not dared bring with me my own female raiment, for there were no means of concealing it under the tight-fitting uniform, and it would have been ruinous to my enterprise to come forth from the tower with a bundle. The enjoyment of liberty seemed to nerve me against fatigue, and gave a vigorous elasticity to my footsteps. I proceeded onward for hours, only resting at long intervals, and then but for a few minutes at a time. The morning dawned, the sun rose, and still I proceeded onward, through a wild and mountainous country without a single habitation. The Pyrenees were already in view, and I began to look about in every direction for a cottage, farmhouse, or some dwelling, in short, where I might obtain refreshment and a change of raiment. All of a sudden I came upon the highroad, and there the following spectacle met my view:

“ In the middle of that highway, a post-chaise lay overturned, and a gentleman was leaning in a disconsolate manner, and with his arms folded, against it. One horse, whose

traces had evidently been cut away, was browsing on the grass by the roadside; the other horse and the postilion were not to be seen. That gentleman was the only person visible upon the spot. From the point where this spectacle broke upon my sight, I was not immediately perceived by that gentleman, for I had stopped short amidst a knot of trees to contemplate the scene. At first I could not discern his countenance, but in a few moments — as he raised his eyes and looked with evident anxiety along the road — to my astonishment I at once recognized my treacherous enemy James Knight. Ah! and he was alone there, and I could upbraid him for his villainous conduct toward me. But of what use were upbraidings? Could I not turn the circumstance to my own advantage and punish him by a humiliating process at the same time? No sooner was the design conceived than I resolved to execute it. Drawing forth my pistol, without knowing whether it was loaded or not, I suddenly appeared before the amazed and startled young man. He at once recognized me, and being a coward as well as a treacherous villain, fancied that I was about to immolate him to my vengeance. He fell upon his knees, beseeching me to spare him. While he remained in that humiliating posture, I bade him explain to me as briefly as possible the meaning of the circumstances in which I found him placed.

“He told me that the nature of his mother’s affairs at Barcelona had rendered it needful to obtain certain documents from England, and that he had accordingly been despatched off post-haste upon the mission. About a quarter of an hour before I had arrived upon that spot, a party of robbers had sprung forth from amidst the adjacent trees. The horses had taken fright, rushed up the bank, and upset the chaise. The robbers had carried off his portmanteau, his purse, and whatsoever valuables he had about his person, and had decamped with their booty. The chaise was broken, and the postilion had ridden back on one of the horses to the nearest posting-house, which was about four miles distant, in order to obtain another chaise, or else succour to repair the overturned one. Such was James Knight’s recital, the truth of which appeared to be fully corroborated by circumstances. I bade him rise from his knees and give me his coat and hat in exchange for my military frock and

shako. This he did, all the while beseeching and imploring in the most piteous terms that I would spare his life. I taunted him with his villainy toward me, telling him that I would not degrade myself by wreaking my vengeance on so miserable a wretch. Having assumed his hat and coat, — the latter a frock buttoning up to the neck and fitting me perfectly, — I told him he might inform the postilion that the remaining horse would be found some short distance farther along the road, and leaping upon its back, I made the animal gallop away at the utmost speed of which it was capable. Having proceeded thus for about three miles, I came in sight of a little hamlet, and, dismounting, tied the horse to a tree. I then continued my way on foot, and on reaching the hamlet, obtained refreshment. The cottagers at whose dwelling I stopped were naturally surprised to behold a female in male attire, but as I gave them a piece of silver as a remuneration for the sorry fare which was served up to me, they asked no questions. I did not tarry many minutes in that hamlet, but pursuing my way on foot, speedily entered upon the vast amphitheatrical chain of the Pyrenees.

“The ascent of the Pyrenees from the Spanish side is steep, difficult, and dangerous. Sometimes, when having mounted a terrace or ledge of rock, perhaps a mile in length, the traveller finds his way suddenly barred by the towering wall of a still higher eminence, up which he may perhaps climb if he be of desperate boldness and of experience in the mode of scaling these rocky ramparts, but I dared not make such attempts. I therefore frequently had to turn back and take another course, sometimes, when advancing too quickly, nearly falling over the edge of a gulf on which I suddenly stopped short, at other times terrified by a rush amongst the stunted trees or brushwood, with the idea that it was a wolf preparing to spring at me. Nevertheless, I pressed onward with a courage and an ardour that surprised myself, and with an exhilaration of spirits that was sustained by the excitement of my travel.

“During all that day, I did not succeed in advancing more than eight miles into the heart of the Pyrenees, in consequence of the many times I had to turn and retrace my steps, and of the circuitous paths that I had to pursue. As evening drew near, I felt excessively weary, and was

rejoiced when I came in sight of a pleasing valley, on the slope of which stood a little cottage with a number of sheep grazing near. There I was welcomed by the shepherd and his wife, an elderly couple of hospitable disposition, and who asked no impertinent questions. I slept well that night, and on the following morning resumed my travels. During this second day I passed through several picturesque valleys, reminding me of what I had read of Alpine scenery, for high above them towered the enormous peaks of the mountains, some covered with snow. There were glaciers upon those heights, and I learned that avalanches were by no means unknown. I fell in with many shepherds tending countless flocks, and when I sought refreshment, it was readily afforded, — a trifling remuneration, which was all that I could give, being gratefully accepted. At the end of my second day's journey, I had altogether accomplished thirty miles, including the distance performed on the first day, and was now within fifteen miles of the nearest village in the French territory. It was about sunset on the third day that I reached this village, and there my passport was demanded by a gendarme as I was about to enter a little inn. I showed it, for I had it with me, and then in reply to the officer's questions, I related sufficient of my past adventures to account for appearing in male attire, omitting however the circumstance of having made any exchange of garments with Mr. Knight. In short, I gave the gendarme to understand that these were the clothes in which I had escaped from the brigand's tower. The mayor of the village — a substantial farmer whose dwelling was upon the outskirts — heard my tale from the lips of the gendarme, and when I rose on the following morning, the landlady of the inn told me that the mayor desired to see me. I accordingly proceeded to his house, where he, his wife, and a grown-up family of sons and daughters received me in the kindest manner. They invited me to remain a few days with them, and repose myself after the fatigues I had endured. This invitation I thankfully accepted, and I stayed with this amiable family for a week. I need hardly say that suitable female apparel was provided for me, but I may add that it was with some degree of regret I put off my male clothing, for I had grown accustomed to it, and preferred it to that which more properly became my sex.

“ At the expiration of a week the farmer’s wife, finding that I was anxious to depart, took me up to her own chamber to have a little conversation with me. She said that herself, her husband, and everybody indeed at the farmhouse had conceived such a liking for me that they could not bear the idea of my leaving except under circumstances of comfort. She said she had therefore prepared a box of apparel and various necessaries for my use, and likewise begged me to accept the loan of a sufficient sum of money to take me to the place of my destination, wheresoever it might be. While gratefully expressing my thanks for all this kindness, I declared my wish to return without delay to England, and the farmer’s wife insisted upon my acceptance of five hundred francs — or twenty pounds — for my travelling expenses. With the assurance that I should never forget so much generosity, I took my leave of the kind lady, her sons, and her daughters. The old man drove me over in his chaise-cart to the nearest town, whence I could obtain a conveyance for Paris. I was resolved to go to England by way of Calais, as I did not think fit to pass through Havre, for fear that Mrs. Knight or her son James should have made the friends whom they had in that town acquainted with the circumstances at Barcelona, or, rather, with a version of them most prejudicial to myself. I arrived without any accident, or adventure worth relating, at Calais, and thence I passed to Dover. Though anxious to proceed without delay to Southampton, in order to embrace my brother, yet having travelled almost day and night for the best part of a week in my journey from the extreme south of France to Dover, I was compelled to remain here a day or two to repose myself. I proceeded to the Admiral’s Head, which was kept by Mr. Marshall, with whose eldest daughter I was at school at Southampton. Kate Marshall was delighted to see me, and when she introduced me to her parents and sisters as the schoolfellow of whom she had so often spoken, I was received with a most cordial welcome, not in the light of a guest to whom a bill was to be sent in, but as a friend and visitress. Kate Marshall was now eighteen years of age, and a very fine young woman. Her two sisters were likewise exceedingly handsome. They were moreover all three kind-hearted and generous-minded creatures, and strove to make me as happy and comfortable as possible.



Kate, regarding me in the light of an old friend, — a bosom-friend, too, in whom she could place the utmost confidence, — did not hesitate to admit me to the knowledge of a certain secret connected with her father's prosperity. She took me up into a little private chamber of her own, situated quite at the top of the house, and elegantly furnished. Here she showed me a singular contrivance for carrying on a correspondence with parties elsewhere, by means of a beautiful breed of carrier-pigeons which she possessed. I need not enter into minute particulars now. Suffice it to say that there was a little trap-door in the ceiling of this chamber, by which the feathered emissaries were enabled to enter that room of their own accord on their arrival from a journey. All the neighbours knew that Kate Marshall possessed this beautiful breed of pigeons, but none were aware of the purposes which they served. Kate however — as I above hinted — was inclined to be communicative with me, and she gave me some particulars respecting the uses of those pigeons.

“ It appeared that Mr. Marshall had in an earlier part of his life been a sailor on board a privateer vessel which his father had commanded, and in a conflict with a French cruiser, he and two or three others of the sailors were taken prisoners. His father (Kate's grandfather) managed, however, to escape with the privateer. Robert Marshall and his companions were taken to Calais, where they were held prisoners. While in Calais gaol, Robert Marshall fell in with a Frenchman who was a captive there for some offence against the laws of his own country, and who possessed an extraordinary breed of carrier-pigeons. The Frenchman was needy, and Robert Marshall had a sum of money secured about his person, which had escaped the notice of his captors. With a portion of these funds he bought some of the pigeons; thence an intimacy sprang up between him and the Frenchman, and in the course of conversation, they came to an understanding how a most valuable correspondence could be carried on (when the peace should be established) between Dover and Calais for the furtherance of the contraband trade. The matter, once broached, was promptly arranged between them. Soon afterward the Frenchman obtained his liberty, and he assisted Robert Marshall to escape from Calais gaol. To be brief, Robert Marshall

managed to get back to Dover with his valuable carrier-pigeons. At that time old Marshall (Robert's father) occupied a house in the neighbourhood of Dover, and there the headquarters of the carrier-pigeons were established.

“ When the Peace of 1815 took place, old Marshall bought the Admiral's Head with the monies he had made by privateering, and thither were the headquarters of the birds transferred. Between Dover and Calais — that is to say between the Marshalls and the Frenchman — a frequent correspondence was kept up, and by means of this prompt interchange of intelligence, tidings were mutually conveyed enabling them to baffle the revenue officers on either side of the channel in their contraband ventures. Old Marshall died, Robert Marshall succeeded to the Admiral's Head, and for years did he and his wife manage the breed of birds, the correspondence with the Frenchman, and the smuggling trade. Thus did they grow rich. The Frenchman died, and his son succeeded to the father's possessions and avocations. But of late years there was little correspondence kept up between the parties at Dover and those at Calais, both being too well off to run any risks, save when an opportunity presented itself for some very large gains. The Frenchman, however, being an intelligent and enterprising man, saw how this rapid method of communication might be made the means of conveying news which should enable persons in London and Paris to take advantage of particular prices of the Funds or incidents of the stock exchange, and by judicious speculation make considerable gains. Robert Marshall, Kate's father, knew nothing of stock-jobbing and dabbling on the exchange and he therefore could not remove to London for that purpose. The Frenchman however found an agent in the British capital, and to his house, situated on the bank of the Thames, near London Bridge, several of the birds were accordingly removed, Marshall undertaking for a certain annual sum, regularly paid, to let the Admiral's Head continue as a resting-place or station for the feathered messengers. Other stations were established at Boughton and Gravesend, between London and Dover, while on the other side of the channel, the Frenchman made arrangements for the requisite number of stations between Calais and Paris. Thus for some years was the correspond-

ence carried on between the financier in London and the Frenchman in Paris, and no doubt large sums of money were made from the intelligence which they were enabled so promptly to exchange, and which was thereby communicated in as many hours as it would otherwise have taken days to forward by the ordinary channels. When Kate Marshall left the school at Southampton two years previously to the time at which I thus saw her at Dover, she took charge of the little chamber at the top of the house, and which was fitted up with the arrangements to serve as a resting-place for the carrier-pigeons between London and Paris. Several of the birds were still kept at the Admiral's Head, and Kate took great pleasure in cultivating the breed.

"Such was the narrative that my friend Miss Marshall told me in the frank confidence of the sincere friendship which she experienced for me. Confidence begets confidence, and in return I gave her some particulars of the extraordinary adventures which had occurred to myself since we parted two years back at Southampton. I did not however mention any names, — I mean in respect to my extraordinary marriage, — and thus I suppressed those of the Marstons, Mrs. Lloyd, and the Marquis of Villebelle. I did however tell her frankly the incident of the jewel business at Barcelona, and how it led me to fly to the Catalan Hills and fall into the hands of Don Diego Christoval. She laughed when I assured her that I did not really take the jewels, and I was some time before I could make her believe in my innocence. It was only when I grew angry at her skepticism that she ceased from her good-natured bantering upon the subject, but she added that if I had really taken those valuables, she should not have thought a bit the worse of me; adding that 'people must take care of themselves in this world.' I therefore saw that my friend's principles upon this subject were far from being the most correct; and I have no doubt that having been accustomed to look back so constantly on her grandfather's privateering career and her father's smuggling transactions, her emotions of propriety and rectitude had in certain cases been considerably damaged and warped. From the description I gave her of Count Christoval she admired him most rapturously, and vowed that she wished she had possessed such a chance of becoming the handsome Catalan bandit's bride. I must however do

her the justice to declare that so far as female purity went, her conduct and that of her sisters was unimpeachable.

“ I remained two whole days with the friendly Marshalls, and when I took my leave, it was with a promise that I would soon visit them again. Kate inquired into the condition of my funds, and offered me assistance from her purse, but I still possessed sufficient for my present requirements, and therefore refused her generous offer. From Dover I proceeded to Southampton, and made the best of my way to the school, with a heart yearning to fold my brother in a loving embrace. On arriving at the well-known establishment, I was at once admitted by Mr. Jennings himself, who had seen me pass by the window of the parlour where he was sitting. On beholding me, his countenance grew exceedingly mournful, and I apprehended that something had happened to poor Frank. He took me into his parlour, and there he bade me prepare myself for some afflicting intelligence. Heavens! what a shock did I now receive, — I who had come thither in the fervid hope of clasping my brother in my arms. Alas, I was informed that Frank was no more! For a few minutes I was overwhelmed with grief. Mr. Jennings sent for his wife, and with every appearance of the most genuine sincerity did they administer consolation. I shed torrents of tears, for it seemed to me that the only being whom I had to love upon the face of the earth was snatched from me.

“ When the violence of my grief had somewhat subsided, I sought for particulars, observing that the event must have been sudden indeed, as it was only two months since I had received a letter from Frank. Mr. Jennings proceeded to inform me that a very few days after Frank had thus written to me, the gentleman (the nobleman he should have said) who originally put him at the school came and took him away. Jennings went on to inform me that Frank had been declining for some months past, and that if he had not mentioned it in his letters, it must have been through unwillingness to cause me affliction. He added that about three weeks after my brother had left the school, the gentleman (still of course speaking of the nobleman) wrote to inform him that the poor youth was no more. I did not for a moment suspect the truth of this story, — a story which was all the more abominable and wicked, inasmuch as at

the very instant it was told me Frank was still an inmate of that very school, and therefore within a few yards of the spot where I sat, pale and weeping, a listener to the fictitious narrative of his death. I asked Mr. Jennings who the gentleman (or nobleman, as I felt convinced he must be) was, but he declared that he himself knew not, adding, with a mysterious look, that both myself and Frank had been placed at the school under circumstances of secrecy into which he himself had not dared attempt to penetrate. In short, he gave me to understand that the gentleman (or nobleman) who had taken Frank to the school, and had fetched him away again, had used a fictitious name, that this same fictitious name had been appended to the letter containing the account of Frank's death, and that he possessed no clue to the real name nor even to the abode of that gentleman (or nobleman). What could I do? What could I say? The mystery thus observed — or, rather, which was represented to me as being observed — corresponded so well with all the past details of everything relating to my brother and myself that it wore an air of sterling truth. Wretched and almost heart-broken, I took my departure from the establishment, and proceeded by coach to London. I was resolved to make some endeavour to penetrate the mysteries connected with the past.

“ On my arrival in the metropolis, I took a cheap lodging and put myself into mourning for that brother whom I believed to be no more. I then proceeded to take a view of this cottage, so endeared to me as the home of my infancy and girlhood. It was shut up, and falling into decay. How I longed to live in it and settle myself down within its walls, but I had not the means. I proceeded on foot with the endeavour to find my way to that village where Mrs. Burnaby had taken us in the hired vehicle, and where the handsome equipage had waited to convey us to the house situated in the beautiful park. But the roads had most probably changed their appearance during the eight years which had elapsed since then, and at all events my memory served me not in respect to any features of the scenery which might guide me in the right direction. There is a complete labyrinth of roads intersecting each other in all that neighbourhood, so that I grew bewildered, and was compelled to give

up the search after having vainly prosecuted it for two or three days.

“My funds were by this time totally exhausted, and I scarcely knew what to do. I wrote to Kate Marshall, — but with great reluctance, — requesting a temporary loan from her, and the return of post brought me a bank-note for twenty pounds. Thus I was relieved of anxiety for the immediate means of subsistence, and resolving to lose no time, I endeavoured to procure another situation as a governess. I answered advertisements in the newspapers, called at the residences of the parties advertising, but, being unable to give any reference as to past character, experienced a cold refusal everywhere. Then I inserted advertisements asking for such a situation, and frankly stating that, for reasons which I would explain orally, I was unable to offer testimonials, but these appeals elicited not a single response. Meanwhile weeks were slipping on, my money was diminishing, and I was oppressed by serious apprehensions for the future. Besides, I had contracted two debts that lay heavy enough upon my mind: one to the mayor’s wife in the Pyrenean village, the other to Kate Marshall; and though I was well aware that they would neither expect to be paid very promptly, and the latter not at all until I should be fully able, yet I did not like the idea of those debts. I thought of taking in work, but I never was a good hand with the needle. I however made application at different places for such work, with the resolution to do anything to earn an honest livelihood, but I experienced no success. In process of time my money disappeared. Then I lived by making away with my articles of clothing, till at length I was reduced to such a condition that I was penniless, with long arrears of rent owing to a hard-hearted landlady, and without a single thing left to raise money upon.

“It was in the middle of winter that one bleak, horrible night, between nine and ten o’clock, I was turned out of my lodging. I had not a friend to whom I could go; I had not even a single acquaintance in London of whom I could ask the slightest favour. I wandered about all that wretched night. Be assured that I fell in the way of temptations by yielding to which I might at once have possessed gold. But no! sooner than abandon myself to that hideous alternative, I was fully resolved to put an end to my existence.

All the next day I roved through the streets of London, half-mad with the torturing sense of my wretched position. Night came again, and I was still houseless, foodless, penniless. I had not eaten a morsel for many, many long hours, but yet I was not faint, I was desperate. A strange excitement was raging within me, and often and often did I catch myself dwelling upon Kate Marshall's words, when in a laughing, bantering mood she had told me that she half-believed I really had taken Mrs. Knight's jewels, and that she should not think any the worse of me if I really had. Ah! why did the reminiscence of those words thus keep coming back to my mind? Was it that an evil spirit had been created at the time they were uttered, to lie in wait for me, haunt my footsteps unseen, mark when the moment of weakness and despair arrived, and then whisper these words anew in my ear? Certain it is that what was at first a mere reminiscence became an inspiration, and that what became an inspiration grew into a resolution. Yes, a resolution engendered by despair, and desperately taken. I felt that I hovered between two distinct chasms, — one yawning on my right hand, one upon my left. I must either plunge into that abyss in which woman's honour is engulfed, or I must throw myself headlong into the other where honesty is swallowed up. There I stood, already a lost being, though no deed of crime was done as yet, but still a lost being, because a fatal and irresistible necessity was impelling me onward to precipitate myself headlong into one of those gulfs.

“ Under this influence I hurried through the metropolis, and gained the outskirts on the northern side, because they were those in which my recent searches after the road to the unknown village had been directed, and therefore had made me familiar with that neighbourhood. It was in a lonely part, where there were but six or seven houses scattered about, that my first crime was committed. Two ladies, apparently mother and daughter, came forth from one of those houses, pausing upon the threshold to bid good night to a lady, evidently the mistress of that house, where they had no doubt been passing the evening. I heard the mistress of the house ask if she should send a servant to accompany them home; they laughed as they declined, saying that as their own abode was but a hundred yards distant, they did not fear any danger for so short a walk. Yet it was in that

brief intermediate space between the two dwellings that they were stopped and plundered. Stopped too by one of their own sex. It was in the deep shade of some overhanging trees, so that my countenance could not possibly be discerned, that I confronted them and bade them deliver up their money, telling them that there were two men lurking on the opposite side of the way. The ladies, dreadfully frightened, gave me their purses, beseeching me not to let them be harmed. I assured them they should not sustain any injury if they forbore from crying out. Then I fled precipitately, took a circuitous route through some fields, and reëntered London.

“ It was the middle of the night and the shops were closed. I could not purchase any food, I could not obtain a lodging at that hour, for I shrank from the idea of entering a public-house. I wandered about till morning, so bewildered and confused, so excited and agitated with the deed I had done, that methought it was all a dream. I could scarcely believe in my own identity; I could not persuade myself that it was really I who had committed that crime. I dared not feel in my pocket to clutch the purses, and thus convince myself that it was not a delusion. I did not therefore examine them till long after dawn. Then, stepping aside into a secluded street, I looked to discover the amount of my ill-gotten funds. There were altogether seven guineas in the two purses. I took a lodging, I procured food, I redeemed some of my apparel from the pawnbroker's, and I remained indoors for several days afterward, fearing to go out lest I should be taken into custody. Nevertheless, in my calmer moments, when reasoning with myself, I knew full well that I could not possibly have been seen by the two ladies in a manner clear enough to enable them to identify me. I lived frugally and sparingly, not daring to think of the future, although by this very economy postponing to the utmost of my power the necessity for a recurrence to the same desperate means. But that time came again. In another part of the outskirts of London I committed a similar deed, and on this occasion likewise the sufferers were two ladies hastening home from a party. The produce was double as much as on the former occasion, and upon this I lived for many weeks.

“ One day, about noon, I was passing along a retired street



on my way to a tradesman's shop to purchase something, when an elderly gentleman walking in front of me, while pulling out his handkerchief, drew forth his pocketbook at the same time. The next moment it was in my hands. The rapid glance which I flung around showed me that the circumstance was unperceived by the few persons passing in that street. The pocketbook was concealed beneath my shawl, and I walked firmly on. The old gentleman speedily missed it, felt in all his pockets, looked back in dismay, and, accosting me, asked civilly whether I had happened to notice that he had just dropped anything. I replied in the negative, and continued my way. Regaining my lodgings, I examined the contents of the pocketbook. Two hundred pounds in bank-notes, and all for small sums. This circumstance filled me with exultation, — an exultation indeed in which was absorbed all lingering sense of the criminality of the ways which I was pursuing. Alas, that I should be compelled to say this.

“I hastened to change several of the notes at different tradesmen's shops in the neighbourhood, thus converting them into gold. The next day I saw an advertisement in the newspaper offering a reward for the restoration of the pocketbook and its contents, but there was no intimation that the numbers of the notes were known, and the magnitude of the reward convinced me that they were not. Feeling now secure in the possession of my treasure, I reflected what course I should pursue. I dearly longed to have a quiet little comfortable suburban residence of my own, and I had now the means of obtaining one. I again bethought myself of the cottage where the earliest years of my life were passed, so I set off to look at it once more. A bill pasted against the front door intimated that it was to let, and where intelligence could be obtained as to terms. I proceeded to the office of the house agent whose address I thus learned, and having ready money to pay down as an advance of rent, I was accepted as a tenant. Then I proceeded to furnish it, but in an economical manner, for I had a great deal to do with this money. I remitted the twenty pounds, through a London banker, to the mayor of the Pyrenean village, accompanied by a letter of thanks for the kindness I had received at his hands and those of his family; and when my house was fitted up and I had engaged a servant — this

present one, Rosa — I set off to pay the Marshalls a visit at Dover. By them I was kindly welcomed. I returned Kate the money she had lent me, and when we were alone together, she questioned me closely as to what I was doing, particularly how I came to be so well dressed and had such a command of funds. I evaded her queries at first, and she again fell into that humour of good-tempered bantering in which she is apt to indulge, at the same time hinting her suspicion that I had found some wealthy lover. Singular as it may seem — strangely idiosyncratic as it may appear — I preferred proclaiming myself what I really was than resting under the suspicion of being what I was not, and I accordingly told Kate all I had suffered, — my wretched wanderings without food or shelter through the streets of the metropolis, and the desperate measures into which I had been forced. She wept in sympathy for the miseries and privations I had gone through, and appeared to admire me rather than otherwise for the course I had chosen. To my annoyance, I found that she even told her parents and her sisters all that had happened, and they thought no more of it than she did, or at least they thought none the worse of me.

“ I remained for about a fortnight at Dover, and when I was about to take my departure, Kate offered me some of her beautiful pigeons, observing that it would prove an amusement to attend to them, and that by some means or another they might even become useful. I told her that I did not possibly see how this latter portion of her remark could be realized, when she said, ‘ My dear Elizabeth, if you continue in your present career, which I am sure you will, — for you have taken a good leaf out of Don Diego Christoval’s book, — you are certain sooner or later to get yourself into trouble, from which one of these winged messengers might possibly rescue you. For instance, if at any time you wished to prove that you were at Dover at a certain hour when others may swear you were in London, send off a billet containing the necessary particulars to me, and it can be managed.’ I accepted four of the pigeons, and brought them with me to this cottage, where I have them now.

“ Some months passed, during which I lived comfortably and happily enough, but in a sort of reckless and desperate

manner in respect to my thoughts for the future. The boundary between honesty and dishonesty was completely passed over, and I began to consider that it was my destiny to follow the career upon which I had entered. I found that my servant Rosa was a good-hearted woman, who had taken a very great liking to me, but she was evidently at a loss to understand the sources of my income, or who or what I was. I never had a soul to see me, either male or female, and my habits were such that she could not possibly suspect any impropriety on my part as a woman. It must indeed have appeared singular to her that I should live thus secluded, months passing without a single soul visiting the cottage. At length, as my funds grew low, I perceived the necessity of replenishing them, but I likewise saw how dangerous it was for a woman to prosecute the course on which I had entered. A female may be described so much more easily than one of the other sex, and moreover ladies might resist the predatory demands of a woman, when they would yield at once in terror to those of a man. Thus was it that a train of reflection one day led to the idea of assuming male apparel. But this could not be done without admitting Rosa into my confidence. Gently and gradually did I break to her the circumstances of my position, so cautiously and warily indeed that she was not shocked by any suddenness of disclosure. To be brief, I found that I had not done wrong to admit her as my confidante, and my design was soon carried out. Under pretence of requiring a masquerade garb, I procured a complete suit of male apparel from a tailor, and shortly after I fetched it away, I made my first experiment in that disguise. But upon this part of my history I will not dwell at unnecessary length. If I have launched into so many details in respect to my criminal career, it is only because when first entering on my history, I resolved to speak without reserve, and this very avowal of my iniquities constitutes no mean portion of the heavy punishment I deserve.

“Months passed away, and by those means to which I need not more particularly allude I obtained sufficient to live upon. One day, when dressed in my female garb, I was passing through a street at the West End, having some purchases to make, and I encountered Sir John Marston. He was startled and surprised at beholding me, looked con-

fused, and seemed as if he would have given a great deal to avoid such an encounter. More than ever convinced by his manner that he had wronged me in some way which I could not well understand, I said to him that the time would come when he must answer to me for the past. Recovering his wonted effrontery, he declared that he had nothing to answer for, whereupon I assured him that I was far from satisfied with his conduct toward me, and would do my best to penetrate the meaning of it. He asked me how I was circumstanced; but instead of giving a direct reply, I inquired how it was possible I could be otherwise than poor, inasmuch as I had no doubt been defrauded out of money that was due to me. At this he affected to be very indignant, reminding me of the five thousand pounds I had received, and which he said ought to have served as the fund of an income for my whole life. I then explained how I had been robbed of it within a few days after receiving the amount from him, and I insisted that he should do more for me, unless he wished me to give publicity to the whole affair of the mysterious marriage with the Marquis of Villebelle.

“ Thereupon he replied that he was not at all influenced by my threats, but that out of compassion he would allow me an income sufficient to keep me from want. But seeing me well dressed, he asked how I had been living? I at once boldly informed him that I held the situation of governess in a wealthy family, but that the duties thereof were most irksome, and that I had long thought of writing to him through his lawyer to demand an account of those monies which I felt convinced he must have deprived me of. After some reflection, he offered me two hundred a year if I would forbear from giving publicity to the circumstances of the marriage in Paris. Seeing that he was thus yielding, I at once declared that I would effect no such compromise, but that if he would double the amount I would listen to his terms. He agreed and we went together to the office of his attorney, Mr. Robson, whom he instructed in my presence to pay me one hundred pounds a quarter. He introduced me as the Marchioness of Villebelle, in which name I was of course to sign the receipts. A hundred pounds were paid to me at once, and we separated.

“ I purchased a horse, and amused myself with riding

about the neighbourhood of my cottage residence. And now it may be asked wherefore I did not renew my search after that village to which I had been taken by Mrs. Burnaby, and for that splendid mansion in the park where I had seen the invalid lady? The explanation is easily given. When I first made those researches, I was untainted by the consciousness of crime, and if I could have discovered a clue to that lady, I might have presented myself to her with an unblushing countenance, whether she were my mother or whatsoever degree of relationship she stood in toward me. But now it was very different, — and I shrank from the idea of making any discovery in that quarter. Therefore I studiously avoided riding in the direction which, so far as my memory served me, I had been taken that day by Mrs. Burnaby.

“ Possessed of an income of four hundred a year, it might be supposed that I had sufficient resources without the necessity of recurring to my evil ways of life. But without being able to account for it, I am forced to confess that I loved the excitement thereof. It had become to me the same as hunting or steeplechasing to those who indulge in such sports. At this moment, when, thank Heaven! my mind has assumed a better tone, I recoil in horror and with a shuddering aversion from the bare idea that I was ever influenced by such a morbid state of feeling. Such, however, was the case then, and from time to time I appressed myself in my male garb, and, mounting my horse, rode out at night upon the highway. Never did I perpetrate any violence; never did I harm a single hair of a human being's head. One night, in the neighbourhood of Hornsey, I stopped an old man who was driving along in a gig. He assured me he had nothing about him worth the taking. I made him hand me his purse which, as I found, contained but a few shillings. I gave it him back again, and was about to gallop away, when he said boldly that if I knew him better I could no doubt make his services available. He then told me, after a little more conversation, that his name was Solomon Patch, and that he kept a public-house in Agar Town, St. Pancras, that he was acquainted with a great many persons who lived at the expense of others, and that he gave an excellent price for whatsoever valuables might be brought to him. I replied that I should not forget the intimation, and

we parted. Some time afterward I visited this man's house in Agar Town, and found there a motley assemblage of wretches, male and female, whose looks bespoke their characters and their avocations. I gave them money wherewith to purchase liquor, and as Solomon Patch failed not to hint how we first became acquainted, they learned what I was. They insisted upon knowing my name, but I only told them my Christian one. Some person present at once dubbed me Lady Bess, and that is the name by which I have been known amongst them ever since. A short time after my adventure with Solomon Patch, I paid another visit to the Marshalls at Dover; and no longer feeling any shame at the career I was pursuing, — but glorying in it rather than otherwise, — I gave Kate an account of my various adventures. She told me in her turn that she had become engaged to a young man by the name of Russell, who was captain of a vessel ostensibly trading to the French and Spanish ports, but in reality engaged in the contraband trade. She added that Russell was making considerable sums of money, and that when he had amassed a fortune they were to be married.

“ My history is now drawing to a close, but there is one incident that deserves special mention. One day, about six months ago, I was riding on horseback, dressed in my female attire, through Edmonton, when a riderless steed galloped by me, and a little ahead I beheld a number of persons running to the assistance of a gentleman who had been thrown off. On reaching the spot, I instantaneously recognized in that individual my treacherous enemy, James Knight. He was senseless, and indeed, at the first glance I felt assured he was dead. Such proved to be the fact. He was borne into the house of a neighbouring surgeon, who pronounced life to be extinct, his skull having received a terrible fracture. I did not say at the time that I knew him, but when his person was searched to discover who he was, cards and letters were found upon him indicating both his name and address. On the following day I repaired to that address, being somewhat anxious to see Mrs. Knight and ascertain what her sentiments were in respect to the jewel business at Barcelona; for though I had recently been leading a life which might be supposed to render me but little scrupulous in such matters, yet I did not wish her to retain the impression that I had rewarded her kindness at

the time by a black ingratitude. I had not forgotten how she had received me into her family when I was friendless and penniless at Havre after the robbery of the diligence, and I was anxious to reëstablish myself in her good opinion, if I had really lost it.

“ On arriving at the house, which was in a genteel street at the West End of the town, I found all the blinds drawn down, and the aspect of the dwelling denoted the sombre gloom of death. On sending in my name, I was speedily admitted and was ushered into the presence of Mrs. Knight. She was overwhelmed with grief at her son's death, but she received me most kindly; and believing my visit to be one of condolence and sympathy toward herself, thanked me with fervid gratitude. I therefore saw at once that she entertained no evil opinion of me. After some little conversation she began to touch upon the incident which had made me flee from Barcelona so precipitately. She said that at the time she naturally believed I was really guilty of the theft of the jewels, but that when she received the letter which I wrote at Don Christoval's tower, and which I sent to the post through Frank at Southampton, she at once viewed the matter in quite a different light. She had questioned her son anew, and the confused answers he gave confirmed my tale of his villainy. Then he confessed everything, expressing deep contrition for what he had done, and his mother forgave him. She did not make the most distant allusion to the incident of her son's subsequent meeting with me on the borders of the Pyrenees, and having to surrender up a portion of his clothing, or, rather, to make an exchange, and therefore I presumed that he had felt too much ashamed of his pusillanimity on the occasion to mention the event to his mother. With respect to her own affairs, she informed me that she had at length, and after a great deal of trouble, settled them satisfactorily, and that her fortune proved to be greater than she had at first anticipated. I consoled with her on the loss she had sustained in respect to her son, describing how I had witnessed the occurrence, and I took my leave of her, well pleased to find that I had not suffered in her good opinion.”

## CHAPTER XIV

### A CHANGE OF ABODE

LADY BESS, having brought her narrative down to the point at which the preceding chapter concluded, went on to relate how she had one day encountered the Marquis of Villebelle, and how she had promised to deliver up to him the various papers proving their marriage. The reader will recollect that in the earlier portion of this tale, Lady Bess charged a certain Tony Wilkins, at Solomon Patch's house at Agar Town, to present a sealed packet to a gentleman whom he would meet at King's Cross. That gentleman was the Marquis of Villebelle, and that packet contained the documents she had volunteered to give up.

She then proceeded to describe how, in company with Chiffin the Cannibal, she had waylaid Messrs. Marlow and Malton, how she had fled to Dover, and how one of the carrier-pigeons which Kate Marshall had given her proved the means of extricating her from that dilemma. Then she described how, some little time afterward, she had met her brother Frank in the street, and how overjoyed as well as amazed she was to find that he was in the land of the living. She related everything Frank himself had told her in respect to his own history after he had quitted the school at Southampton, — how he had obtained a situation at court, how he had there recognized Lord Petersfield, and the two ladies whom he had twice seen in the companionship of her whom he believed to be his mother, how he had been abruptly but honourably removed from his situation in the royal household, and how, through Lord Petersfield, he had obtained another place, namely, that in Lady Saxondale's service.

Lady Bess likewise described without reserve how she had



called upon Lord Petersfield, and extracted the portrait which had so much excited Frank's attention, and which was subsequently recognized by Adolphus as that of his mother, Lady Everton. Then Elizabeth Chandos entered more fully into details than she had done on the previous day, in respect to the researches she had made with regard to those circumstances that so closely concerned Adolphus. She minutely narrated all she had learned from old Bob Shakerly, and she made no secret of the stratagem she had devised and executed for eliciting from Marlow and Malton the abode of Lady Everton. In the course of these explanations, she did not forget to state how Theodore Barclay had been bribed to betray what he knew concerning past events, and how it was through his suggestion she had called upon the lawyers.

"And now, Mr. Gunthorpe," she said, thus winding up her narrative, and speaking in a low and tremulous voice, full of emotions, "I have unbosomed all my secrets to you, as if I were on a death-bed making revelations of everything. You are acquainted with all the errors of which I have been guilty; my whole life is before you. In whatsoever colours I now find myself in your presence, I at least have the satisfaction of having told the truth; for I repeat, there is within me the intuitive feeling that you had some right to demand these explanations at my hands. But you have promised not to be too severe in your blame, and the emotions which you have exhibited at many parts of my history give me every reason to hope that you are not judging me too harshly, too severely."

"Heaven forbid, my dear Elizabeth!" said the old gentleman, down whose cheeks the tears were flowing fast, and this was not the first time he had been profoundly moved during the two hours which had elapsed since Lady Bess first commenced her history. "Blame you, no!" he added, with sudden vehemence, as he wiped away those tears, and starting from his chair, he began to pace the room in the utmost agitation. "I cannot blame you. The blame rests with those villains who robbed yourself and your poor brother out of the ample fortunes which should have been yours, and which, by making you rich, would have elevated you high above the possibility of any temptation. Ah, yes, and there has been blame attaching to another, — another,

who should have looked after your welfare, who should not have left you both so completely at the mercy of those men — But no matter; the past cannot be recalled. In respect to you yourself, Elizabeth, there is at least one cause for rejoicing, that as a woman you have not fallen, you have not disgraced yourself. And now show me once more that letter which you received from the Marquis of Villebelle when he was at Dover. You showed it to me yesterday. I wish to look at it again.”

“Certainly,” responded Lady Bess, and she hastened to produce from her writing-desk the epistle which Mr. Gunthorpe asked for. Its contents were as follows:

“ADMIRAL'S HEAD, DOVER,  
“ July 12, 1844.

“I have not hitherto had an opportunity of expressing my sincerest and most heartfelt thanks for the generous conduct you have observed toward me in respect to that strange transaction which took place in Paris five years back, and to which I need not more particularly allude. It is evident that Miss Marshall, the eldest daughter of the landlord of this inn, is to a certain extent your confidante, and she has this day rendered me a most signal service, the nature of which she will no doubt explain to you. I naturally conjecture that were it not for certain revelations which you must have at some time or another made to her, she would not have had it in her power to render me that service.

“I must now explain my principal object in penning these few lines; and being unacquainted with your address, I shall entrust the letter to Miss Marshall, that she may forward it. I just now had occasion to call at the residence of Sir John Marston, who is dwelling in this town. During his momentary absence from the room where he received me, I happened to glance at a paper which lay open upon his desk. It was a letter addressed to him, and bearing the signature of a certain Louisa Lloyd, doubtless that same Mrs. Lloyd who was present at the transaction in Paris to which I have above alluded. In that letter my eye caught the names of Elizabeth and Francis Paton, and then immediately followed these words: ‘I hope and trust there is no possible chance of their discovering that their father

is the Marquis of Eagledean.' This is all I saw, for Sir John Marston returned to the room immediately afterward. I do not know whether you have already made the discovery which Mrs. Lloyd appears so earnestly to hope that you have not, but I consider the matter to be one of sufficient importance to be at once communicated to you. If, by making such communication, I am rendering you the slightest service, I shall feel truly rejoiced, and though I must always remain your debtor for your generous conduct in giving up those documents some weeks back, yet may I hope that the contents of this letter will acquit me of some part of the immense obligation I owe you.

“ Permit me to subscribe myself

“ Your devoted friend and well-wisher,  
“ VILLEBELLE.”

Mr. Gunthorpe perused this letter with as much attention as if he had not read it on the preceding day, and as he handed it back to Elizabeth, he appeared to be absorbed in the deepest reflection, still pacing the room to and fro. Suddenly stopping short, he was about to say something, when she exclaimed, as she glanced forth from the window, “ Here are Frank and Adolphus returning from their walk.”

Mr. Gunthorpe looked at his watch, and said, “ It is close upon two o'clock, at which hour I ordered my carriage to return. Elizabeth, it was my purpose to have made certain revelations to you, which it is necessary you should learn, but I cannot do it now. You must restrain your impatience yet a little while — ”

“ But tell me, Mr. Gunthorpe,” she said, in a tone of anxious entreaty, “ who are you, and wherefore do you take such an interest in the affairs of Frank and myself? Do tell me — I beseech you to tell me! One word will suffice. Frank and Adolphus are entering the house, — quick, quick, do speak that word! ”

“ I am the bosom friend of the Marquis of Eagledean,” he replied, in a hurried manner.

Elizabeth Chandos looked disappointed, but yet somewhat bewildered and incredulous.

“ Hush,” said Mr. Gunthorpe, “ no more now! But as the friend of your father, — as one acquainted with all his secrets, and one having full power to act on his behalf, —

you must suffer me to take certain immediate steps in respect to yourselves."

"Do what you will, Mr. Gunthorpe," said Lady Bess, "for we are in your hands."

At this moment Adolphus and Frank entered the room, and were much delighted to find Mr. Gunthorpe there. Warm greetings were exchanged, and refreshments being placed upon the table, the old gentleman gladly accepted a glass of wine, for he had evidently passed through a sad and exciting ordeal while listening to Elizabeth's history. By the time luncheon was over, his carriage drew up in front of the cottage.

"Now," said Mr. Gunthorpe, "you are all three about to quit this place and remove to my residence. Do not look upon me thus with so much astonishment; I am perfectly serious. Yes, for many, many reasons must you all three come and take up your abode beneath my roof. Let your preparations be hastily made. Some of my servants shall come in the course of the day and fetch away your boxes. Adolphus, Frank, go to your rooms and get in readiness. Elizabeth, remain here with me."

The two young men hesitated not to obey Mr. Gunthorpe's directions, and when they had quitted the apartment, he turned toward the lady, saying, "You will permit me to dispose as I choose of your furniture and such matters beneath this roof. I can assure you, Elizabeth, you will never require them again. Now go and send back to Miss Marshall the carrier-pigeons which she gave you, and if you choose to forward by one of them a little billet, to the effect that altered circumstances on your part preclude the possibility of your ever more needing these feathered agents, it will perhaps be as well. You understand me, Elizabeth? Go, my dear girl. And tell Rosa — for that I think is your servant's name — to come hither, as I wish to speak to her."

Elizabeth obeyed these instructions as deferentially as Adolphus and Frank had hastened to fulfil those which they on their part had received, and Rosa came into the presence of Mr. Gunthorpe.

"My good young woman," said he, "your mistress, her brother, and their guest are about to leave this abode. I am well aware that you are acquainted with much, too much, concerning Mrs. Chandos. I am not, however, going

to utter a word of blame or reproach on account of the past, but I wish to make it well worth your while to bury in oblivion all you do know concerning that lady. She will leave the cottage just as it is. There is a lease, I believe, and that you can have; all the furniture is likewise yours. Here are fifty pounds for your immediate wants, and every half-year you will receive a cheque from me for the sum of twenty-five pounds. Upon an annual income of fifty pounds you can live respectably. You may take lodgers to make up enough to pay your rent. But all this is done for you on condition that you set a seal upon your lips in respect to whatsoever you may know concerning Mrs. Chandos. Now go up-stairs, fetch down her male apparel, take it into the kitchen, and tear it to pieces. I shall come in a few minutes and see that you have done so. Go, but take your money, and don't stand staring at me in this vacant, bewildered manner."

Thus did Mr. Gunthorpe issue his commands, and Rosa, finding that he was altogether serious,—as indeed the bank-notes he had placed upon the table fully proved,—hastened to obey him. In a few minutes the old gentleman, who seemed determined to do things in quite a businesslike manner, found his way into the kitchen, and expressed his satisfaction when he perceived that Rose had literally fulfilled his instructions and had torn up Lady Bess's frock coat, waistcoat, and trousers into shreds.

"There," he said, "that will do. By the bye, there's a horse. She will have no further need of that, and you may cause it to be sold and take the proceeds for yourself. But mind that it is sold."

Having thus spoken, Mr. Gunthorpe retraced his way to the parlour, where he was speedily joined by Adolphus, Frank, and Elizabeth. The lady threw upon him a significant look, to imply that his instructions in respect to the pigeons had been duly carried into effect. They then all four entered the carriage, which drove away toward Stamford Hill.

"It is my wish," said Mr. Gunthorpe, while proceeding thither, "that you, Elizabeth, should resume your maiden name of Miss Paton. It is by this name you will be known beneath my roof."

Frank glanced toward his sister in a manner which showed

that he saw full plainly she had been telling all the history of her past adventures to Mr. Gunthorpe, and while he was rejoiced that she should resume her maiden name, thereby severing herself as it were from several painful reminiscences, he could not help admiring the generosity of their kind-hearted friend, whose benevolence continued unchanged toward her. As for Adolphus, he was too much inexperienced in the ways of the world to think that there was anything very peculiar in the intimation which Mr. Gunthorpe had just given relative to the resumption of Elizabeth's maiden name; while the lady herself was prepared to follow in all things the instructions of one who appeared to have such full authority to issue them.

On arriving at the mansion, Adolphus, Elizabeth, and Frank were provided with handsome apartments; two valets were assigned as special attendants upon the young gentlemen respectively, so that Francis Paton, from having been a page himself, had one to wait upon him. A female dependent was attached to Elizabeth in the quality of lady's-maid; and thus was it evident by all these arrangements that Mr. Gunthorpe purposed to treat his guests with the utmost kindness and distinction. He sent off a note desiring Mrs. Leyden, Henrietta, and little Charley to come and dine at the manor at five o'clock; and when the whole party assembled in the magnificent drawing-room, the old gentleman appeared resolved to banish from his mind whatsoever cares or disagreeable reflections were harboured therein, that he might both enjoy and enhance the happiness which he was thus diffusing around him.

And it was indeed a happy party gathered on this occasion. Need we say that Henrietta and Adolphus sat together at the dinner-table, and likewise in the drawing-room in the evening? Or need we add that they experienced all the delight enjoyed by lovers who behold no barrier to the progress of their affection and its ultimate felicity? Mrs. Leyden, too, was amply recompensed, in her altered circumstances and prospects, for the many troubles and misfortunes which she had gone through, while little Charley was never tired of gazing around in childish wonder upon the splendid apartments, with their sumptuous furniture and their brilliant lights.

On the following morning Adolphus proceeded to call

upon Henrietta, in pursuance of a suggestion which Mr. Gunthorpe threw out, or, rather, a permission which he gave, for the young nobleman was docile as a child, and almost as unsophisticated as one, being yet too timid and bashful to take any important step of his own accord. Alas, so considerable a portion of his life had been spent in a close and cruel confinement! Mr. Gunthorpe had purposely sent him out of the way that he might have an opportunity of making certain important revelations to Elizabeth and Frank. Accordingly, as soon as Adolphus had taken his departure in the carriage which was placed at his disposal to convey him to Mrs. Leyden's cottage, the old gentleman conducted Elizabeth and Frank to the library of the mansion, and, taking a chair, he bade them seat themselves opposite to him, and listen attentively to the narrative he was about to unfold. There was a fervid curiosity in the mind of the youth, and though this same feeling was also experienced by his sister, it was blended on her part with a kind of solemn awe, for she was eight years older than her brother, and therefore more thoughtful in respect to the incidents which were now occurring, and more shrewd in forming certain suspicions and conjectures on particular points. When they were both seated near Mr. Gunthorpe, he addressed them in the following manner:

“ I am about to speak of Lady Everton. I am about to tell you much regarding that unfortunate lady. It was for this reason that I have excluded Adolphus from our present conference, for it would be sad and mournful for him to hear the tale of his mother's frailty and dishonour. You, Elizabeth, have acted wisely and well in keeping secret from him the suspicions which yourself and Frank have entertained in respect to Lady Everton, and it will be a matter of serious consideration for us all — perhaps too for Lady Everton herself — whether Adolphus shall ever have the veil torn from his eyes in respect to his mother's secrets. For those suspicions on your part, Elizabeth, — those suspicions on your part, Frank, — are indeed well founded. Lady Everton is your mother! ”

This announcement, although so fully expected, was received in deep silence, but also with deep emotion; and then, as if by a simultaneous ebullition of feeling at thus acquiring the certainty that the lady whom they had seen

in their earlier years, and who had wept over them, was indeed their mother, Elizabeth and Francis threw themselves into each other's arms, mingled their tears, and embraced tenderly. Mr. Gunthorpe rose from his seat and walked to and fro in deep agitation, but suddenly calming his emotions, he resumed his chair, saying, somewhat abruptly, "Let me not hesitate any longer to enter upon the narrative of the past. Give me your attention, interrupt me not in its progress, but listen in silence, as I listened yesterday, Elizabeth, to the tale which you revealed to me."

Then, perceiving that the brother and sister were anxiously awaiting the promised narrative, Mr. Gunthorpe related those particulars which will be found in the ensuing chapter.



## CHAPTER XV

### LADY EVERTON

“It was in the beginning of the year 1814 that Lord Everton conducted to the altar Alexandrina, sister of Sir John Marston. His lordship was a colonel in the army, had served for some years in India, where he had greatly distinguished himself, and had amassed considerable wealth. He was forty years of age, but looked considerably older, his constitution having suffered by the influences of an Oriental climate, the fatigues of active service, and the wounds he had sustained. To speak truthfully, he was neither handsome in person nor prepossessing in manners. He had all the imperious habit of command and the authoritative severity of a soldier. He was far more fitted to preside in a camp than to shine in a drawing-room. Alexandrina was but sixteen when she thus became Lady Everton. She was one of the most beautiful creatures ever seen, — intellectually accomplished, of fascinating manners, and of most amiable disposition. Even if her affections had not been engaged to another, her marriage with an individual more than double her age, and whom she could not possibly love, must have been regarded as a cruel sacrifice. But her affections were engaged; she loved the Honourable Paton Staunton, who was at that time in his thirtieth year. But Mr. Staunton, though the nephew of the then Marquis of Eagledean, appeared not to have any chance of succeeding to the title and estates of his uncle, inasmuch as the marquis had two sons. Moreover, Mr. Staunton was poor, having but a few hundreds a year; the Marston family was likewise poor, and thus Alexandrina, unable to marry the object of her affections, was sacrificed to the lordly and wealthy soldier.

“ Mr. Staunton was a Member of Parliament, and noted for the extreme liberality of his political opinions. He was at the time the only man in the House of Commons who dared raise his voice to assert that the people had rights from which they were most unjustly debarred, that the country was ruled by an arrogant, a selfish, and a rapacious oligarchy, and that what was termed ‘ British freedom ’ was one of the most detestable of mockeries. Now, his uncle the Marquis of Eagledean was a staunch Tory; he hated his nephew Paton Staunton for his republican notions, while on the other hand, Mr. Staunton, finding that his narrow-minded relative would not permit liberty of conscience, proudly forbore from asking him any favour. It was therefore in consequence of Mr. Staunton’s poverty and want of fine prospects that Alexandrina Marston was hurried to the altar to become the bride of another man.

“ In 1816, two years after the marriage, Adolphus was born. In the course of a few months the affairs of India became so threatening, and some of the native princes obtained such successes over the British troops, that it was found necessary to confer the command of the Anglo-Indian army upon an officer of tried experience, skill, and valour. The government of the day offered the post to Lord Everton. He accepted it, and, with the rank of general, proceeded to India. It cost him no considerable pang to leave his young wife and new-born child, for he was a man whose ambition towered high above all the softer feelings of humanity. It would, however, be alike untruthful and unjust to affirm that he experienced no emotion at all on parting from them. About the same time that this appointment took place, the Marquis of Eagledean died, his elder son succeeding to the title, and in a few months after this an accident occurred which all in a moment produced a remarkable change in the position and circumstances of the Honourable Paton Staunton. The new Marquis of Eagledean, with his brother, — both young men, — were upset in a boat on the Thames near Twickenham, and were drowned. They were unmarried, and thus Paton Staunton abruptly received the intelligence that he had become Marquis of Eagledean, with large estates and a revenue of thirty thousand a year.

“ From the time of Alexandrina’s marriage with Lord Everton, she and Paton had not met. Soon after her

husband's departure for India, she became attached as principal lady in waiting to the Princess Sophia, and at one of the receptions given by that princess, in her apartments at St. James's Palace, she met the former object of her affection, who had recently become Marquis of Eagledean. That meeting was an interesting one, — one full of a touching pathos and of sorrowful reflections for both; inasmuch as they soon discovered that their mutual love had abated not, but was, if possible, stronger than ever. They could not help thinking that if only two or three short years had been allowed to elapse ere Alexandrina was disposed of in marriage, she might have accompanied to the altar the individual who had won her heart and whose position in life had been destined to undergo so remarkable a change. That meeting led to others.

“Alexandrina's husband was far away, she did not love him, she scarcely even respected him, because she felt that she had been dragged as his victim to the altar; she knew that her loveliness had served as a chaplet to be interwoven amidst the laurels which adorned his brow. The Marquis of Eagledean remained unmarried, — he had vowed never to marry, — his heart cherished the image of Alexandrina, and she knew all this. Their meetings did not continue innocent; their mutual passion was above control; they were culpable. In a short time Lady Everton found that she was in a way to become a mother. She made a confidante of her principal lady's-maid, Mrs. Burnaby, who was a widow, and a trustworthy person. I should, moreover, observe that she was a reduced gentlewoman at the time she first entered Lady Everton's service, that she was well educated, and altogether the most eligible female for the important trust to be reposed in her. But it was necessary to admit others into Alexandrina's confidence, and the housekeeper at Everton Park, likewise a discreet and kind-hearted woman, was one. Another was the maid next in rank to Mrs. Burnaby, and then came the medical man who attended upon the household at the Park. But all the arrangements were so well settled, and the persons engaged were so trustworthy, that Alexandrina's position remained unsuspected by the world, and in due course a daughter was born. This was in 1818. The cottage near Tottenham had been already hired and furnished, and a wet-nurse

was engaged. To that abode did Mrs. Burnaby repair with the infant, on whom the name of Elizabeth Paton was bestowed.

“After this event the Marquis of Eagledean quitted England, with Alexandrina’s full concurrence, for they found that, considering the strength of their mutual love, such separation was necessary for her honour and security. But this parting was indeed most painful, and required all their strength of mind for its accomplishment. For six years did the marquis remain on the Continent, chiefly in France, but at the expiration of that time business compelled him to return to England. He believed that he had so far conquered the romantic ardour of his love for Alexandrina, that they might now meet as friends. He wrote to her, and she expressed in reply a similar opinion. They did meet, and for some short time they exercised so powerful a control over their feelings that they never touched upon the topic of their love. And yet they both knew that they were standing again upon the edge of a precipice; they both felt that so far from time having mitigated the fervour of their devotion toward each other, it continued unextinguishable, immitigable. It was a deathless sentiment, triumphing over time, defying the lapse of years, interwoven with the very principles of their existence.

“General Lord Everton was still absent in India, where his presence was required. He was amassing wealth, he was gathering fresh laurels, and yet his work, either for his country or himself, appeared to be only half-done, for his letters contained no intimation of the probability of an early return to England. If ever there were extenuation for female frailty, surely it existed for Lady Everton under all those circumstances! The man whom she was forced to accompany to the altar had been for years absent, while that other man to whom her heart’s first and only affections were given was once more present, and the opportunities for their meeting were frequent. They were again culpable; again did Lady Everton find herself in a condition to become a mother; and again, with the assistance of Mrs. Burnaby and the others who were in the former secret, was a child born. This was in the year 1826. The infant was conveyed away to the cottage, and on him the name of Francis Paton was bestowed.

“ There was now another separation. Alexandrina and the marquis, bitterly deploring the past, resolved that the future should remain untainted by criminality. He went abroad again, well-nigh broken-hearted at the necessity for bidding farewell to the object of his first and only love, and at the anguished state of mind in which he had left her. It was even agreed between them that there should not be the slightest epistolary correspondence, — nothing that should increase the yearning they were but too certain to experience toward each other. What to the Marquis of Eagledean was his lordly title? What his immense wealth? They could afford him no consolation. He had long considered the first as but an empty bauble, and he only valued the latter as a means of enabling him to do good. Eighteen months elapsed, and during this period the marquis resided in Paris. His time was chiefly employed in visiting the abodes of want and poverty, and ministering to the relief of the sufferers. Wherever he found an aching heart, it became a solace to him to afford condolence; wherever he found honest penury sinking into despair with its vain struggle against the world, it soothed his own soul to be enabled to succour it. Nor less did he penetrate into the dens of vice and demoralization, to drag up from those sloughs such unfortunates as would accept the hand stretched forth to their assistance. It was thus, as I have said, that eighteen months passed away, and at the expiration of this period the Marquis of Eagledean read in an English newspaper that General Lord Everton, having finished his career in India, was resolved to return home. A few days afterward another paragraph intimated that he might be expected to arrive in London in about five or six months.

“ The Marquis of Eagledean now felt it to be a paramount duty to make ample provision for his two children, Elizabeth and Frank. He had never seen either of them from the moment of their birth; he dared not see them; he felt that if he were to do so, he should long to have them with him, to take charge of them, to adopt them, and acknowledge them as his own. But how could he do this? He would have to bring them up, stigmatized with illegitimacy; and when they should ask him who their mother was, how could he respond to the question? Besides, if he suddenly appeared before the world with those two children acknowledged

as his own, — and as illegitimate, too, for he dared not pretend that they were otherwise, — wonder would be excited, suspicions might arise, inquiries might take place, and the truth be traced out. It was known to many that he had been Alexandrina's suitor previous to her marriage with General Lord Everton, and as her husband had been for so many years absent, the tongue of scandal would not fail to whisper a surmise which might ultimately be proved the actual truth. No, every possible precaution must be taken to shield Alexandrina's honour from danger and detraction, and the births of those children must therefore remain buried in an impenetrable mystery.

“ Thus was it that the Marquis of Eagledean had never dared to pay even the most stealthy visit to that cottage where his children were kept in the care of Mrs. Burnaby, and this was not the least violence that he was compelled to exercise over his feelings. But now that Lord Everton was on the point of returning from India, the marquis felt it a paramount duty to give Alexandrina the assurance that the two children would be amply provided for, and that she need experience no anxiety with regard to their future welfare. The marquis accordingly resolved to pay one more visit to England, in order to settle this business, and then bid his native land a long farewell, — if not an eternal one, — so that he might avoid the chance of encountering her whose image was enshrined in his heart. But on repairing to England on the occasion, and for the purpose named, he solemnly vowed that he would not seek an interview with Alexandrina. He wrote to her, stating that he was again in London, explaining the purpose for which he was there, imploring her to pardon him for having thus broken the compact mutually agreed upon, that no epistolary correspondence was to take place between them, and requesting only that she would give such suggestions or instructions as she thought fit relative to a mode of settling the fortune he destined for their two children. He declared his intention of devoting the sum of one hundred thousand pounds to this purpose, so that they might have a fortune of fifty thousand pounds each.

“ Alexandrina, who was then staying at Everton Park, which is about twenty miles from London, wrote back promptly to the Marquis of Eagledean, expressing her admira-

tion for what she was pleased to term his noble generosity on behalf of their children, and declaring that his proposal to that effect had tended to relieve her mind from the utmost anxiety. As to the mode of settling the money, she had but little to suggest. She however wished them to be brought up in a comparatively humble though comfortable and respectful manner, but not with any extravagant ideas or elevated notions, which in after life might lead them to make searching inquiries into the mystery of their birth. Moreover, as they would have to go forth into the world, when they grew up, without the advantage of relations and friends to counsel and advise them, — and as under such circumstances she trembled for their future welfare, dreading lest they should fall into error, — she besought that they might be reared in ignorance of the handsome fortunes to which they would be entitled, so that they would stand the less chance of falling into the hands of designing persons ere they arrived at years of discretion. For Alexandrina rightly considered that it was a fearful thing for a young woman and a young man to enter upon life in a comparative friendless manner, and without having passed through an ordeal of experience to teach them how to value and make a good use of the fortunes which they were to inherit. Therefore did she suggest that they should be brought up in ignorance of the wealth in store for them, until they reached that age at which it might safely be entrusted to their keeping. Having thus expressed her views, she left all the rest to the discretion of the Marquis of Eagledean, and she displayed sufficient strength of mind to forbear from hinting at her desire for an interview.

“I have already said that Alexandrina was staying at Everton Park at the time when this correspondence took place between herself and the Marquis of Eagledean. She had several visitors there at the time. One was her brother, Sir John Marston, accompanied by his wife, for he had very recently been married. There were likewise Lord and Lady Petersfield, who were on intimate terms with the Everton and Marston families. Lord Petersfield at that time presided over the household of the Princess Sophia, in which Lady Everton still retained her situation, though it was rather a nominal than a real one. Another visitor at the Park on the occasion, was Mr. Everton, her brother-in-law. This

gentleman was unmarried, — of moderate fortune, and supposed to be of rather unsteady habits. Rumour had indeed whispered that he was dissipated and addicted to the gambling-table, but nothing positive was known on these points. In the world he passed for an honourable man, and on account of his social position, he moved in the highest circles. His sister-in-law had never liked him; she often spoke of him with aversion to the Marquis of Eagledean; but as her husband's brother, she was forced to receive his visits with a becoming courtesy. Besides, Lord Everton, previous to leaving England to assume his military command in India, had requested his brother to visit the Park and the other estates from time to time, to assure himself that the stewards and bailiffs performed their duty.

“To resume the thread of my narrative, I must state that one day — shortly after the correspondence of which I have spoken between Alexandrina and the Marquis of Eagledean — her ladyship was seated in the drawing-room at the Park, her brother, her brother-in-law, and Lord Petersfield being present at the time. Lady Petersfield and Lady Marston, as it appeared, were out riding or walking together, with little Adolphus. The conversation in the drawing-room turned upon the expected arrival of Lord Everton, who was to be in England in the course of a few months. Lord Petersfield — who then possessed a far more courtly affability than has characterized him of late years, since he entered a diplomatic career and assumed its solemn aspect and its studied reserve — expatiated upon what he regarded, or pretended to regard, as the delight and joy with which her ladyship would welcome her husband home after his long absence. Poor Alexandrina felt deeply distressed. No doubt — and it was natural enough — she was smitten with horror and remorse for her past conduct, and experienced a guilty dread at meeting the husband to whom she had proved unfaithful. In short she was so completely overcome by her feelings that she fell back in a sudden swoon. Her brother, Sir John Marston, hastily snatched up a decanter of water, and sprinkled some upon her countenance, while Lord Petersfield and Mr. Everton tore at the bells to summon assistance. But ere any of her ladyship's female dependents had time to reach the room, she began to return to consciousness; and in the dimness and confusion



of her first ideas she let fall some expressions which more than half-betrayed the fatal secret. Starting up in a sudden access of frenzy, — aware of the tremendous inadvertence which she had committed, — she gazed upon her brother, her brother-in-law, and Lord Petersfield in a manner which confirmed the suspicions just engendered in their minds. They consigned her to her maids, and Heaven alone knows, besides themselves, what took place between those three men when alone together.

“ In the course of the afternoon Sir John Marston repaired to his sister’s chamber, and told her frankly that Mr. Everton had searched her writing-desk, and had discovered documentary proofs of her illicit connection with the Marquis of Eagledean. Poor Alexandrina threw herself at her brother’s feet, beseeching he would intercede with Mr. Everton not to expose and ruin her. Sir John Marston assured her that both himself and Lord Petersfield had already exerted their united influence with Mr. Everton to this effect, and that he had promised to throw the veil of secrecy over her guilt, but only on the condition that the marquis should at once leave England, with the solemn pledge not to revisit its shores for many long, long years. Alexandrina wrote a letter to Lord Eagledean, telling him what had occurred, and beseeching him to give the sacred promise upon which her fate depended. This letter Mr. Everton determined to bear himself to the marquis, so that he might, as he alleged, be satisfied as to the reply.

“ Proceeding at once to London, Mr. Everton called upon the Marquis of Eagledean, who was plunged into despair at the fearful occurrence which had thus exposed the unfortunate Alexandrina’s frailty. The marquis did not upbraid Mr. Everton for having violated the sanctity of his sister-in-law’s desk. He was too anxious to conciliate him. Moreover, he could not help feeling that when once that gentleman’s suspicions were aroused, he had a right to adopt any means to discover proofs of the infidelity of his absent brother’s wife. Mr. Everton renewed his proposal that if the marquis would leave England with a solemn promise to remain absent for a long series of years, and to desist from all correspondence with Alexandrina, he would spare the exposure of her dishonour. Lord Eagledean was but too rejoiced to assent to this decision. Indeed, it only

embodied the resolve to which his own mind had been previously made up, and which he had expressed in his last letter to Lady Everton. In short, he left himself entirely in the hands of her brother-in-law, Sir John Marston, and Lord Petersfield, to all of whom the fatal secret had thus become known. He even proposed to take the children away with him to some far-off clime, and there bring them up in utter ignorance of the secret of their birth. But to this Mr. Everton would not listen, and he advanced as his reason several arguments similar to those which had constituted Lord Eagledean's own motives for leaving the children completely in the care of Mrs. Burnaby. The settlement of the hundred thousand pounds upon those two children was next deliberated upon, as this step was to be taken before the marquis could leave England. Mr. Everton suggested that the amount should be lodged in the Bank of England, or with the Marquis of Eagledean's own private bankers, in the joint names of Lord Petersfield and Sir John Marston, as they two, having become acquainted with the secret, were the most eligible trustees who could be selected. The marquis entertained no objection to this arrangement. He was well acquainted with Lord Petersfield, whom he believed to be a man of the strictest probity, and with regard to Sir John Marston, it was natural to include him in the trusteeship, he being Alexandrina's brother. An appointment was accordingly made for all four — namely, the marquis, Lord Petersfield, Mr. Everton, and Sir John Marston — to meet on the following day and discuss the matter further.

“ When this interview was over, Lord Eagledean proceeded to consult his bankers, and also his solicitor, upon the best method of carrying out the arrangements, confessing to them, under their solemn pledge of secrecy, that Elizabeth and Francis Paton were his own illegitimate children, but as a matter of course, Lady Everton's name was kept out of the question. To the solicitor the marquis explained that he wished certain restrictions to be placed upon the powers of the trustees, so that they should only carry out such instructions as he might think fit to record for their guidance, without affording them even a discretionary control over the fortunes of the children or the children themselves. In thus speaking, the marquis had in view the suggestions

which he had received from Lady Everton, as I have already described them. On the following day the meeting took place between the marquis, Lord Petersfield, Mr. Everton, and Sir John Marston. Sir John was the bearer of a letter from his sister Alexandrina to the Marquis of Eagledean, and which she had left open that its contents might be seen to be only of a business character. Therein she recapitulated all the suggestions she had previously afforded, and all the apprehensions she entertained for the future welfare of the children. One passage ran somewhat to this effect: 'It is chiefly for our daughter Elizabeth that I tremble. Frank, when he grows up to man's estate, will feel the want of relations and friends far less than his sister. Her sex naturally exposes her to other temptations and more fatal errors. It would be well if on the attainment of her majority she could be eligibly married, but without in the least degree forcing the natural bent of her affections. It may be deemed a weakness on my part, but it will nevertheless afford me considerable satisfaction, and in after years relieve me of much of the anxiety which will otherwise harass my mind on her account, if by such marriage a real rank could be conferred upon her, so that in the possession of a titled name and an elevated social position the mystery of her parentage and the obscurity of her name may be lost sight of. With such a fortune as she will possess through your bounty she may well aspire to such a marriage. I do not mean that she is to be dragged to the altar and forced to wed some titled personage; no, Heaven forbid! But I should venture to recommend that if a brilliant marriage in accordance with her own feelings can be effected when she attains her majority, her fortune should be placed at her disposal; but on no account should she be permitted to receive more than the interest of her money until she does contract a matrimonial alliance.'

"Such were Alexandrina's suggestions in reference to Elizabeth. Now, although the Marquis of Eagledean himself despised aristocratic titles, and cared nothing for the one which he himself bore, he was nevertheless prepared to adopt the wishes of the unhappy Alexandrina, and to this effect did he express his intentions to Lord Petersfield, Sir John Marston, and Mr. Everton. They offered no objection, and when the meeting broke up, he repaired to his solicitor

for the purpose of giving him final instructions with regard to the trust deed. It will perhaps take some little trouble to explain in lucid terms the details of this deed, but the task must be attempted. In the first place Lord Eagledean undertook to lodge the sum of one hundred thousand pounds in his bankers' hands, to be retained by them for the benefit of Elizabeth and Francis Paton, and in the trusteeship of Lord Petersfield and Sir John Marston. He apportioned fifty thousand pounds to be the fortune of Francis, together with all the accumulations of interest which might remain for both after the annual deduction of four hundred pounds for their joint maintenance until they should become entitled to their fortunes. The deed provided that should either die, the other was to become entitled to the whole amount, and that should they both die, the amount was to revert to himself (the Marquis of Eagledean) or to his heirs. In respect to the fortune of Elizabeth, he introduced the following provisions into the deed: that if on the attainment of her twenty-first year, she contracted a marriage with some eligible and proper person, who by his rank and social position could place her upon a high standing, and confer upon her an honourable name, she was at once to receive possession of her fortune, but that so long as she remained unmarried, she was merely to receive the interest, the capital remaining in the bankers' hands. Or again, if she contracted a marriage which in the opinion of her two guardians was derogatory and unworthy, she should still receive only the interest of the money, without any power over the capital; and on no account was the fortune to be settled on her husband, or alienated from her own possession. In respect to Francis, the Marquis of Eagledean provided by the trust deed that on the attainment of his twenty-first year, he should become possessed of the full annual interest of his fortune; but that he should not enter upon the enjoyment of the capital until the attainment of his twenty-fifth year. Moreover, the bankers were charged not to pay over the respective fortunes without receiving at the time satisfactory proof that the above-mentioned conditions were duly complied with.

“Such was the nature of the trust deed drawn up, and which, as a matter of course, was far more explicit in its details than the sketch which I have just given. It neces-

sarily took several days to complete all these arrangements, during which interval the Marquis of Eagledean was compelled to remain in England, but as Alexandrina continued to reside at Everton Park, they did not meet. Nor did he make the slightest attempt to see her, for he felt that it would be most unbecoming and indelicate to do so under existing circumstances. At length the business was concluded, the necessary documents were signed, the money was deposited in the bankers' hands, and the Marquis of Eagledean quitted England. He repaired to Germany, and settled himself at Baden. Some few months afterward he read in an English newspaper of the death of the Honourable Adolphus Everton, son of Lord and Lady Everton, aged twelve years, and very soon after that, he read an account of the return of his lordship to England. Deeply did he dread what might be the result of the meeting between Alexandrina and her husband. She had already betrayed her secret in a swoon, the same frightful accident might occur again. But no; it did not appear that there was any ground for his apprehension, inasmuch as the English newspapers frequently made mention of Lord and Lady Everton; and thus, as their names were coupled in the record of their movements, it was to be inferred that they lived together without a suspicion on her husband's part of his wife's dishonour. But Lord Everton had not been many months in England, ere death overtook him, and when the Marquis of Eagledean read the account of his demise, it was with a feeling that can be better imagined than described. Oh, might he not now hope that, after the usual period of widowhood, Alexandrina would become his wife? He however remained in Baden, considering that it would be the height of indelicacy and impropriety to present himself to Lady Everton too soon after her husband's death.

“ A year thus elapsed, and the marquis now thought that it would be no longer indiscreet to return to England. But then arose in his mind the memory of that solemn pledge he had given to remain absent a long series of years. Perhaps it was straining a point to consider that this interdiction continued valid after Lord Everton's death, but still the Marquis of Eagledean was punctilious upon the subject, and he resolved to write to the brother, who had assumed the title, and ascertain his feeling upon the subject. In due

course an answer was received. Lord Everton (as I had better call him for distinction's sake, although he has all along been a base usurper) wrote a long letter, in which he declared that he had consulted his sister-in-law with regard to the present state of her feeling toward the marquis, and that she had vowed to pass the remainder of her life in widowhood, as an atonement to the memory of him whom she had dishonoured. Lord Everton went on to say in his letter that he himself considered such atonement to be strictly due to the memory of his deceased brother, and he insisted that the Marquis of Eagledean should adhere faithfully to the solemn pledge: namely, to remain absent from England. Lord Eagledean was cruelly afflicted by the contents of this letter, yet he felt persuaded that Alexandrina was acting under the coercion of her brother-in-law, even if she had been consulted at all in the matter. He therefore wrote to Alexandrina, explaining everything that Lord Everton had said, and requesting a frank and unreserved avowal of her own sentiments. He appealed to her, in the name of that fervid love which for so many years they had experienced for each other, he enjoined her by all the circumstances of the past not to send him a reply which would banish hope from his breast, and he suggested that if her brother-in-law still insisted on the fulfilment of the pledge of self-expatriation, she might join him on the Continent, where their hands could be united in matrimony. He said that he was well aware he was already violating one part of his pledge, which had been to the effect that all correspondence should cease between them; but he pleaded as an excuse the altered circumstances of their relative position arising from her husband's death. He concluded by declaring that upon her response depended all his future conduct toward her, for that if she, by her own accord, reiterated what her brother-in-law had already said to her, he should, as a man of honour and delicacy, regard her decision as final, and as one too solemn and sacred to admit of any additional appeal on his part.

“Most anxiously did the Marquis of Eagledean await the reply to this letter. It came at the expiration of a few weeks; it proved a death-blow to his hopes; the decision was adverse to his fondest expectation. In this reply Lady Everton assured him that the death of her husband had

awakened her to the sense of the grievous wrong she had done him, that her peace of mind was destroyed for ever, that her happiness was annihilated, and that were she even to see the marquis again, his presence would drive her to despair. She conjured him to study, as well as he was able, to banish her image from his mind; or, if he must still continue to think of her, that he would only regard her in the light of a friend sincerely wishing him well, but whom he must never see again. She repeated what her brother-in-law had said, to the effect that by crushing within her bosom all inclination to enter the marriage state again, she might make some atonement to the spirit of her departed husband, and that as she had proved unfaithful to him in life, she would prove faithful to his memory after death. She assured the marquis that she penned that letter of her own accord, without coercion, and even without the knowledge of Lord Everton; that its contents were the spontaneous effusion of her own heart, dictated by a religious piety of feeling, which she implored him not to disturb.

“The Marquis of Eagledean submitted to this decision, but he did not believe that Alexandrina was a free agent when she wrote that letter. Nevertheless, if she were indeed under the coercion of her brother-in-law, he saw that it must be through a threat that her past conduct should be exposed to the world, and the marquis was prepared to make any sacrifice of his own feelings, and to consent that she should do the same on her part, rather than see her name dragged through the mire of opprobrium, scorn, and dishonour. He felt assured that Everton was a villain, but Alexandrina was too completely in his power to permit the possibility of his being thwarted. Nevertheless, deeply, oh, most deeply, did he compassionate that woman whom he loved so tenderly and so enduringly, and it cost him a severe struggle and many a bitter pang to abstain from flying back to England and imploring her to dare all consequences — exposure, shame, and the ruin of her reputation — rather than consent to an eternal severance. Yet he did exercise this mastery over himself, and from that instant the whole aspect of the world was completely changed to the Marquis of Eagledean.

“Leaving Germany, the marquis repaired to Italy, and settled himself at Naples. There he assumed another name, — the name of a civilian. He thus laid aside his rank in

order that he might dispense with the train of attendants, the pomp, the splendour, and the ceremony, which it would have been necessary to support had he maintained that rank. At Naples he dwelt in a private manner, avoiding society, and using his immense wealth in doing good to the utmost of his power. Years passed on, and with his mind, so did his person change. Care and sorrow altered his countenance, and at length it became impossible to recognize in him the once handsome and fascinating Marquis of Eagledean. For those who knew him many, many long years ago can truthfully aver that he was both handsome in person and fascinating in manners, and if they beheld him now, they would not entertain the slightest suspicion of his identity. But as those years of self-expatriation passed on, the tone of his mind acquired a degree of resignation which prevented him from falling into complete cynicism and misanthropy. Nay, more, he even learned to smile again at times, to put on a cheerful aspect, and to deport himself with a blunt good-humour. His habits had naturally become eccentric from the secluded life he had led for so long a period; and indeed, it is often in eccentricity on the part of old men that the sense of past cares and sorrows either becomes merged or else finds its peculiar expression.

“ Yes, years passed, — those years which so completely altered the mind, the habits, and the personal appearance of the Marquis of Eagledean. At length he resolved to pay a visit to England. He had several reasons for this determination, to which he did not however arrive suddenly and in a moment of eccentricity. He had received many evil accounts concerning his nephew, Lord Harold Staunton, the presumptive heir to his title and estates. These reports had reached him through indirect channels, for Lady Macdonald, Lord Harold Staunton's aunt, was too indulgent toward her nephew to write any particulars very materially to his prejudice. Therefore the marquis resolved to visit London and ascertain for himself the truth of those rumours. There was another reason. Lady Macdonald had informed him that his niece, Lady Florina Staunton, was contracted to Lord Saxondale. Now, through the same channels which had conveyed to the Marquis of Eagledean the irregularities of Lord Harold Staunton, intelligence had reached him of a similarly prejudicial character in respect to Lord Saxondale.



Here again did he resolve to judge for himself. And last, but not least, he experienced an anxiety to make inquiries concerning the welfare of his children, — those children for whom he had made such ample provision.

“ He knew not indeed whether they were alive; he had communicated not with Lord Petersfield, nor with Sir John Marston. The solicitor who prepared the trust deed had long been dead, and many years had elapsed since the marquis held any communication with those particular bankers in whose hands the money was lodged. It must not be thought that he had ceased to reflect with tenderness upon those children. The truth is, he dared not take any step which should recall too vividly all the incidents of the past. Convinced that he had entrusted their destiny to honourable men, and that the provisions of the deed were so carefully arranged as to ensure their welfare, his mind had been easy upon those points. Yet when he resolved to return to England, the intent of making inquiries concerning his son and daughter naturally entered into his plans. He came to England about two months back, and if he did not instantaneously enter upon these inquiries, it was because it suited his purpose, for several reasons, to maintain a strict *incognito* and pass under the assumed name he had for so many years borne upon the Continent. With that assumed name he did not at first choose to call upon Lord Petersfield, and he therefore postponed that proceeding until he might think fit to resume his rank again. But I can say no more at present — My feelings are overpowering me — You know all! ”

With these words Mr. Gunthorpe extended his arms toward Elizabeth and Francis Paton, and they, throwing themselves upon their knees before him, looked up with tearful countenances and ineffable emotions into his face, adown which the tears were likewise falling thick and fast.

“ Yes, my dear children,” he said, in tremulous tones, “ I am your father, — I am the Marquis of Eagledean.”

## CHAPTER XVI

### DISCOURSE

HALF an hour elapsed, — half an hour, during which there was poured forth a tide of emotions which no language can depict, — a flood of feelings which no pen can describe. They had so much to say to each other, that father, that daughter, and that son, so many questions to ask, so many responses to give, and all interrupted by so many fresh embraces and tenderest caresses. But at the expiration of this interval, they recovered a degree of calmness and then the Marquis of Eagledean reminded Elizabeth and Frank that they had many subjects for serious deliberation.

“ Listen to me attentively, my dear children, for Adolphus may return, and we must not, at least for the present, suffer him to learn all that has been taking place. I must still be known for yet a little while as plain Mr. Gunthorpe, and ye must both exercise the most rigid command over your feelings, so as not to betray the degree of relationship in which you stand toward me. Yes, I must continue my *incognito* for the present, until I have seen Lady Everton. With her shall I consult, — yes, we shall meet and deliberate as friends, — whether Adolphus shall be left in ignorance of the affinity of your two selves unto him. Consider, my children, how difficult and how dangerous is this point. If he be told to regard you, Elizabeth, as a sister, and you, Frank, as a brother, it will be of course necessary to explain to him the history of his mother’s frailty. Perhaps—and it is most probable, indeed, it is most natural — that she will implore the secret to be maintained, so that she may not have to blush in the presence of her own son. I shall proceed into Wales alone in the first instance, and obtain an interview with her. It will even be better for Adolphus

not to accompany me. I will break to her the circumstance that he is alive — if she herself be indeed ignorant of it. In short, upon my interview with Lady Everton so much depends that my *incognito* must be preserved, and it must not be known that it is the Marquis of Eagledean who is thus visiting her in her retirement. Remember, therefore, my dear children, that you treat me for the present as plain Mr. Gunthorpe, as your friend, and not as your father, as your benefactor, working out an eccentric whim which has made him take a fancy to you both, and not as the parent who in due time will ensure your worldly welfare. Now, have you both strength of mind to master your feelings in the presence of others? ”

Elizabeth and Frank both gave the requisite assurances, and the marquis resumed his discourse.

“ The vile and atrocious treatment which you have both received at the hands of Lord Petersfield and Sir John Marston can be easily accounted for. There can be no doubt that, from the very first, those two men came to an understanding with each other and doubtless also with the full connivance and concurrence of the usurper Everton himself. Indeed, it is not difficult to conceive that Sir John Marston said to that villain Everton, ‘ Leave me and Petersfield to appropriate to ourselves the fortunes of these children; and you on your side play your own game to become possessed of the title and estates properly belonging to Adolphus.’ Then, when you came of age, Elizabeth, a husband bearing a noble name was found for you; and no doubt the document which you signed, and over which the notary spread his blotting-paper, was a general release to your guardians, and an acknowledgment of the receipt of your fortune. On the presentation of that document to the bankers, the money would be paid over to them. In respect to yourself, Frank, there can be no difficulty in reading the mystery. A tale of your death was invented, so that your fortune devolved to your sister, and by virtue of the same deed which she had previously signed, or perhaps by a forgery, your fortune likewise fell into the hands of the villains Petersfield and Marston. Indeed, there must have been forgeries committed, — forgeries of documents to prove your death; and it is but too evident that the school-master at Southampton was well bribed to enter into the plot.

“ That you, Elizabeth, should have been led to believe in your brother’s death, was likewise necessary to the carrying out of the villainous scheme, for it is clear that Sir John Marston has been all along afraid lest you should by some means or another obtain a clue to the fraud which had been practised toward yourself, and follow it up to detect that which had likewise been perpetrated toward your brother. That when you married the Marquis of Villebelle, Sir John Marston should have stipulated with you both for your immediate severance, was likewise a necessary precaution, for if you had lived together as husband and wife, you would have told Villebelle all the circumstances of your past history, and he would have maintained his right to receive from Sir John Marston a full explanation of the circumstances attending so mysterious a marriage. And that Sir John Marston should the other day have endeavoured to prevent the Marquis of Villebelle from contracting a second marriage, with the Honourable Miss Constance Farefield, is likewise easily explained. For if the bankers learned that you were alive, while the marquis contracted this second marriage, they would suspect there had been some foul play in respect to the first; they would demand explanations of Lord Petersfield and Sir John Marston, they might follow up the clue, and exposure would follow. No wonder, indeed, was it that Marston should have allowed you four hundred a year, considering the immensity of the fortune he had robbed you of, — considering also his anxiety to prevent you from instituting disagreeable inquiries. But let all that pass. Petersfield and Marston possess the secret of your mother’s shame, and they must not be driven through base revenge to drag all the circumstances of the past before the world.”

The marquis paused, and after a few moments’ reflection, he continued his discourse.

“ Perhaps you are surprised that I did not reveal myself to you yesterday, Elizabeth, after you unfolded the narrative of your past life, or that I did not tell you who I was ere I commenced my own narrative just now. But it was so much easier for me to develop all the incidents of the past in the form of a mere narrative than if I had at once thrown off the disguise and spoken of myself in the first person. Yes, it was less painful to tell the tale as if it were the biography of another, and not mine own. But there was a mo-

ment yesterday, Elizabeth, when I was about to breathe the one word which would have told you who I was. It was when you besought me so earnestly to speak that one word. And it would have been spoken had not you, Frank, together with Adolphus, returned to the cottage at the time. But now at last you know everything, and let me hope, my dear children, you do not feel that you ought to blush for the author of your being because he led your mother into frailty."

Neither Elizabeth nor Frank gave any verbal reply to this question, but a still more eloquent response was afforded by the manner in which they precipitated themselves into their father's arms, bestowing upon him the most endearing caresses.

"This is a happiness," he continued, "which, had any one predicted it to me but a few weeks back, or even only a few days, I should not have believed that it was possible. Not but that I anticipated a feeling of delight in meeting my children, if they were still alive and to be found, but I thought not that my own nature remained susceptible of such unalloyed and ineffable bliss. I feared that it was warped by past sorrows, changed by the afflictions of other years, rendered morbid and unhealthy by various eccentricities. I find that it is not so, and I love you, my dear children, oh, I love you, with all the gushing effusion which the most youthful father could possibly experience when straining his offspring in his arms."

There was another long pause, and when the feelings of the father, the daughter, and the son had subsided into calmness again, they began to converse relative to Adolphus.

"You have told me, Elizabeth," said the Marquis of Eagledean, "that in accumulating all possible proofs of that villain Everton's guilt, together with the identity of Adolphus as the son of the late General Lord Everton, you had it in view to bring the base usurper to a private and amicable settlement, so that a public scandal, in which her ladyship's name might by chance be painfully brought in, should be avoided. You have acted wisely and well. All your proceedings have been marked by the most delicate consideration, and characterized by the soundest judgment. It is now for me to take the work out of your hands. I will repair at once to Beech-tree Lodge, in the hope of finding

Mr. Everton there, — for Mr. Everton he assuredly is, and his title of lord is a monstrous usurpation. So soon as Adolphus returns in the carriage, I will repair without delay to the village of Hornsey.”

Half an hour after this conversation, — it being now about one o'clock in the day, and Adolphus having returned, — the Marquis of Eagledean proceeded to Beech-tree Lodge, and asked first of all for Theodore Barclay. This individual proved to be the footman to whom the inquiry was addressed, and the marquis hurriedly demanded whether Lord Everton was at the lodge. The response given by Barclay was that his master was exceedingly ill and confined to his chamber, that he would see no one, the physician having ordered that he should be kept as quiet as possible.

“ Nevertheless, he must see me,” said the marquis, slipping some pieces of gold into Theodore's hand. “ I come from Mrs. Chandos.”

“ Ah!” ejaculated Barclay. “ I understand. Fortunately Mr. Bellamy is not at home at this moment, and I can take you up to his lordship's room. What name shall I announce?”

“ Mr. Gunthorpe,” replied the nobleman. “ Be quick; I am desirous of seeing your master at once.”

Theodore accordingly led the way up the staircase, and conducted the Marquis of Eagledean to a handsomely furnished bedchamber on the second story. Gently opening the door, he said, “ My lord, a gentleman, Mr. Gunthorpe, desires most particularly to see you.”

“ I will see no one,” ejaculated a voice from within; but the Marquis of Eagledean entered the room, and Theodore Barclay, closing the door, retreated down-stairs.

Everton was seated in an armchair, near the bed from which he had only recently risen. His emaciated form was wrapped in a dressing-gown, he looked ghastly pale, the traces of harrowing care and fearful anxiety were plainly visible upon his features, and it was with a mingled angry petulance and affright that he exclaimed, on beholding the visitor, “ What means this intrusion? Who are you? What do you want? ”

“ Tranquillize yourself as well as you can,” said the marquis, deliberately taking a chair opposite the one in which Everton was seated, “ for we have business of importance to discuss.”

“ But who are you? ” again demanded the sick man, and he gazed with increasing apprehension upon this visitor, who appeared so determined to maintain his position in the chamber.

“ You have heard my name announced,” replied the marquis. “ Is it unfamiliar to you? ”

“ Gunthorpe? I do not know it. Who are you? Why don't you speak out plainly at once? You see that I am ill — that I cannot bear excitement — ”

“ The name of Gunthorpe is then unknown to you? ” said the marquis. “ Am I to conclude that neither Lord Petersfield nor Sir John Marston have acquainted you with the interview that took place between them and me the day before yesterday? ”

As Lord Eagledean mentioned those names, a still more ghastly expression gathered upon the countenance of the wretched invalid, mingled with a still more agonizing affright. He gazed wistfully and with feverish anxiety upon the marquis, as if to study the lineaments of his countenance, or read therein the exact purport of his visit; but it was evident enough that he did not recognize Lord Eagledean, so changed indeed was the personal appearance of this nobleman from what it was when he and Everton had last met, more than sixteen years back.

“ I will at once set your mind at rest,” said the marquis, “ so far as I am enabled to do so, and far more, perhaps, than you deserve. All your guilt is known — ”

“ My guilt? ” echoed the invalid, and his emaciated form quivered with a cold, convulsive spasm. “ But you spoke of Petersfield and Marston — ”

“ And I have likewise,” added Lord Eagledean, solemnly, “ to speak of your nephew Adolphus, the rightful heir to the estates and title which you have usurped.”

“ It is false — all false,” cried the old man, vehemently. “ He is a pretender, an impostor. Adolphus died and was buried — ”

“ Silence! ” interrupted the marquis, sternly; “ persist not in those foul falsehoods. But hear me. I come to offer you the means of settling all these matters peaceably, tranquilly, — I cannot use the word amicably, — but, I may say, with as little scandal and as little exposure as may be possible under the circumstances. Now, will you make

this reparation? Will you make this atonement? Or will you dare the vengeance of the law?"

"But who are you?" again inquired the miserable old man, looking aghast, a most abject picture of physical decay and moral ignominy.

"I am one possessing sufficient knowledge of the past to drag all your crimes to light, if you force me to that alternative. But I do not seek it; I have already given you this assurance. If with that palsied hand of yours," continued the marquis, solemnly, "you persist in clutching the coronet which you plucked from the brow of its rightful possessor, you will speedily exchange this well-furnished apartment for a felon's dungeon. Listen to me — do not interrupt me; those passionate ejaculations of yours will produce no effect, unless indeed it be an effect detrimental to yourself. You spoke ere now of the death of Adolphus, his burial; I tell you that it was a monstrous deceit, — a detestable imposture. For Adolphus is living, you know that he has escaped from this vile den of yours, and I must tell you that he has found friends."

"I understand it all," exclaimed Everton, regaining a portion of his lost effrontery. "That crazy young man — a rampant lunatic — has by some means or another got the idea into his head that he is the Adolphus of whom you speak. No doubt there are base and mercenary pettifoggers to be found ready and eager to take up his cause. Perhaps you yourself are the attorney who may have got it in hand? Come, sir, we begin to understand each other; name your price, — I don't want law, — I am too ill to be troubled with litigation —"

"And this illness of yours," interrupted the Marquis of Eagledean, indignantly, "has doubtless been brought on by the goading tortures of your evil conscience. No, sir, I am not an attorney, nor have I the selfish purposes of a detestable rapacity to serve. Besides, have you forgotten the allusion I have made to Lord Petersfield and Sir John Marston? And can you not understand that your iniquity in respect to your nephew Adolphus is not the only villainy of yours with which I am acquainted? Was it not by your consent and connivance that those two men — as base as yourself — appropriated the immense fortune —"

"But I was no party to that trust deed," ejaculated the



miserable invalid, again trembling all over from head to foot. "My name was not mentioned in it — I had nought to do with the transaction. If Petersfield and Marston have abused their trust, I am not responsible."

"No, you are not responsible legally, but you are morally," replied Lord Eagledean. "On that subject I do not, however, wish to dwell at present."

"But who are you? I suppose you are an agent or friend of some one in Italy —"

"Yes, the Marquis of Eagledean. I am his friend," responded the visitor, curtly and drily.

"The Marquis of Eagledean was a villain," exclaimed the invalid, — "the seducer of my sister; and I spared him — I spared her likewise. I kept their secret religiously, faithfully —"

"Yes, to serve your own purposes. Ah! Mr. Everton —"

"How dare you address me thus? I am Lord Everton, and you cannot disprove my rights. This fabrication in respect to a crack-brained pretender will not hold good for a moment. Come, sir, tell me who you are, and what you want?"

"Yes, I will tell you what I want in a few words," rejoined the marquis. "I demand a full confession of your iniquity toward your nephew, and the acknowledgment of his identity. But stop, do not interrupt me. Let me tell you at once that I have obtained proofs of which perhaps you little dream."

"Proofs?" ejaculated the invalid, endeavouring to assume a tone and look of defiance, but in reality convulsing and writhing in his chair with the tortures of an agonizing suspense.

"Yes, proofs! Upwards of sixteen years ago," continued the Marquis of Eagledean, speaking in a low and solemn voice, "the corpse of a pauper boy, who died in a workhouse, was disinterred from the grave, was removed to Everton Park, and on the same night, Adolphus was brought hither; from which moment he has been kept in a cruel captivity until his providential release a short time ago."

The invalid gave a low moan, and sank back in the chair like one annihilated. His eyes became glassy, as if glazing beneath the touch of death, while he stared in vacant dismay upon Lord Eagledean. This nobleman, fearing that the

wretched man was about to give up the ghost, sprang from his seat, and was rushing toward the bell to summon assistance, when Everton cried out, in a half-shrieking, half-imploring voice, "No, no! let no one come. I will do whatever you command, I am in your power, I am at your mercy!"

The Marquis of Eagledean resumed his seat and the invalid, experiencing a sense of faintness, pointed toward a bottle upon the table, murmuring, "I beseech you — give me some of that cordial."

This request was immediately complied with, and the invigorating, or we should rather say stimulating, effect of the liquor was quickly apparent on the part of the invalid. A slight flush, but of a hectic appearance, sprang up on his cheeks, as if painting the ghastliness of death, and his eyes shone with an unnatural lustre.

"I see that you know all," he said, in a low and gloomy voice, and yet he trembled with excitement. "What do you require of me? I have been betrayed, some villain has revealed the secrets of the past —"

"No matter how they came to my knowledge," interrupted the marquis; "it is for you to make speedy reparation and atonement. A written acknowledgment, signed by your own hand, to the effect that Adolphus is your nephew, the legitimate possessor of the title and estates of Everton, that the tale of his death was false —"

"But if I do all this," said the miserable man, "it will consign me to a dungeon, it will subject me to terrible penalties —"

"Which you richly deserve, but which shall be spared you. No, horrible and unnatural, perfidious and execrable, though your conduct has been, no vindictive feeling shall pursue you. You will sign the needful paper to put Adolphus in possession of his rights; but before any use shall be made of that document, you may fly to the Continent, there to linger out the rest of your existence. Some forms and ceremonies will have to be observed in the House of Lords to substantiate the claims of Adolphus, and it will therefore be impossible for the history of your guilt to be altogether saved from publicity. But its consequences you may escape by self-expatriation, and I know the members of the British aristocracy well enough," added the Marquis of Eagledean, with a scornful sneer, "to be assured that the

Committee of Privileges of the House of Lords will not suffer more of the details of your guilt to ooze out to the public knowledge than they can possibly help. They at least have the merit of shielding to the extent of their power the crimes of any one of their own order, lest the effects of the scandal should redound upon them all."

"But this paper — this document," said the invalid, quivering nervously, "who is to draw it up? When is it to be signed?"

"I will draw it up at once, and you shall sign it now," was the response of the marquis. "Rest assured I shall be found a competent witness, when the time comes, to present the papers before the Committee of Privileges. At all events, that is our affair, not yours. Where shall I find writing materials?"

The invalid pointed to a desk which stood upon a side-table. The marquis proceeded thither, opened the desk, sat down, and began to write. For about a quarter of an hour did he thus remain occupied, during which interval the thoughts of Mr. Everton were of such a harrowing, anguished description that they were almost a sufficient punishment for the tremendous iniquities which had stained his past career. When Lord Eagledean had finished drawing up the deed, which embodied a general confession of Everton's proceedings in respect to his nephew, he read it slowly and deliberately over to that person, then, handing him the pen, he bade him sign it.

"Is it absolutely necessary?" asked the invalid, gazing up with appealing earnestness into Lord Eagledean's countenance. "Can no mercy be shown me? May I not at least retain my rank until death makes its appearance? Consider, Mr. Gunthorpe, — or whoever you may be, for methinks you are more than what you seem, — consider, I beseech and implore you, I am not long for this world. I feel as if the hand of death were already upon me. At the outside I cannot live many months, perhaps not many weeks; my days are doubtless numbered, I have experienced a shock, caused by the deliverance of that young man — But, oh, reflect, I conjure you, may not some mercy be shown me? for I spared his life."

"Mr. Everton," interrupted the marquis, sternly, "to what a pitiable condition must you be reduced, to what

an abyss of moral degradation are you fallen, when you have to congratulate yourself that you had not the courage to become a murderer? Do you not see, sir, that the hand of Providence was in all this? You were villain enough to play the part of usurper, you would deprive your nephew of his just rights, you could for years retain him in a miserable captivity, treating him as a lunatic until you almost made him one, you could snatch him away from his mother, you could mercilessly separate the parent from her son, — all this were you villain enough to do, but you lacked the boldness to strike the blow effectually. Do not think for a moment, sir, that I believe it was through any merciful consideration on your part that you spared your nephew's life. No, I understand your character full well. With all your iniquity you were a coward, and it was Heaven's will that this cowardice on your part should become the means of saving you from a still darker crime than any you have perpetrated. Take no credit to yourself that you are not a murderer; you possessed the will, but you lacked the courage. And now, sir, without further entreaty on your part, without further hesitation, sign this paper."

The invalid, overawed, dismayed, and crushed by the withering language addressed to him by one who spoke with the authority of an avenger, and yet an avenger who was showing mercy, — the invalid, we say, took the pen in his trembling hand, and prepared to sign. But he laid it down, and requested that another glass of the cordial might be given to him. This desire was promptly fulfilled, and under the influence of the stimulant, he affixed his name to the foot of the document, in a firmer hand than could have been anticipated.

"Now, sir," observed Lord Eagledean, consigning the paper to his pocketbook, and taking up his hat, "I have little more to say. The promise I have given you shall be kept. No use shall be made of this document until I learn that you are safe upon the Continent. Nor am I so cruel and inhuman as to wish that you precipitate your departure in a manner that may endanger your life. Perhaps, now that you have made this atonement, — now that you are acquainted with all the worst that is to befall you, and that your mind must be relieved from the most torturing apprehensions as to the course which Adolphus might have

adopted in making good his claims, — you may recover some degree of mental tranquillity, which will assist you toward convalescence. Your departure need not be prejudicially hurried, but it must not be inordinately prolonged. And one word more. If, when Adolphus assumes possession of his ancestral estates, you yourself are reduced to poverty, a sufficient provision shall be made for the remainder of your life; and thus, sir, must you feel that much good is being returned for an immensity of evil, and that you are treated with that mercy which you never extended to others.”

With these words the Marquis of Eagledean took his departure, and descending the stairs, he was about to enter his carriage, when Theodore Barclay, approaching him, said, “ Mr. Gunthorpe, does my master know that I have given any information concerning him? ”

“ No, but he may possibly suspect it. You would do well to leave his service at once. Here is my card; you can call upon me a fortnight hence, when something shall be done for you.”

The footman expressed his thanks, and the Marquis of Eagledean was whirled away from Beech-tree Lodge toward Stamford Manor.

On reaching his house, he found Adolphus, Elizabeth, and Frank walking together in the front gardens. Immediately joining them, he related what had taken place between himself and Mr. Everton, for to the grade of a civilian had the usurper sunk down again, being divested of his noble rank. The marquis displayed the document which he had compelled that individual to sign, but to which he had not as yet appended his own attesting signature. He then represented to Adolphus his intention of departing on the ensuing morning for Wales, in order to obtain an interview with Lady Everton.

“ You must permit me, my dear friend,” he said to Adolphus, “ to manage the whole of this business after my own fashion. For several reasons, which I cannot now explain, it is better that you should not accompany me. But rest assured that the shortest possible delay shall be allowed to elapse ere you are permitted to fold your mother in your arms. Perhaps she may accompany me back to London, or perhaps I may send off a messenger to require your immediate presence in Wales; I know not as yet how all

this may be. But tell me, are you satisfied to leave it to my management?"

"Oh, my dear sir, my excellent friend," exclaimed Adolphus, pressing with effusion the hand of the marquis, "how could I be otherwise?"

In the evening the marquis gave instructions to the dependents of his household that during his absence they were to regard Miss Paton as their mistress, and obey her instructions in all things. Retiring to his library, he wrote a few letters, one of which was to William Deveril, to the effect that urgent business would take him out of town for a short time; but he promised that he should return in time for that day on which our young hero had been promised a visit from the mysterious woman whom he had saved from drowning in the waters of the Trent.

On the following morning, having taken an affectionate leave of Elizabeth, Frank, and Adolphus, the Marquis of Eagledean set out upon his journey into Radnorshire.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE MYSTERIOUS MISSIVE

IT was the forenoon of the day after the Marquis of Eagledean's departure from Stamford Manor, that Elizabeth and Frank, having accompanied Adolphus in a walk as far as Mrs. Leyden's cottage, left him there to pass an hour or two with Henrietta, and then continued their own ramble with the intention of calling for him on their way home.

Elizabeth leaned upon her brother's arm; she was elegantly dressed, he was handsomely apparelled, and it was a pleasing spectacle to behold that superb young woman and that beautiful youth thus linked together in the firmest bonds of fraternal affection. Elizabeth wore her raven hair in massive bands, which served as an ebon frame for her high and expansive forehead, while an exquisite French bonnet subdued the natural boldness of her features and gave to her looks a certain air of feminine delicacy. Frank — who, as the reader will remember, had been somewhat indisposed after he first left Lady Saxondale's service — was now perfectly restored to health; and though he had never much colour upon his cheeks, yet whatsoever bloom was wont to rest thereon had come back again, appearing like the delicate vermeil upon the downy surface of the ripening peach. A tight-fitting frock coat set off the lithe and slender symmetry of his form to the utmost advantage; while in respect to his sister, the dress that she wore, developed, although concealing, the noble proportions of her richly modelled shape. Thus altogether they were a couple — that brother and sister — whom it was impossible to gaze upon without a feeling of interest, and they felt proud of each other. For Frank saw that his sister was a superb woman; while she, being so much older than himself,

experienced an almost maternal satisfaction and pride in contemplating that beautiful youth who bore the endearing name of brother.

"How changed, my dear Frank," she said, as they rambled along together, "are the circumstances of our position. Does it not all appear like a dream?"

"There have been moments," answered Frank, "when I have hesitated to believe that it was all a reality. Yesterday morning — and this morning, too — when first awaking, I sat up in the bed, looking around the splendidly furnished chamber, and wondering whether I indeed saw it with my outward vision, or whether it was a delusion of the fancy. Yes, extraordinary things have taken place within the last few weeks. But the condition of Adolphus has experienced a change as remarkable as our own."

"And is he not happy now?" said Elizabeth; "how devotedly he appears to love that sweet and amiable girl Henrietta. But methought you sighed, Frank?" exclaimed his sister, and stopping suddenly short in the road where they were walking at the time, she gazed attentively upon him. Ah, my dear brother! the colour mantles upon your cheeks. You have a secret which has been kept back from me?"

"Forgive me, dearest Elizabeth, forgive me," said the youth, murmuringly, "it is true — it is true — and I have been wrong to keep that secret from you."

"I do not demand your confidence, Frank," observed Elizabeth, as she slowly walked on again leaning on her brother's arm, "but if you think fit to give it to me, I will bestow either counsel or sympathy in return."

"I know not," resumed Frank, with half-averted countenance and downcast looks, "whether it is really love which I experience, and yet methinks it must be — But it has been sensuously guilty, and —"

"But its object?" said Elizabeth, inquiringly, seeing that her brother stopped suddenly short.

"Juliana Farefield," was the response.

"Ah, Lady Saxondale's elder daughter. But if you really love her, Frank, you may aspire to her hand. There is no need for you to be disconsolate," continued his sister; "on the return of our father, you must tell him everything. And yet, my dear brother," she added, speaking more slowly and



gravely, "there is this consideration, that if Juliana Farefield beguiled you into becoming the object of a sensual phantasy, she is a being unworthy of a pure affection on your part, because she herself experiences it not toward you."

Francis Paton, recovering from his confusion, proceeded to acquaint his sister, candidly but delicately, with all that had taken place between himself and Juliana. Elizabeth listened in silence, and continued to reflect in silence also, after he had done speaking.

"You tell me that Miss Farefield manifested a deep interest in the tale of your earlier years," she at length said, "that she treated you with the kindest sympathy, that she expressed the conviction your birth was above the circumstances in which you were then placed. All this seems to argue in favour of a true and sincere love on her part. And yet, could she not have suggested a private marriage? Not being acquainted with her, and therefore being utterly unable to form a correct estimate of her true character and disposition, I know not what to say, or what to advise. She is exceedingly handsome, Frank, is she not?"

"Oh, she is superbly beautiful!" cried the youth, in enthusiastic tones, and again did the colour glow upon his cheeks.

"I know not what love is," said Elizabeth, "but I think that I can conjecture the symptoms and principles of the passion. Look into your own heart, Frank; does it cherish Juliana's image? Are you frequently, almost constantly thinking of her? Yes, yes, I know that you are. Those abstracted moods which I have so often observed since we were thrown together again have not been altogether fraught with pain and grief on my account. Doubtless you have sorrowed at being separated from Juliana. Your heart has yearned toward her."

"Yes, for I feel that I love her," replied Frank. "But do you think, dear Elizabeth, that there is any hope of the proud and haughty Lady Saxondale permitting her daughter to wed a youth who once wore a livery in her service?"

"The Marquis of Eagledean," responded Elizabeth, proudly, "will give you a fortune, Frank, that will be sufficient to overrule Lady Saxondale's scruples. Yes, if he cannot give you a noble name, he will at least give you wealth, and wealth in this country constitutes a social posi-

tion. Besides, Juliana is not more likely to be swayed by her mother's will than Constance herself was. But, ah! now that I reflect, from certain words which our father let drop when he was having a private conversation with me the day before yesterday on the eve of his departure, I gleaned that he entertains no pleasant feeling toward Lady Saxondale. He believes that his nephew Harold Staunton is her ladyship's paramour, and that at her instigation he has done some very bad deeds. However, we must wait till the return of the marquis ere we can decide upon any step to be taken by yourself in respect to Juliana. Do not be discouraged, dear Frank, by what I have just been saying in respect to Lady Saxondale. Although we have known our dear father but for a few days, we have nevertheless seen enough of him, and likewise experienced ample proofs, to convince us that he will in all things study the happiness of each of us. During the interval that he will remain absent, it is for you to look deeply into your heart, to assure yourself that this is a sincere and permanent affection which you entertain for Miss Farefield; and if you come to the conclusion that the felicity of your life is centred in her, I have no doubt our father will take such measures as shall crown your most fervid aspirations."

"Dearest sister, I thank you, oh, I thank you for these assurances!" exclaimed Frank. "How rejoiced I am that I have at length revealed my secret to you! Often and often have I been on the point of confessing it. It has wavered upon my lips, and then I have felt an indescribable confusion, a bashfulness, an apprehension —"

"I understand you, my dear brother," replied Miss Paton, with an affectionate look.

"But you, Elizabeth," quickly rejoined Frank, "is it really possible that you have never experienced even the most transient sentiment which might be deemed bordering upon love?"

"Never, Frank! Perhaps you cannot comprehend such a heart as mine, and yet, as I have before told you, it has hitherto escaped even the faintest impression of a tender character."

"I have often seen the Marquis of Villebelle," said Frank. "He is very handsome, possesses a highly intellectual countenance and fascinating manners. Do you think,

Elizabeth, that if you had lived with him, as your husband, if the circumstances of that marriage had not at the time inspired you with an aversion for an alliance that ought only to have been connected with a heart's best and purest affections, — do you not think, I say, that you would have learned to love that handsome and elegant nobleman? ”

“ I do not think so, Frank,” responded his sister, smiling. “ No. My belief is that when a woman first meets the man whom she is destined to love, she experiences some unknown and intuitive feeling which at once points him out as the being who is to exercise a paramount influence over the future years of her life. Such was not the case when I first set eyes upon the Marquis of Villebelle.”

“ No, because the circumstances were so peculiar,” exclaimed Frank. “ He appeared before you to the utmost disadvantage, and in a position but little calculated to command either respect or esteem. Had it been otherwise, — were you introduced to him in the ordinary manner, meeting him in society and gradually becoming the object of his attentions, — you know not, my dear sister, what would have been the result. And then, there was Count Christoval. You have told me that he was one of the handsomest men you ever beheld in all your life, and that he possessed every intellectual embellishment to aid the advantages of personal beauty — ”

“ You seem very anxious, my dear Frank,” interrupted Elizabeth, laughing gaily, “ that I should confess to having been at some time of my life smitten with the sentiment of love.”

“ Ah, my dear sister,” responded the youth, “ if you had been, it would now prove so sweet to me to converse with you thereon.”

“ The heart that loves, then,” said Elizabeth, now speaking seriously, “ longs to pour forth its thoughts and feelings to another heart beating with kindred emotions? Yes, I am convinced, Frank, from all you have been saying, that you do love Juliana Farefield. Your words convey all the evidences of that affection. But with regard to myself, I can only repeat what I have already told you, that if my soul be ever destined to receive the impression of love, I have not as yet encountered in the world the object who is to inspire the feeling. We were talking of Don Diego

Christoval. Remember the many months that I passed in his society, the delicate attentions that he showed me, the mingled vehemence and pathos with which he urged his suit, and yet I experienced not for him the slightest feeling of love. No, the count, although so handsome, so fascinating, so intellectual, and although surrounded by so many circumstances of a wildly romantic character but too well calculated to make an impression on a susceptible heart, yet he was not the individual destined to ensnare mine."

"Then will you never marry, Elizabeth?" asked Frank, bending his ingenuous looks upon his sister.

"Never," she at once responded, "unless I learn to love tenderly and well. But while thus discoursing, my dear brother," she said, stopping short, "we have been wandering to a greater distance than we at first intended. Ah! what is this?"

The ejaculation that Elizabeth Paton thus suddenly gave forth was produced by the circumstance of a beautiful carrier-pigeon suddenly descending from the higher regions of the air, and circling three or four times over the spot where she and her brother had halted. The intelligent bird actually appeared to be examining Elizabeth, to assure itself that she was the kind mistress whose hand had been wont to feed it and in whose bosom it had often nestled. Each circle that it made became narrower, and also lower, till, at the expiration of a few moments, it perched upon her shoulder.

"It is one of my own pigeons," she exclaimed,—"one of those that I sent back to Kate Marshall." Then, as she took the bird in her hands and began caressing it, she said, "It bears a letter. Ah! can I, without a breach of our father's wishes, read its contents? He evidently desired that I should break off all further correspondence with the Marshalls, and he was right too."

"Nevertheless," suggested Frank, "there will be no harm in seeing what the billet contains. It may be of importance, and there is no necessity for you to answer it, unless circumstances demand a reply."

"We will read it," said Elizabeth, and she accordingly proceeded to unfasten the little note from beneath the bird's wing.

The moment this was done, the feathered messenger

ascended into the air, as if knowing that its mission was accomplished, and was soon out of sight.

"Doubtless that intelligent little creature," said Elizabeth, still hesitating whether to open the letter, "has been to the cottage, and not finding me there, went forth in search of its well-known mistress. But as you have suggested, there will be no harm in seeing what Kate says."

She accordingly opened the billet, the contents of which were in Miss Marshall's handwriting. The ambiguous arrangement of the letters of the alphabet was not observed on this occasion, for Kate no doubt had fancied that, as her friend Lady Bess wrote so positively to declare that she thenceforth dispensed with the service of the carrier-pigeons, she had destroyed the cypher-book for the current year, which indicated the initial letter for each respective day. The note contained the following lines:

"DOVER, August 4, 1844.

"I am rejoiced, my dear friend, that circumstances have so changed with you as to render your future prospects of the brightest character. I know not whether this little missive will reach you, but I risk it. Indeed, I cannot refrain from the endeavour to convey a piece of information which nearly concerns you. A certain person arrived at Dover yesterday, and stayed a few hours at our house. His name being known to me, I spoke to him, and found that he has come to England in search of you. You can guess to whom I allude, as I dare not enter into particulars, for fear this note should fall into other hands than yours.

"Your affectionate friend,

"C. M."

"To whom can she allude?" ejaculated Frank, he having read this note simultaneously with his sister.

"I cannot conceive," observed the latter, thoughtfully. "Surely — But no; it is scarcely possible. At all events, the note requires not an answer, and I am glad of it; for though I never can forget the kindnesses I have received from the Marshalls, yet in obedience to our father's wishes, all correspondence must henceforth cease between them and me. Come, Frank, let us hasten back to Mrs. Leyden's house, for Adolphus will wonder what has become of us."

The brother and sister accordingly repaired thither, and found Adolphus walking with Henrietta in the immediate vicinage of the dwelling. After Elizabeth and Frank had rested a little while at the cottage, they continued their way, in company with Adolphus, toward Stamford Manor.

It was about seven o'clock in the evening, that Elizabeth Paton rambled forth alone in the grounds attached to the mansion, — Frank and Adolphus remaining indoors. She was pondering upon the conversation that had taken place in the morning between her brother and herself, and deliberating in her own mind upon the probable course that their father would recommend with respect to Frank's passion for Juliana Farefield. She was likewise reflecting, in its turn, upon the mysterious letter she had received from Kate Marshall. In this meditative mood she reached the palisade that skirted the grounds, and on the opposite side of which there was a road. All of a sudden an ejaculation of enthusiastic joy fell upon her ears, startling her from her reverie. She raised her eyes; with a single bound an individual sprang over the palisade, and alighted in her presence, his countenance beaming with rapture.

Yes, the suspicion which had at first struck Elizabeth Paton on reading Miss Marshall's letter was now suddenly confirmed: it was Don Diego Christoval who stood before her.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE SPANIARD

COUNT CHRISTOVAL was now thirty-five years of age, and though somewhat care-worn, yet in other respects his countenance was as prepossessing as on the first day when Elizabeth Paton met him amongst the Catalan hills. He wore his moustache, but his beard and whiskers were closely shaven, and their absence made him seem several years younger than he really was. His dark eyes shone perhaps with a more subdued and melancholy lustre than was their wont ere he had learned to love the English lady; but now, as he gazed upon her, they beamed with the light of rapturous joy. The brilliant teeth shone between the half-parting lips, and in this moment of his ineffable delight, the rich warm blood of his trans-Pyrenean nature was mantling through the transparent olive of his complexion. He was dressed as a private gentleman. His apparel was in the best possible taste, and the closely fitting frock coat displayed the fine symmetry of his tall form to its fullest advantage.

Elizabeth Paton quickly recovered from the startled surprise into which the sudden appearance of Don Diego had thrown her, and with the natural generosity of her heart she chose to lose sight of the forced prisonage she had endured at his hands, and to think only of the kindness and attention received from himself and his associates in the Catalan hills. But while she extended her hand, she nevertheless assumed a certain degree of reserve in gentle rebuke for the unceremonious manner in which he had burst into her presence. Yet it must be confessed that her mien was not exceedingly reproachful, because strong-minded though she were, she was nevertheless sufficiently a woman to feel that his conduct was most flattering to herself.

Addressing him in the French language, she said, "Don Diego, what brings you to England?"

"Your image," he replied, in the English tongue, at the same time carrying her hand to his lips; and kissing it rapturously ere she could withdraw it, he said, "That image which has never once been absent from my mind since you fled from the tower in the wilds of Catalonia."

Elizabeth gazed upon him with the utmost astonishment, for he was addressing her in the English language, — spoken, too, with the utmost accuracy and with but so little of a foreign accent that it was barely perceptible. She knew at the time when she was in Spain he was utterly unacquainted with her native tongue, and she naturally marvelled to perceive that he had acquired it to such perfection.

"I have learned the English language for your sake," he said, with a deep tenderness of voice and a corresponding look, but both alike mingled with a chivalrous respect, just as he was wont to deport himself toward her during her captivity in Catalonia. "And you asked me wherefore I came to England!" he continued. "Need you have put that question? But let me put a question to you, and I beseech and implore you to respond to it at once. Have you ever thought of me with kindness since you fled from Spain?"

"I have thought of you with friendship," replied Elizabeth Paton, seriously but frankly, "and within the last few days, when relating my adventures in Catalonia, I have spoken of you in similar terms."

"Friendship," murmured Count Christoval, mournfully, but with a sudden access of hopefulness, he exclaimed, "Yet may not friendship prove the germ of a more tender feeling? I know you are not married — I have every reason to believe that you do not love another — Indeed, I have been assured that you pride yourself on being unsusceptible of love. O Elizabeth! so bright and beautiful a creature as you, to possess a heart that is unsusceptible of love. No, no; it were impossible. It were an anomaly in human nature. And I am not without the hope that destiny has reserved for me the happiness of thawing that glacial soul of yours."

"Don Diego Christoval," answered Elizabeth, still speaking seriously, but with a certain degree of kindness in her



accents, as well as with the fullest candour in her looks, "it is my firm belief that I never can regard you with any other sentiment than that of friendship. And now, I appeal to the generosity of your nature, and to every feeling of delicacy which must harbour in such a heart as yours, that you will leave me at once. Yon mansion where I dwell is the house of a benefactor, and I dare not stand the chance of suffering in his estimation. He is absent, too, at this moment, but my brother is there, and a very dear friend also, there are numerous servants likewise, I am well known in this neighbourhood — In short, every instant that you remain here threatens to compromise me most seriously. What would be thought if I were seen walking here with a stranger?"

"A stranger to those whom you have named," rejoined the count, reproachfully, "but no stranger to you. Will you not accord me a few minutes, — only a few minutes, — while I tell you all that I have thought, all that I have done, and all that I have hoped, during the four years which have elapsed since last I saw you?"

"Well, then, a few minutes," answered Elizabeth, "and only a few minutes," she added, impressively, "because I must not be compromised."

"Oh, this coldness — this coldness," ejaculated the count, vehemently, "after I have told you that I came to England expressly to search after you! It is more than I can endure. Have pity upon me, Elizabeth, — I beseech you to have pity upon me! — for never in this world was a woman the object of a love so devoted as that which my heart cherishes for you. Love! It is a passion transcending far all that poets ever dreamed or romancists ever depicted in the form of love. It is a passion which has become so interwoven with the very principles of my existence that if it be doomed to prolonged disappointment, it will drive me to put an end to my sorrows and perish in the blood of a distracted suicide."

The count spoke with a wild impetuosity, mingled with a solemn earnestness, that for the moment overawed Elizabeth Paton, and even made her afraid. Not afraid for herself, for she was a woman who scarcely knew the name of fear, and there was no Catalonian tower at hand to which she might be conveyed, and where she might be retained captive. But she was afraid on account of that man who

loved her with an ardour so indubitable, a depth of passion so sincere, and a constancy so well proven, that she felt this menace of suicide to be no idle nor inconsiderate one.

"Count Christoval," she said, giving him her hand, speaking kindly, but with a half-reproachful look, "it is not generous of you to address me in these terms. Much as I may pity you, deeply as I may compassionate you, and 'even flattered and honoured as I may feel by this love of yours, yet a woman's heart is not to be won by passionate threats and impetuous outpourings."

"No, but her heart is to be won by a devoted love," exclaimed the count; "and all that I say, all that I do, all that I menace, must be taken as evidences of that devoted love on my part. Listen to me — I beseech you to listen. You have promised to accord me a few minutes, and I will endeavour to be calm."

"Proceed," said Elizabeth, withdrawing her hand, which he had pressed tenderly and fervidly between both his own. "Let us not linger near this road where passers-by might chance to observe us; we will walk through that shady avenue, where we shall be unperceived from the mansion. You see, Count Christoval, that I am compelled to take precautions, that I am fearful of being compromised, and I hope, therefore, you will have some consideration for me."

"Will you have any for me, Elizabeth?" he asked, gazing upon her countenance with a rapture subdued by mournful suspense. "But let me avail myself of the little leisure you are affording me. I will go back to that time when you fled from the tower in Catalonia. On discovering your flight, a frenzy seized upon my brain, for several hours I was like one demented. It appeared to me as if the world contained nought left that was worth living for, and yet, as Heaven is my witness, I took no measures to pursue you, or to bring you back. I had hoped that by my unwearied attentions I should have secured your affections. Your flight was a proof that my fondest anticipations had all been in vain. When I recovered some degree of calmness, it was only to fall into a profound melancholy, and there were moments, during the latter part of that day on which your flight was discovered, when I thought of putting a period to my existence. But the circumstances in which my faithful associates were placed recalled me to immediate activity.

I was reminded that the hour had come when I was to learn the result of the negotiations in respect to the captive son of the military commandant of Catalonia. Those terms were favourable: a ransom money was paid for his release, and immunity was granted to myself and my band for the ensuing three months. But such a change had come over me that I resolved to abandon immediately the life I was leading. I thought to myself that if I were to follow you to England, whither I felt assured you would repair, I might yet succeed in making an impression upon your heart. I thought that when you were free, and no longer regarded me in the light of a gaoler, you would forget whatsoever injustice you had sustained at my hands; while on the other hand, you would remember the many proofs of devoted love that I had given you.

“ I took leave of my comrades, I abandoned to them the greater share of the spoils which we had amassed, and they wept as they gave me the farewell embrace. I set out alone toward the Pyrenees, intending to follow you to England. But I had not journeyed many miles, when I was seized with a sudden illness, brought on by the anguish I had suffered on account of your flight. It struck me like a thunderbolt. I fell from my horse, and lay senseless in the depth of a ravine. There I might have perished, had it not been for the kindness of some peasants who chanced to pass that way. They took me to their cottage in the neighbouring hamlet, and there I lay, raving in the delirium of fever for many weeks. When I regained complete consciousness, I was so enfeebled, so attenuated, that I could not leave my couch, and thus some more weeks passed, while I lay stretched prostrate and powerless there. One morning a party of soldiers entered the village, and their commanding officer billeted them upon the inhabitants. This officer was the captain-general's son, whom I had taken prisoner, and whom you saw at the tower. On going his rounds to see that his men were properly cared for, he came to the cottage where I lay. I was recognized. The three months of safety guaranteed by his father had more than elapsed, and I was accordingly arrested as a Carlist traitor and as a guerilla bandit. But the young man possessed certain generous feelings, and he did not send me out to be shot like a dog, as he might have done, and as most other of the Christina officers would have done in his

place. He forwarded me as a prisoner to Barcelona, at the same time despatching a letter to his father, the captain-general, beseeching that my life might be spared. This entreaty was not without its effect; but I was sent along with several other Carlist captives to the prison of Cadiz, there to remain until a ship should be in readiness to bear us as felon exiles to the Philippine Islands.

“ But it happened that the Governor of Cadiz was a relation of mine; he took compassion on me, and though I myself would ask no favour from the government of Queen Christina’s regency, he adopted measures secretly to procure a mitigation of my sentence. He succeeded, and I was ordered to be retained a prisoner at Cadiz. The same favour was shown to other officers of the Carlist army, who were my fellow captives. We were treated with much indulgence, and being allowed books, I obtained the means of acquiring the English language. Amongst my fellow prisoners was an English officer who had served in the Carlist army, and after awhile he became my tutor in the study of your native tongue. For, oh, I was not without the hope of sooner or later recovering my liberty, and I thought, — Heaven grant that the idea was not vain! — I thought, Elizabeth, that if I could address to you the language of love in those tones and words most familiar to your ear, an impression would be more easily made upon your heart. Am I doomed to be mistaken? ”

“ Proceed with your narrative, Don Diego,” said Elizabeth, in a tone which was slightly tremulous. “ Remember that the minutes are speeding by.”

“ Ah, cruel to remind me that you have limited our present interview to so short a space! ” exclaimed Count Christoval. “ I who for years have sustained life by dwelling upon your image. But I will continue. Three years elapsed, and I continued a prisoner at Cadiz. My assiduities in acquiring the English language were unremitting; I had an able tutor, and you may judge whether I made the most of my time, and whether I profited by his lessons. In the summer of 1843 all Spain was convulsed by the civil war raised by Queen Christina’s adherents against the Regent Espartero, and in a battle which took place, an uncle of mine — a devoted adherent of Christina — was slain. He died, leaving behind him immense wealth, to which I should have been



CADIZ

*Photogravure from original by Finden*







the legitimate heir, were it not that all I possessed devolved to the Crown, as I was a condemned traitor and an outlaw. Then was it that the kind feeling of the Governor of Cadiz again made itself apparent; and when Spain once more became comparatively tranquillized, he exerted all possible interest on my behalf. But matters of this kind drag themselves slowly along in my native country, and it was only a few weeks back that one morning my generous and well-meaning relative brought me the announcement that I had received a full pardon, that my title of count was restored to me, and that I was allowed to take possession of the large fortune whereof I have spoken. I myself would have asked no favour of those in power, but I was not insane enough to reject the boons which had thus been secretly procured for me. Besides, during my long imprisonment at Cadiz, I had learned sufficient of the true character of Don Carlos. I had heard so much from my fellow captives respecting his bigotry, his selfishness, and his narrow-mindedness, that I came to loathe the cause which I had formerly served. But while having been brought to this abhorrence of Carlism, I was not changed into an admirer of the queen's monarchy. My studies had converted me into a Republican, and on the day that I issued from the prison at Cadiz, I vowed that never again would I draw my sword on behalf of royalty, but only to aid in emancipating the Spanish people from the thralldom of tyrants, should the opportunity for such redemption ever present itself.

“Business affairs, connected with my newly inherited fortune, compelled me to visit Madrid; but no sooner were those matters settled, when I set out on my journey to England. I travelled alone, without ceremony, without attendants; my purpose was to proceed as rapidly as possible, avoiding encumbrances of all kinds. A post-chaise bore me to the Pyrenees. Oh, with what mingled feelings of hope and fear did I enter upon this journey. The mountainous boundary being crossed, I hurried on through France. The nearer I approached to England, the more torturing became my suspense. Sometimes I was buoyed up with enthusiastic hopes; at others I was a prey to the most torturing apprehensions. But all these had I likewise experienced during my captivity at Cadiz. Now, however, as I approached

England the dark side of my thoughts grew darker. You might be no more, you might have gone to some far distant clime, without leaving a trace to guide me in the search; or even if you were in your own native land, it might still be impossible to discover you.

“I reached Dover, and accident led me to take up my temporary quarters at a hotel where you were known. The moment my name was perceived upon the card fastened to my trunk, I became the object of interest with the persons of that establishment. Miss Marshall sought an opportunity of dropping a hint that she knew me, — at least by name. Some conversation took place, and you may conceive how great was the tide of enthusiastic joy which was poured into my soul, when I learned many particulars concerning you. Yes, I learned that you were alive and well, that you were in reality unmarried, that your heart remained unsusceptible of that passion which was consuming me, and that you had very recently experienced a change in your circumstances of a fortunate description. Miss Marshall spoke of you in the kindest and most friendly terms. She spoke of you, indeed, with the tender interest of a sister, and I firmly believe, Elizabeth, — yes, I am convinced of it, — she looked not unfavourably upon me when I confessed to her the object of my visit to England, — that I came as a suitor for your hand. That she deemed me thus worthy of espousing her dearest friend — for such you are in her estimation — her conduct toward me showed. She gave me certain information how to discover your residence on my arrival in London, or at least she told me as much as she herself knew at the time upon the subject. I have been to the house which you have recently left, — a picturesque little dwelling not far from hence. There I found a female who had been your servant, and she directed me hither. Now, Elizabeth, you know all. My narrative is ended, and my fate is in your hands. You have a word to speak, — a word which will either fill me with happiness, or condemn me to despair. I pray you that it may not be spoken inconsiderately or rashly. I come to lay my title and my fortune at your feet. I can give you rank and riches, but what is ten thousand times more valuable, I can give you a heart which never loved before it first became impressed with your image, and can never love another. Now, Elizabeth, solemnly do

I conjure you to reflect that the life of a fellow creature is in your hands."

"My lord," answered the lady, in a low, soft voice, — and in a voice that was tremulous, too, — "if I were to tell you that I am insensible to all these proofs of so much love on your part, I should be something less or something more than woman. I pretend to be neither, and certainly I am not without a feeling of gratitude for this attachment which you have maintained toward me. But would you have me wed where my heart is not won? Count Christoval, I again repeat that this heart of mine cherishes a friendship for you, but knows not the feeling of love, or at least not now."

"What is your decision, Elizabeth?" he asked. "You have not pronounced it. Assuredly you have given me no hope, but you have not consigned me to despair. Perhaps," he added, with a look of mingled bitterness and apprehension, "you regard me as a bandit, and you shrink at the idea of joining your hand to mine?"

"No, no," exclaimed Miss Paton, a convulsing tremor passing vividly through her entire form, for she felt visibly and keenly at the moment that upon this ground they were at least on an equal footing. "You wrong me — or, rather, you do not understand me — no, you cannot. There, take my hand in friendship. It is a proof that I do not shrink from you, that I have no right to do so, but it is not given in love, because I will neither deceive myself nor you by simulating a sentiment which I do not truly and faithfully experience."

There was something wild and full of impetuous emotions in her voice and manner,—something strange and impassioned in her whole aspect, as she thus proffered her hand to the Spanish nobleman. He pressed it to his lips; again and again he covered it with kisses, and it was not withdrawn, because Elizabeth had fallen into a mood of deep abstraction, and knew not rightly that this fair hand of hers was so completely abandoned to him. But suddenly feeling the fervid warmth of those kisses, she withdrew it with an abruptness that both startled and hurt Count Christoval. Yes, his feelings were hurt, his heart was wounded, and he gazed upon her in mingled surprise and reproachfulness. He gazed thus in surprise, because those vehement emotions

which she had displayed, and that sudden singularity of manner, were uppermost in his mind, and he saw that there was something which had thus profoundly agitated her, but which he could not fathom.

"You must leave me now," she said, recovering her wonted composure, or at least a sufficient command over her feelings to appear outwardly composed. "Our interview has already been too long. We must meet again, — once again, — but only to part for ever," she added, tremulously. "I will then endeavour to reason with you against this wild and insensate passion which you have cherished for me —"

"No, no, speak not thus, Elizabeth!" ejaculated Don Christoval. "You have promised me another interview, and in that promise there is hope. I will not insist upon your answer now, I will leave you— Yes, I will leave you, in the joyous conviction that I have made some little impression upon your heart."

"My lord, go not away with that idea," said Elizabeth, more hurriedly than earnestly, "because — because —"

"Address me not with that cold formality of my lord," he exclaimed. "To you I would be Diego — only Diego, and that I shall be so, I now entertain the enthusiastic hope. Oh, it was impossible that such a love as mine could be doomed to disappointment and despair! We will part now, Elizabeth. Tell me when and where we are to meet again. And let it be soon, — I conjure you to let it be soon! — for I shall count the hours and the minutes that must elapse until we meet."

"Give me your address, and I will write to you," she replied, after a few moments' consideration, and still there was a tremulousness in her fluid voice.

Count Christoval named a hotel at the west end of the town, and repeated his fervidly expressed prayer that the interval ere they met again should not be a long one.

"I will write to you," she said, "as soon as — as soon as —" and still she hesitated, "as soon as I have reflected on all you have told me, Diego — my lord, I mean."

"Then farewell for the present," he exclaimed, and seizing her hand, he once more carried it to his lips.

She did not withdraw it. How could she remain altogether insensible to the manifold proofs of love which his

narrative had afforded, and his conduct during this interview corroborated? No, and thus she suffered him once more to retain possession of that hand for nearly a minute.

“Farewell, dearest Elizabeth, farewell for the present,” he repeated, and then hurrying away was soon out of sight.

## CHAPTER XIX

### ELIZABETH'S REFLECTIONS

It was seven o'clock in the morning, and Elizabeth Paton was half-reclining in a large armchair, in her elegantly furnished chamber at Stamford Manor. She had not as yet commenced her toilet. The luxuriant masses of her long dark hair hung negligently down upon her bare shoulders, — those shoulders which were of such polished whiteness, and so symmetrically modelled. She was absorbed in the deepest thought. A book, which she had taken from the table near, was held unregarded in the fair hand on which Count Christoval's lips had been so fervidly pressed on the preceding evening. Her whole attitude, her look, and the complete abandonment of her form to the influence of that reverie showed a profound and serious communing with her own heart.

Elizabeth Paton was at that moment a splendid model for the study of a painter or a sculptor. That form, if transferred to the canvas in its semi-nudity and with its superb contours, would have seemed to breathe with a real life, notwithstanding the profound pensiveness which the entire figure denoted. If copied in marble, it would have appeared to glow with vital warmth, notwithstanding that the statue would be as motionless as its living original at that moment. Ah! and the poet, too, might have imbibed inspirations from the contemplation of that superb creature, in the bloom of her womanhood, but every lineament of whose countenance and every contour of whose shape retained the virginal freshness of youth. There was a softness now in the eyes that had lately been wont to look penetratingly, almost with a bold hardihood; there was a softness, too, in the expression of that countenance which

had previously borrowed somewhat of a masculine aspect from the daring pursuits in which its possessor had engaged. But even had she worn her male apparel at this moment, it were without effect; it would have been lost sight of in that melting softness of the looks, — in that deep pensiveness which the whole form betrayed. Yes, her face, inclined downward, and with the eyes fixed upon vacancy, that attitude of complete self-abandonment, her mien and bearing, — all were purely feminine now. Her lips were slightly apart; the polished ivory teeth were visible between their coral lines; and that mouth in its ripe redness, with a dewy moisture upon it, appeared not coarse, but borrowed a delicacy from the general expression of the countenance.

Could she regard with indifference the deep and impassioned idolatry of that handsome Spaniard of whom she was now thinking? Could she fail to be moved by the earnest entreaties and the tender prayers which appeared to be still murmuring in her ears, in a voice naturally melodious, but rendered doubly so when breathing the language of love? And as she reviewed her past insensibility to that passion, and in this retrospection associated the image of Count Christoval with her thoughts, could she not arrive at the comprehension of a bygone apathy and a present change? When she was his prisoner, although experiencing toward him a grateful sense of certain kindnesses, there was nevertheless the true spirit of a woman to shield her against the influence of love, — that spirit which, smarting under a sense of wrong, blended with her natural pride, and made her feel that it was not as a prisoner she was to be wooed and won. So much for the indifference of the past. But what of the present? In the natural generosity of her soul she had put from her thoughts all sense of bygone wrong, when she found Don Diego standing in her presence on the preceding evening. By so doing, she had removed, of her own accord, — and yet at the time unconsciously, — the main barrier which had rendered her heart inaccessible to the influence of his adoring affection.

Thus they had met in England on far different terms and under very different circumstances from those in which they stood when so many months together in Spain. Had those months been prolonged to years, and had those circumstances continued the same, — she a captive, and he the gaoler, —

her heart never would have become accessible to the slightest impression which Christoval's assiduities sought to make upon it. But now that they had met on other terms, — she in freedom, he no longer appearing in the invidious light of a captor; she independent to become the arbitress of his fate, he confessing that this destiny of his was in her hands, — that impression had been made in an hour which whole months under other circumstances had failed to accomplish. The beauteous bird, imprisoned in a cage, may often be vainly wooed and coaxed and encouraged to sing, and thus many weeks and months, and long, long periods pass in the utter silence of its melody; but when freed from its captivity, it will in a moment pour forth the blithe carol of its gushing music, nor in anger for the past refuse to warble it in the ears of him who had been its gaoler. Like the bird of our metaphor is often the heart of woman.

And so it was with Elizabeth Paton. On the preceding evening she had persevered in the assurance that she experienced toward Count Christoval nought but friendship, and could feel no love, and she truly thought so when she thus spoke. But each time the assurance was repeated, it was in a less firm voice, and with a gradually growing tremulousness of the accents. The hand, too, which she abandoned to him more than once, was snatched away because she recoiled from the bare idea of manifesting an undue weakness, and yet the fervour of the kisses imprinted thereon had not failed to touch an electric chord vibrating to the centre of her heart. Moreover, the strong mind of Elizabeth Paton had been destined to enter upon a phase of wild romance; it was not merely entering upon that phase now, — it was in the midst of it. Had not Christoval reminded her that he had been a bandit? And did not his words suddenly excite the painful — ay, the poignant — reminiscence that she had pursued a similar career? What therefore was it now that was engaging her thoughts? What was the strange and fanciful phase of weirdlike romance through which her mind was passing? The similarity between that episode in his life and that episode in her life appeared to indicate that they were destined for each other, inasmuch as this parity of conditions had seemed to exist for the purpose of abrogating the possibility of reproach from one to the other.



Pursuing the train of her reflections, Elizabeth Paton thought to herself that if from the first moment she met Count Christoval in Spain, it was written in the book of destiny that she should become his wife, certain circumstances were requisite to work out that decree. Amongst those circumstances was the imperious necessity which had driven her to adopt in England a bandit career, similar to that which he had pursued in Spain. By these means was it brought about that they stood upon the same level. He had been a bandit, and yet had preserved unimpaired many of the finest, the most chivalrous, and the most magnanimous, attributes of man; she also had been a bandit, and had preserved the most estimable jewel with which woman is endowed. All these considerations appeared to assimilate their conditions to an extraordinary degree, — to fit them for each other, to establish something like a peculiar aptitude in their union; in short, to point him out as the only man to whom she could dare reveal the secret of her career and then accompany him to the altar, and to point her out to him as the only woman whom he might take as a wife without the fear of always blushing as he met her regards.

From all that we have been saying, the reader may perceive that Elizabeth Paton was rapidly succumbing beneath the influence of that wild worship and ineffable idolatry of which she was the object. She was yielding to that love so impetuous yet so tender, so fervid and yet so delicate, which the Spaniard experienced for her. No wonder that there was this softness in her looks; no wonder that all her traits should once more become unexceptionably feminine. The influence of love was melting whatsoever of masculine hardihood or artificial boldness wherewith her former pursuits and habits had temporarily endowed her. She was becoming a woman — all a woman — once again.

But had she endeavoured to escape from such thoughts as these, that on leaving her couch she had taken up a book and thrown herself in that armchair to read it while waiting the entrance of her maid? Yes, she had attempted to divert her mind from dwelling on these new ideas which were rising up within her, stealing into her brain, and gradually diffusing their influence throughout her entire being. On retiring to rest after her interview with Don Diego Christoval, she had been unable to sleep, — at least for some hours; she

had remained awake, pondering on all that had passed, endeavouring to persuade herself that her heart was not touched, that she was still inaccessible to love. When sleep had at length visited her eyes, the image of the handsome Spaniard appeared to her in her dreams, and these were of a roseate hue. When she awoke again, the bright sun of a cloudless August morning was shining in at the window. She had risen from the couch to avoid the influence of the thoughts of the overnight, and which had been continued in her dreams; she had thrown herself into that armchair, she had taken the book, she had endeavoured to fix her attention upon its pages, but all in vain. Her eyes — those superb dark eyes — were soon gazing upon vacancy; all the powers of her vision were concentrating themselves inward, to dwell with a more earnest look upon the image of Count Christoval; her right arm drooped gradually and languidly, and though her hand still retained the volume, yet it was but mechanically, herself being unconscious that she still held it. And then had ensued that long train of reflections which we have described.

Yes; the reverie was a long one, and at its conclusion, Elizabeth had reached the conviction that Diego and herself were destined for each other, and that she must learn to love him as he already loved her. Ah! when once the meditations of a woman have reached such a point as this, it ceases to be an endeavour to love: it becomes a facility, a necessity, an easy and natural gliding into the experience of the fulness of the heart's passion.

Elizabeth Paton awoke from her reverie. She was startled up by a new thought which had suddenly flashed in unto her mind. Was it that she dreaded to reveal to Count Christoval the one passage in her own life's history which assimilated her condition unto this? No, for this she would reveal to him unreservedly and rankly, — ay, and even if necessary, with an eagerness which should prove to him that he need never blush in her presence when retrospectively over the incidents of his own career. What then was it which startled her thus? It was the recollection that she had been married to Villebelle. True, she had surrendered up the documents which she had held in proof of this marriage, but was there not the record thereof in the register at the British embassy at Paris? True likewise, that the Marquis of Villebelle had

married another; but was it not this latter marriage which was void? And was not the former one valid according to the laws of man? And then, too, her father, the Marquis of Eagledean, would he for a moment consent that she should contract another marriage, even though he might approve of the Spanish nobleman as a suitor and forget the worst portion of his antecedents? These reflections were gloomy enough. But suddenly the light of hope flashed in upon them. Had not her father enjoined that she should resume her maiden name of Elizabeth Paton? And in issuing this command was it not virtually and effectually ignoring that former marriage? Was it not blotting out as much as possible the memory of that mock ceremony? Yes, it must be conjectured — it must likewise be hoped — that such was the idea which the Marquis of Eagledean had entertained when bidding his newly found daughter resume her maiden name.

Did Elizabeth upon this occasion resolve to fulfil her promise speedily, and write to Count Christoval? No, she determined to wait a few days, — to examine still more minutely and deliberately into the condition of her heart. But this was not so easy as she at first fancied. She composed her looks in such a manner that when Alice, her maid, entered the chamber to assist at the morning toilet, she saw not that there was anything peculiar on the part of her mistress; and throughout that day, too, did Elizabeth Paton so bear herself that neither her brother nor Adolphus observed aught unusual or different in her demeanour. The next day it was the same. But all this while there was a rapidly increasing love springing up in the soul of Elizabeth Paton. The spirit had gone forth over the hidden waters of her heart. They had sparkled and bubbled up quickly, — the springs of the fountain were opened, — and each fresh thought that they engendered gave a new impulse to their flow. Had she been ten years younger, she would have taken as many days — perhaps as many weeks — to comprehend what love was, as now it required hours to endow her with its fullest experience. And thus, during these two days, she felt a growing inclination to accord the handsome Spaniard the promised interview. The third day passed, and the struggle to restrain herself from penning the lines which should bring that interval about was maintained with

a greater difficulty. On the fourth morning she asked herself wherefore she should delay it any longer? And what reason there was why she should not come to a speedy explanation concerning herself with Don Diego, in order that she might be in a position to deliberate for the future? And now arose in her mind the transient fear that Christoval might recoil from her when he learned that episode in her life which had struck her as so peculiarly assimilating their positions. But no; this apprehension was evanescent indeed, for she knew that the count's love was potent beyond the exercise of any volition on his part, amounting to an idolatry over the romantic infatuation of which he held not the slightest control.

On this fourth morning, then, she penned a brief note to Don Diego Christoval, to the effect that she would meet him at seven o'clock in the evening at a particular spot, which she described, and which he could not fail to comprehend, as he must have passed that way both coming and returning on the evening of their first interview. Throughout that day Elizabeth preserved the same external calmness as hitherto. She had no fear of being prevented from keeping the appointment by any proposal on the part of Frank or Adolphus to accompany her on an evening walk. For we must here observe that both she and Frank were giving Adolphus lessons on such branches of education as he had experienced no opportunity of pursuing since he was twelve years old, on account of his long captivity from that date of his life, at Beech-tree Lodge. It was immediately after breakfast that Elizabeth took her turn to instruct him, and in the evening, after dinner, Frank became the friendly tutor. Thus was it that Elizabeth felt assured of being enabled to go forth alone and meet Don Diego Christoval. But did she not reflect that perhaps she was acting in a way of which her father would disapprove? This idea had not escaped her consideration, but she had resolved that the interview about to take place should be the last until the return of the Marquis of Eagledean. Indeed, she sought this interview for the purpose of assuring herself that Christoval would still continue in the same mind toward her after he had learned the one evil episode in her life. It was necessary she should arrive at a certainty on this subject before she made any communication to the marquis in respect to the

appearance of the Spaniard in the neighbourhood, and her own altered feelings toward him.

The spot which she had appointed for the interview was about half a mile from the mansion, and in a somewhat secluded lane. Thither she proceeded at the hour specified; and now her beating heart, her throbbing temples, and the flushing which she felt upon her cheeks afforded additional evidences to those she had previously acquired that her feelings had indeed undergone an immense change in respect to Count Christoval.

The moment she appeared in the lane, she beheld him hastening, almost flying, toward her. He approached with anxious looks of suspense, seeking to read upon her countenance the fiat of his destiny. Oh, love has a wondrous prescience, — a marvellous power of penetration. An electric spark seems to fly from heart to heart, revealing in a moment as much as it would take minutes or hours for words to make known. Between two hearts that love, and though communicating thus by that mutual and mystic intuition, there is as rapid an exchange of thought as between the two extremities of the electric telegraph, thus outstripping by an almost inexplicable agency all other means of reciprocal correspondence.

“Heaven be thanked — I am happy, I am happy!” ejaculated the impassioned Christoval, the moment he was near enough to catch in warm transfusion the first glance of Elizabeth's eyes; and with all the fervid rapture of his enthusiastic nature, he seized her in his arms, he strained her to his wildly throbbing breast.

Nor did she immediately disengage herself from that embrace. She allowed her form to remain enfolded by those arms thus fervidly flung around her; she received upon her lips the impassioned caresses of love; she caught the electric fire, and she gave those kisses back again. But this scene of tenderness — profound, glowing, ineffably delicious — lasted but a few moments, and then, gently withdrawing herself from the embrace of the enraptured Spaniard, Elizabeth said, in earnest tones, “Yes, I love thee — I love thee!”

Don Diego Christoval gave no immediate reply, — no words escaped his lips. The power of utterance was suspended, but his looks far more eloquently testified to the fervid, rapturous joy that filled his heart. Never had he

experienced such emotions. He seemed to be in the midst of paradise, but overcome by the intoxicating influence of its fragrance and its beauties. His brain swam around; the delirium was wild and whirling, but delicious beyond all power of description. Elizabeth comprehended the ecstasy which her adorer's heart experienced, and it was an augmentation of her own happiness to feel that she had been the source of such ineffable delight.

"Is it possible — is it indeed possible?" said the Spaniard, his feelings at length breaking the seal which an overpowering bliss had placed upon his lips. "Is it a reality? Or is it a dream? Oh, it is a joyous reality, it is an ecstatic truth, and at this moment the world contains not a being happier than I. Captivity is now recompensed: anxiety, care, suspense, and suffering, — all are amply rewarded. Dearest, dearest Elizabeth, it is the devotion of all the rest of my life that you have this day ensured unto yourself."

"My dear Diego," she said, "tranquillize your emotions, let us speak deliberately, for I have much to tell you. Give me your arm, and we will walk here awhile together. I am about to deal frankly and candidly with you; I am about to unfold some circumstances of my life upon which I can only look back with sorrow and regret. But at once understand me —"

"I do already understand you, dearest Elizabeth," he interjected, "for your friend Miss Marshall spoke enthusiastically of the stainless purity of your character as a woman."

"And did she tell you no more?" asked Elizabeth, in a tremulous voice.

"She told me that although you had for some years passed by the name of Mrs. Chandos, yet you might confidently and truly proclaim yourself to be unmarried. Ah! your friend, Miss Marshall, took compassion on my suspense, she sympathized with me in my anxiety to learn all those particulars concerning you, so deeply, deeply interesting to myself."

"But there is now a revelation," interrupted Elizabeth, "which it behoves me to make without delay. Diego," she continued, looking him full in the face, and yet with a deep blush upon her cheeks and the glitter of uneasiness in her eyes, "what would you think of me if I were to confess that what you have been in Catalonia, have I been in England?"

"Oh, no more of this, my worshipped and adored Eliz-

beth!" ejaculated the count, in fervid accents. "Had I even found you a lost woman — the most depraved of your sex, had I discovered you plunged deep down into the slough of shame and self-abandonment, had I been compelled to seek the vilest den of pollution itself in order to drag you thence, I should not have continued the less your devoted lover, your constant worshipper. But, as a woman, you are all that a lover can admire or a husband hope to find, and whatsoever misdeeds of another character you may have been driven or led to commit weigh as nought with me. You love me, Elizabeth, you have given me your heart, you will become my wife, and my happiness is incapable of diminution."

"Thanks, a thousand thanks, dearest Diego," murmured Elizabeth, "for this assurance," and throwing her arms about his neck, she embraced him tenderly of her own accord.

They walked together for half an hour, during which Elizabeth represented to the count that she was under such immense obligations to her benefactor Mr. Gunthorpe that she dared take no further step in respect to her love for Christoval until that gentleman returned from Wales. She thought it better at present not to reveal the secret of Mr. Gunthorpe's high rank, and of the close affinity which subsisted between him and her, for the marquis had enjoined the strictest secrecy on that subject, and his daughter would not violate it, even to that man from whom, if she were the complete mistress of her actions, she would have withheld not a single incident or thought.

"Mr. Gunthorpe's absence," she proceeded to observe, "will not be very long, because I know that he has a particular appointment to keep in London with a young friend of his, a certain Mr. Deveril, for the 20th or 21st of this month. But if, by any accident, his absence should be prolonged even until then, I will write to him, I will tell him everything, — how you have sought me in England, how my heart has been so suddenly filled with a devoted love toward you, and I will beseech him to give his permission that you may visit at the mansion. But in the interval we must see each other no more."

"No more? And for many days," said Count Christoval, in melancholy accents. "Do not be thus cruel, my beloved one, after having infused so much happiness into my heart."

"It must be as I have said, Diego," she replied, earnestly and entreatingly. "You would not injure me with my benefactor, you would not encourage me to disobedience? No, it is an additional proof of your love which I now demand. Rest assured that the strength of mine will not be impaired by this temporary separation. Will you not agree to my proposal?" and as she thus spoke, Elizabeth pressed his hand, gazing at the same time beseechingly and tenderly upon him.

"I will do all that you require," he answered, giving back that look of fondness. "But our separation must not last for many days; it would become insupportable for me. You promise, dear Elizabeth, that I shall not be doomed to a long absence from you?"

"Judge my feelings by your own," she replied. "And now, dearest Diego, we must separate."

"Farewell, my own well-beloved," he exclaimed, once more folding her in his arms; "farewell, farewell, and remember that I shall endure with a cruel impatience the interval that is to elapse ere we meet again."

They separated, and Elizabeth Paton retraced her way slowly to the mansion, feeling the warmth of her lover's kisses still upon her lips and cheeks, and the pressure of his arm around her waist. Her heart, too, was filled with indescribable emotions of happiness and joy, and she murmured to herself, "Now I can discourse with Frank upon the delicious sensations of love."



## CHAPTER XX

### THE RETREAT IN WALES

IN the vicinity of Rhavadergwy—a town in Wales—stood a small but pleasing residence, in one of the most picturesque parts of Radnorshire. The site of this habitation was upon an eminence, and a beautiful garden sloped gently down to a purling rivulet which formed its boundary. In the rear of the house there was a paddock, in which the deer disported gaily, and where the swans floated upon a large piece of artificial water.

It was about eleven o'clock in the forenoon that the Marquis of Eagledean, having walked forth from Rhavadergwy, where he arrived on the previous evening, approached this dwelling of which we have just spoken. His countenance expressed a mingled anxiety and seriousness. More than sixteen years had elapsed since he had seen Lady Everton, and he was now about to present himself before her. He had learned in the town that she lived in an almost total seclusion, that she was exceedingly charitable and devout, but that it was generally reported and believed in the neighbourhood that her reason was affected. The marquis had not chosen to appear too minute in his inquiries, and therefore beyond these few particulars he had learned little or nothing.

On reaching the vicinage of the habitation, he stopped short at a distance of about fifty yards, and gazed upon it with the feeling we have above described,—a feeling of mingled seriousness and anxiety. Yes, upwards of sixteen years had elapsed since he had seen her, and she was then thirty years of age. She must therefore be now forty-six. Must not an immense change have been accomplished during this interval in her personal appearance? A change, too,

all the more remarkable and all the greater, because it was not the lapse of years alone that would have effected it, — care and sorrow would have combined to accomplish the work. There was something profoundly sad — something indeed solemnly awful — in the thought that perhaps in a few minutes he would at a single glance be enabled to observe the full extent of that change, and to perceive how powerful had been the ravages of time and the desolating influences of affliction. And then — as he stood thus meditating — back to the mind of the Marquis of Eagledean came the image of Alexandrina as she was when he had last seen her.

Then she was in all the glorious beauty of womanhood, — perfectly resembling that portrait which he had so recently seen in his daughter Elizabeth's possession, and which was engraved from an original painted in 1828, when she was in her thirtieth year. Then her countenance was of a perfectly oval shape, with a forehead of noble height, — a forehead, too, fair and pure as the chastest marble of Paros, and the splendid face was wont to be framed with a perfect cloud of raven tresses showering upon her superb shoulders and upon her back. Then the darkly pencilled brows threw out in lovelier contrast the purity of those temples on the opals of which they were set, and the long, ebon fringes of the eyes mitigated without subduing the lustre of the magnificent orbs themselves. Then, too, the lips from which his own had so often culled ecstatic but guilty kisses were full and of the richest redness, and the low-bodied dress, which she was wont to wear in compliance with the fashion of the age, afforded a glimpse of the well-proportioned bust. Such was the bright and beautiful image which was conjured up to the memory of the Marquis of Eagledean, — the image of her who had possessed his first and only love, — the love of an entire life. And as he reflected upon this image, and thought how time and affliction might have marred those lovely lineaments, rendering their possessor prematurely old, the tears trickled down the nobleman's cheeks, and he wept, oh, he wept, as convulsively as a child.

And was not he too changed? Would even the penetrating eyes of love — if love she still cherished toward him — be enabled to discern in his altered person one single lineament to remind her of the handsome and courtly individual who had been the object of her worship in bygone years?

The marquis indeed felt that the meeting which was about to take place would be under very painful circumstances.

Wiping away the tears from his cheeks, and subduing his emotions as well as he was able, Lord Eagledean advanced a little nearer to the dwelling and reached a hedgerow that bordered the garden on the side skirting the road along which he was walking. In a few moments he beheld a lady descending the steps of the front door. She came forth slowly, looking neither to the right nor to the left, but with her eyes bent downward, as if in deepest thought. She was dressed in black, and a sable veil was thrown over her head, but not so as to conceal her features. From the point where the marquis suddenly halted on perceiving her, he could not obtain even the slightest glimpse of that countenance, and yet he felt convinced that this was the Alexandrina of his enduring and faithful love. Yes, the figure was exactly of her stature. It was not bowed by years; it was still upright as in her youthful days he had known it to be. But it was from an intuitive presentiment rather than from actual observation that he experienced the conviction that this was she whom he sought.

He remained where he was concealed behind the hedge, hoping that she would approach near enough on the other side for him to observe her attentively and well, so that whatever shock might be destined for him from her altered appearance should have passed away ere he revealed himself to her. Descending the steps, she traversed a large grass plat in front of the mansion, and then slowly entered the gravel-walk which ran behind the hedge. Her steps were deliberate; she advanced like one who was all the time absorbed in profound thought, and who took no notice of the trees, the flowers, and the natural beauties by which she was surrounded. The sun was powerful, and she drew her veil completely over her countenance, so that as she approached nearer to the spot where Lord Eagledean stood, he could obtain no glimpse of those features on which he yearned to gaze again. But her figure was little impaired by the lapse of time. It was not emaciated, it was not reduced to leanness; on the contrary, it presented all the fine contours of a more youthful period. Could this lady indeed be she whom he had come to visit?

She passed by on the other side of the verdant barrier,

and the marquis strained his eyes to penetrate also through the thick folds of the veil, but the attempt was vain, he could not catch the slightest glimpse of the countenance thus hidden. She proceeded on toward the lower part of the garden, and Lord Eagledean continued his way to the gate which afforded admittance to the grounds.

He opened it, he entered the garden, and then he hesitated whether to go and accost that lady, or whether to advance up to the house at once and make the usual inquiry which a visitor would put. At that moment a domestic, in a plain, dark livery, appeared upon the steps. He was an old man, and one who might at once be set down as being a faithful dependent of long standing in his present service. The marquis accosted him, and said, "I wish to see Lady Everton; is that her ladyship walking yonder in the garden?"

"It is, sir," responded the old servant, "but her ladyship receives no visitors. All matters of business must be conducted through Mrs. Jameson."

"Ah!" ejaculated Lord Eagledean, for he remembered that this was the friendly housekeeper at Everton Park, who had been admitted into the confidence of her mistress in respect to the birth of the two children. "But I have some very particular intelligence to communicate."

"If so, sir," observed the footman, "there will be no harm in your introducing yourself to her ladyship; she can but refer you, if necessary, to Mrs. Jameson."

The old man spoke courteously, even benevolently, and the Marquis of Eagledean, thus encouraged, was about to hasten away toward the extremity of the garden, when it suddenly occurred to him that if Alexandrina should chance to recognize him at once, a scene might possibly ensue which she would afterward deeply regret and wish to have been avoided. He accordingly turned back again toward the footman, saying, "All things considered, it would perhaps be better that I should see Mrs. Jameson first."

The domestic bowed, and led the way through a hall, up a staircase, to a room where an old woman with hair as white as snow was seated, occupied with her knitting. She was dressed in black, and in her look benevolence was mingled with sadness. She was not so much altered but that the marquis would have recognized her, even if he had not been informed who she was.

"Mrs. Jameson, a gentleman wishes to see you on some business connected with her ladyship," and having placed a chair for the accommodation of the marquis, the old footman withdrew from the apartment.

Lord Eagledean sat down, and did not immediately speak, for he saw that Mrs. Jameson's looks had been at once earnestly fixed upon him. They grew more searching; the expression of her countenance showed that memory was doing its work faithfully, and that he would be recognized by her. Ah! then if she were thus enabled to penetrate through the change and alteration which years had effected in him, how much more easily would Lady Everton have done so! And how prudent was the precaution he had thus taken in seeing Mrs. Jameson first.

"My lord, my lord," said the old woman, trembling from head to foot with the violence of her emotions, "I know you — I recognize you! What brings you hither?"

"Need you ask?" inquired the marquis. "Can you not conjecture?"

"But your wife, my lord, the Marchioness of Eagledean," interrupted Mrs. Jameson, "is she not still alive? Is she no more?"

"Good heavens!" ejaculated the nobleman, for these words struck him as a revelation, instantaneously making known to his comprehension some new phase in the villainy of Mr. Everton. "My wife — the Marchioness of Eagledean — I never was married."

A cry of mingled joy and astonishment burst forth from the aged housekeeper's lips, as she started up from her chair. Then fixing her looks earnestly and penetratingly upon the marquis, she said, "My lord, I adjure you by everything you deem solemn and holy to proclaim the truth, whatsoever it may be."

"I have already proclaimed it," he replied, profoundly agitated. "I am incapable of deceit. I never have been married — No; never, never has the image of your mistress been absent from this heart of mine."

"Oh, what misery — what long years of misery, wretchedness, and woe — might have been spared to my poor mistress had she known the truth!" and as Mrs. Jameson spoke, she resumed her seat, wringing her hands, while tears trickled down the countenance that was furrowed with age.

“The blackest iniquities have been perpetrated,” said the marquis, with bitter vehemence, “but until this moment I did not even suspect their fullest extent. And now let me hasten to ask you a question. Does Lady Everton know that her son Adolphus is yet alive?”

Mrs. Jameson gave a wild start, and then sinking back in the chair, gazed in speechless astonishment upon the Marquis of Eagledean. She evidently knew not what to think, and by the expression of her countenance it was apparent that she feared his reason was unsettled.

“No, my good woman, — faithful dependent of your mistress that I am sure you have been, — I am not deceived — I am not deceiving you. It is another truth that I proclaim, Adolphus lives, and what is more, his rights are acknowledged! Yes, his villainous uncle has abandoned the title and estates which he had usurped.”

“Then, may God be thanked!” said the old woman, in a tone of the profoundest piety. “There may yet be happiness in this world for my poor mistress,” and having thus spoken, she clasped her hands together, raised her venerable countenance, and the prayer of thanksgiving, which she said inwardly, wavered upon her thin lips.

“I see that we have much to talk about, — many things to converse upon,” resumed the marquis, after a pause, “ere the intelligence be broken to your mistress that her son is alive and that I am within these walls. In a few words let me likewise explain to you that our two children, Elizabeth and Frank, are well and happy. They are beneath my roof in the neighbourhood of London — But again you survey me with the deepest amazement?”

“Because, my lord, it has this moment become your turn,” replied Mrs. Jameson, “to reveal another phase in that scheme of villainy which has been practised toward my poor mistress. Four years have elapsed since she was assured in a letter from her brother-in-law that poor Frank was no more, and that Elizabeth, having inherited his fortune according to the terms of your lordship’s trust deed, was dissipating it rapidly, as she had already dissipated her own, amongst the profligate and dissolute.”

“All false, abominably, atrociously false!” ejaculated the marquis, springing up from his chair, and beginning to pace the apartment in a terrible state of excitement and rage.

“ Oh, the monsters to whom the welfare of these dear children was entrusted! Oh, that miscreant Everton! Shall they, after all, be suffered to escape condign punishment? Or shall not a terrific vengeance alight upon their heads? But no, no; there are a thousand considerations — I must calm myself — I must compose these wildly agitated feelings of mine.”

Thus speaking, Lord Eagledean resumed his seat, and giving his hand to Mrs. Jameson, he said, in an altered voice, — a voice full of solemn emotion, — “ You have been a kind and faithful friend to your mistress; accept my heartfelt gratitude.”

“ Oh, my lord,” she replied, the tears still streaming down her cheeks, “ you know not what happiness you have imparted to my soul! And what happiness, too, is now in store for her ladyship. But let us hasten to discourse on those subjects which require mutual explanation, for I long — oh, I long — to be enabled to go and commence breaking to my dear mistress all the joyous intelligence that I shall have to impart.”

“ In respect to my beloved children, Elizabeth and Frank,” said the marquis, “ I need not tell you that now they are under my care, they are amply and richly provided for; but the fortunes that I settled upon them upwards of sixteen years ago have been self-appropriated by those villains Petersfield and Marston.”

“ Heavens, her ladyship’s own brother!” ejaculated the housekeeper. “ And it is false, then, that Elizabeth has led an evil life, that she ran away from her husband, the Marquis of Villebelle, with a paramour.”

“ All false — all diabolically false!” exclaimed the marquis. Then, in a graver tone, he added, “ It is my firm conviction that no female in the land can boast herself more pure, more chaste, than my daughter Elizabeth. I have not time now to enter into details; suffice it for me to tell you that her marriage with the Marquis of Villebelle was a mockery, — a marriage into which she was coerced by the villain Marston, a marriage that was never consummated, and one which would not hold good according to the English law. As for Frank, Lord Petersfield procured him a situation, a menial one, at court. It was so easy for a peer of the realm thus to dispose of a youth whom he had basely

plundered. But little did he imagine that poor Frank's memory would be so good in recognizing those whom he had seen in his earlier years. One day, two ladies whom he had met in the company of his mother at Everton Park, and also at St. James's, appeared at court together. I know not who they could have been — ”

“ Lady Hesketh and her beautiful cousin Miss Villiers,” remarked Mrs Jameson. “ They must have been the two ladies to whom your lordship alludes. I will tell your lordship presently how they came to be acquainted with Lady Everton's secret.”

“ Well,” continued the Marquis of Eagledean, “ as I was saying, Frank recognized that Lady Hesketh whom you have named, and her beautiful cousin Miss Villiers, when they appeared at court together. But although he thus recognized them, he knew not their names. They, as a matter of prudence, denied that they were acquainted with him, — denied indeed that they knew who he was, or had ever seen him before. Doubtless the report of his death had not reached their ears, or else they would have seemed still more surprised. But certain it is that soon afterward Lord Petersfield thought it better to have Frank removed from a place where he might meet them again, and he accordingly transferred him to the service of Lady Saxondale, at whose mansion he was no doubt well aware that Lady Hesketh and Miss Villiers did not visit.”

“ Oh, what a ramification of treachery!” cried Mrs. Jameson, holding up her hands in astonishment and dismay. “ Years have elapsed since any communication took place between these ladies and my mistress, for when Lady Everton resolved upon retiring to this seclusion in Wales, she broke off all her past friendships, resigned all her previous acquaintances.”

“ And therefore,” observed the marquis, “ Lord Petersfield entertained little fear that your poor mistress would learn from Lady Hesketh or Miss Villiers that her son Frank was really alive and had been seen in a menial capacity at the palace. But now, Mrs. Jameson, have the goodness to explain to me those matters concerning which I am yet in the dark, — all that occurred, in short, from the time that I quitted England in the year 1828.”

“ I will, my lord,” responded the old housekeeper, “ but



it shall be as succinctly as I can, for I am sure that you are impatient to have speech of her ladyship."

"Yes," replied Lord Eagledean, "but ere we meet, I would rather be acquainted with everything, so that she may be spared the pain of having any explanations to give."

"Your lordship can well understand," resumed Mrs. Jameson, "that the knowledge of my poor lady's secret put her completely in the power of that bad man her brother-in-law. He came and gave his orders at the Park just as if he were the master. He represented to my poor mistress that after all he had learned, she was not a fit and proper person to have full charge of her son Adolphus during the father's absence. He removed Adolphus to the western extremity of the building, lodging him in apartments to which there was a communication by means of the private staircase. He introduced creatures of his own to surround the boy, to attend upon him, and doubtless to keep watch over him also. As the time approached for my lord's arrival from India, Mr. Everton sent up all the old servants of the Park to the town house in London, for the purpose, as he said, of making the fullest preparations there to receive his lordship. I was packed off along with the rest, and Everton Park was left in the hands of the strange domestics whom Mr. Everton had planted there. I went away with a heavy heart, for I suspected some mischief, but I was relieved to a certain extent when I found that Mr. Everton himself was about to proceed to London and pass a few days at his own house. I will now describe what took place at the Park after I and my fellow servants had removed to the town residence, although I did not learn the full particulars from my mistress's lips until some time later. It appears that several days elapsed, during which her brother-in-law being absent, she was permitted to enjoy more of the society of Adolphus than she had previously been. But one day she was taken seriously ill. I must tell you that Mr. Everton had located a medical man at the Park under pretence of watching over the health of Adolphus. My poor lady has often declared to me her conviction that she was taken so seriously ill in consequence of some medicine which that surgeon had persisted in prescribing for herself. Certain it is that she fell into a complete state of stupor, — a lethargy which rendered her unconscious of all that was passing

around her. In this condition she remained nearly a week, and when she came to herself, it was only to learn the dreadful intelligence that Adolphus had been taken ill on the same day as herself — just one week back — and that he had died during the night. Indeed, the funeral was to take place on that very same day on which my poor mistress recovered her senses. Her anguish was ineffable; it must have been so, and in the wildness of her despair, as she afterward told me, she plainly and openly accused her brother-in-law, who in the meantime had returned to the Park, of making away with his nephew. He rejected the accusation with an indignant burst of passion, which seemed so natural that it made her ladyship regret she should have advanced such a charge. The medical man was there to corroborate Mr. Everton's denial of the wickedness, and for the time being the poor lady's dark suspicions were lulled, or perhaps absorbed in the bitterness of her grief. She had not the satisfaction, as she subsequently observed to me, of contemplating her dear child's remains, for they were already, as was represented to her, locked up in the coffin which was about to be borne away to the tomb.

“She was, however, conveyed by her female dependents to the chamber of death, and she wept scalding tears over the coffin. She was borne back to her own room in a state of unconsciousness, fever supervened, and she remained delirious for several days. When convalescent, her brother-in-law remonstrated with her for the infamous charge she had levelled against him, and while again indignantly repudiating it, he bade her observe that it was an ungrateful recompense for his kind forbearance in keeping the secret of her amour with your lordship. My poor lady fancied she beheld a threat in this intimation, and though her suspicions in respect to poor Adolphus's death revived somewhat in her bosom, she felt herself so completely in the power of her brother-in-law that she dared not give utterance to another word.”

“The earth contains no miscreant greater than that brother-in-law,” interjected the Marquis of Eagledean. “Mrs. Jameson, all those arrangements which he made at the Park, and which you have described, — the surrounding Adolphus with his own creatures, the introduction of a medical man, doubtless well bribed to his interests, the

sending away of yourself and the other faithful servants of the household, and the administration of some medication which paralyzed her ladyship for a whole week, — all these things were done to enable him to carry out his diabolical design. For the corpse of a pauper boy was secretly conveyed into the house by night, while Adolphus was borne away to Beech-tree Lodge, — a place possessed by Mr. Everton in the village of Hornsey, and where poor Adolphus remained sixteen years in captivity.”

Mrs. Jameson was horrified at this statement, and some minutes elapsed ere she could resume her narrative. But at length she continued thus:

“As soon as my poor mistress was again convalescent, she hastened to London to be at the town mansion when her husband should arrive from India, and then it was she told me of all that had taken place at the Park. Of course the tidings of Adolphus’s death had already reached us in London, and I can assure you that heads were gloomily shaken, suspicious looks exchanged, and dark misgivings murmuringly whispered amongst us all. But what could we say? What could we do? And I, who was most in her ladyship’s secrets, knew how completely she was in the power of her brother-in-law. Well, the general returned from India. Oh, how altered he was! He never was of prepossessing appearance, but he came back looking like a wretched old man, with broken constitution and shattered health, all sacrificed at the shrine of his ambition. It was a hard task for my poor lady to maintain anything like composure when he conversed with her upon her pursuits during the years of his absence. He was much cut up by hearing of the death of his son, which intelligence, I should observe, had reached him the instant he set foot in England, and therefore previous to his arrival in London. In one sense it was fortunate that her ladyship had an excuse for her affliction and her tears, inasmuch as her grief constituted a mask to veil from her husband’s eyes the confusion and the remorse she felt at encountering him again. A few months afterward he died. There was no foul play in his case; he was hovering on the verge of the tomb when he arrived in England. His brother then assumed the title and took possession of the estates, her ladyship having only a jointure of three thousand a year.”

"And were you aware," asked Lord Eagledean, "that at the expiration of twelve months from his lordship's death, I wrote from Germany to your poor mistress?"

"Yes, my lord, I am approaching that subject now. Her brother-in-law, who had become Lord Everton, doubtless expected that you would take some such step as that, and of course, from all you have told me, it by no means suited him that you should return to England."

"No, because he might have been well aware that if I became the husband of your mistress, I should institute a strict inquiry into the circumstances of Adolphus's death. And moreover," continued the Marquis of Eagledean, "there can be no doubt that he had already come to an understanding with his sister-in-law's brother, Sir John Marston, that while he was to do what he thought fit to obtain the title and estates of Everton, Marston and Petersfield might on their side look upon the fortunes of Elizabeth and Frank as their own booty. But proceed, Mrs. Jameson."

"Well, my lord, I was going to observe," continued the old housekeeper, "that my lady's brother-in-law was on the lookout either for your return to England, or else for the arrival of letters from you. A letter did come, and he intercepted it. When he had read it, he took it to my mistress, whom he allowed, or, rather, compelled to reside at the Park. She was in a bad state of health, deeply desponding, and with a mind painfully attenuated. In such a condition it was not a very difficult task for him to coerce her into a particular course of action; her reputation was in his hands, he could shatter her fair fame at any moment, as if it were brittle glass. He compelled her to write back a particular style of answer to yourself, and he knew from what you had previously written that it would prove conclusive, for you had left my dear mistress to decide upon your fate. No reply came, or if you ever wrote again, the letters reached not my mistress."

"I never wrote again," observed the Marquis of Eagledean. "I retired to Italy, adopted an assumed name, and dwelt in retirement."

"My lady's brother-in-law," continued the housekeeper, "appeared now to feel more assured of his own position. He no doubt concluded that all apprehensions which had arisen on your account were fully disposed of. Time wore

on, and her ladyship became more her own mistress. She was gradually relieved from the species of restraint which her brother-in-law had put upon her. Sometimes she went to stay with the Princess Sophia at St. James's Palace, but generally she dwelt at the Park. She felt dull and lonely, and she invited Miss Dalrymple and Miss Villiers to stay with her. These two young ladies were cousins, — they were orphans, too, — and totally dependent upon distant relatives, whom they did not love. It was therefore a pleasure to them to experience the friendship of my poor mistress, while on the other hand it was a pleasure to her to have them with her. They became her bosom friends. It was in the year 1832 that her ladyship inquired of her brother Sir John Marston whether any tidings had been heard of your lordship. The reply was in the negative, but doubtless Sir John informed Lord Everton — or Mr. Everton as he all along ought to have been called — that such an inquiry had been made. That bad man, naturally trembling lest his sister-in-law's affection for your lordship was as strong as ever, and might lead to the revival of a correspondence between you, paid a visit soon afterward to the Park, and displayed a letter which he purported to have received from some place on the Continent, and which letter contained an account of your lordship's marriage."

"A base fabrication — a vile forgery," interjected the Marquis of Eagledean.

"Alas! we knew it not at the time, and the intelligence," continued Mrs. Jameson, "struck my poor mistress as with a death-blow. It destroyed a hope, — the last hope which she had all along cherished: namely, that you would still return. She became dangerously ill; once more did delirium seize upon her, and one evening in her ravings she betrayed her secret to Miss Dalrymple and Miss Villiers. But they were kind-hearted, generous-minded girls, — the elder not more than twenty-one at that time, the other two years younger, and they deeply sympathized with their friend and benefactress. As she got better, she experienced a deep yearning to see her children, and they were accordingly brought by Mrs. Burnaby to the Park. This was with the consent of her brother-in-law, but only on the condition that immediately afterward Elizabeth should be removed from the care of Mrs. Burnaby and sent to a boarding-school."

“The better,” observed the Marquis of Eagledean, “to enable Petersfield and Marston to work out their ulterior designs. But pray proceed.”

“My narrative is drawing toward an end,” said Mrs. Jameson. “A year afterward my poor mistress was on a visit to the Princess Sophia at St. James’s Palace. Lord Petersfield presided over the princess’s household, and by his permission her ladyship was allowed to see her little Frank again. About ten months after that, Mrs. Burnaby died. Then Lord Petersfield decided upon sending Frank to the same school at Southampton where his sister Elizabeth had already been two years. But before he was conducted thither, Lady Everton begged that she might see him. Lord Petersfield declared that it must be for the last time, as the boy was getting too old to permit these occasional interviews to be continued with any safety to her ladyship’s secret. His lordship brought Frank to the Park, and then took him to Southampton. Shortly after this incident Miss Dalrymple became the wife of Sir Albert Hesketh, and her cousin Miss Villiers went to reside permanently with her. Lady Everton now resolved to carry into execution a plan which she had some time back conceived: namely, that of retiring from the world. All her hopes of happiness in this life were dead within her; she believed your lordship married to another, she had seen her children, as she thought, for the last time, and for their future welfare she had little apprehension, knowing how bounteously your lordship had provided for them, and never entertaining the most distant apprehension that Lord Petersfield and her brother Sir John Marston could play those children false. When her determination of retiring to some remote seclusion was communicated first of all to Sir John, he exhibited an appearance of the most affectionate zeal in volunteering to find her a suitable dwelling; and her brother-in-law also testified a semblance of the kindest consideration, by offering to purchase and make over to her whatsoever retreat Sir John Marston might decide upon. In the course of a few weeks her ladyship was informed that a sweet little domain in Wales had been found and purchased for her use.”

“Yes, those villains,” exclaimed the Marquis of Eagledean, “were all too glad to get her into quarters as remote as possible.”

“It was at the close of the year 1834 — some months after Mrs. Burnaby’s death, and after that last interview with little Frank — that her ladyship came down into Wales. She brought with her six of the oldest and most faithful domestics belonging to her household, in addition to myself. Arrangements were made with her brother-in-law for the payment of her jointure through Messrs. Marlow and Malton, solicitors of Parliament Street, Westminster.”

“And they were doubtless instructed by the brother-in-law,” observed the marquis, “not to give her ladyship’s address to anybody.”

“My poor mistress herself,” continued the housekeeper, “determined, on retiring from the world, to break off all correspondence with her former friends and acquaintances. She wished to separate herself as much as she could from the past, in order that the future years of her life might flow on as tranquilly and as uninterruptedly as possible. The only subject on which she sought occasional information from her brother and brother-in-law was the welfare of her children. Years passed on. In 1839, Elizabeth being then of age, her ladyship received the intelligence that she had married the Marquis of Villebelle, and it was a source of gratification to her to find that one wish she had formally expressed was thus fulfilled by the bestowal of a noble name upon her daughter. But some time afterward she was plunged into affliction by the intelligence that this daughter had separated from her husband and was living irregularly. Then came the news of Frank’s death — ”

“All done,” interjected the marquis, “for the purpose of stifling her future inquiries relative to her children, by making her believe that one was dead and the other unworthy her consideration. And now tell me, Mrs. Jameson, in what frame of mind her ladyship’s existence has been passed.”

“With the exception of those two causes for deep affliction — and which, thank Heaven, in a few minutes will be dispelled — her ladyship has experienced a degree of mental tranquillity which, if not altogether natural, has at least saved her health and her person likewise from the ravages of a bitter anguish. I do not think, my lord, that the tone

of her mind has been altogether natural. It may be described as a calmness both deathlike and glacial. It has preserved her from excitement and irritability, but I fear that if Providence had not sent you hither now, with all these happy tidings, she would gradually sink down into idiotic apathy. She seldom speaks, and when she does, it is with a strange coldness, — a coldness that it does one harm to feel the influence of. She seldom reads and never works, but she either sits in the drawing-room gazing from the window, or else wanders in the garden, or about the neighbourhood, in a kind of dull, listless mood. Nevertheless, there are moments of activity with her, and these are when dispensing her charities; for her jointure far more than suffices for the maintenance of the establishment in this part of the country where everything is so cheap, and she expends large sums in doing good. Her benevolence has rendered her an universal favourite as well as an object of great interest, but I believe that most persons in the district fancy the poor lady is not altogether right in her intellects. Alas! they know not her story as you and I know it, my lord — But I think that we have no need for further discourse, and certainly no necessity for dwelling upon mournful topics. Shall I go and prepare her ladyship to see you? Shall I break to her the intelligence that her son Adolphus lives, that Frank also lives, and that Elizabeth is worthy of her love? ”

“ Yes, go — go quickly, my good woman,” said the Marquis of Eagledean, all his agitation reviving at the thought that in a few minutes he would again behold the countenance of her whom he had loved for upwards of thirty years.

“ I go, my lord,” replied Mrs. Jameson, cheerfully. “ But one word more. What may I tell her of Adolphus? Consider the questions that a mother is sure to ask — ”

“ I comprehend you — I understand you full well,” exclaimed the marquis. “ Tell her that he is a fine, tall, handsome young man of whom she will be proud. But more; there are other tidings with which you may gladden her poor heart. Tell her that her daughter Elizabeth is one of the handsomest women of whom England can boast, and that Frank is a youth of an almost fabulous beauty. Go and tell her all this, and I will await you here.”



Mrs. Jameson hurried from the room, her countenance beaming with brighter smiles than it had worn for many and many a long day, to execute the pleasing task which she had in hand.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE INTERVIEW

IN consequence of what the worthy old housekeeper had said with regard to Lady Everton's personal appearance, the reader is prepared to learn that it had not undergone such a very great change as under all circumstances might have been expected. We will proceed to state that although her ladyship was now forty-six years of age, she might have easily passed herself off as little more than forty. There was no colour upon her cheeks, but the cheeks themselves were not sunken nor hollow; the lustre of her eyes was subdued, but then, in her earlier years it had been so bright that this mitigation of their brilliancy had only softened and not dimmed them. Her hair, of raven darkness, had so far resisted the ravages of time and the withering influence of sorrow, as to be only touching on the commencement of a change, and this to be detected only by a tire-woman when attending the duties of her ladyship's toilet. Her teeth were remarkably well preserved, and helped to ward off the aspect of advancing years. Her figure, as already stated, had retained its fine proportions; and the uprightness of her gait, together with a certain statuesque carriage of the bust and head, which was natural to her, gave her an air of mingled dignity and grace which contributed to sustain her right to be pronounced a fine, handsome woman.

Such was Lady Everton, such the object of the Marquis of Eagledean's visit into Wales, such the appearance which she was anon to present before him. But, ah! if instead of being destined to meet this still handsome and attractive woman, he had been doomed to find her a withered, emaciated, shrivelled creature, with cavern-like eyes, silvered

hair, and toothless mouth, still, still would he have experienced for her the same love, the same sympathy, because his was no sensual passion now. It was a chaste and holy affection, feeding itself upon the memories of the past, and sanctified by the existence of two beings who were the pledges of that love.

We need hardly inform the reader that during Mrs. Jameson's absence from the room where the marquis remained, he experienced an indescribable agitation, — a surging-up of a variety of emotions, at the prospect of so speedily meeting the mother of those children. About half an hour elapsed, — an interval that was short enough for worthy Mrs. Jameson to break to her ladyship the varied pieces of agreeable intelligence she had to impart, but an interval full long indeed for Lord Eagledean himself to endure the excitement of his stirred-up feelings. At length the door opened. Eagerly did he glance toward it, but only the housekeeper appeared. Her countenance was beaming with satisfaction and joy, and the marquis at least gathered thence the assurance that the glad tidings revealed to Lady Everton had produced no evil effects. Mrs. Jameson beckoned him to follow and she led the way toward a drawing-room, at the threshold of which she stopped short for a moment.

“My lord,” she said, in a low, whispering voice, “I shall go no farther; you will enter there alone.”

Thus speaking, she opened the door. Oh, at that instant the Marquis of Eagledean felt himself young again, — ay, felt as if twenty years had been struck off the sum of his existence, felt as if a new life were rejuvenescent in his veins! He sprang forward, the door closed behind him, a cry of joy reached his ears, a form flew to meet him, quicker than he himself was advancing, and the beloved one of other times — the beloved one too of the present moment — was clasped in his arms. Years of anguish, years of hopeless sorrow, years of separation were all compensated for in these first few moments of ecstatic joy. It may seem strange to speak thus of that old man of sixty and that woman of forty-six, but their hearts had become young again, their memories travelled backward to the joys and delights of bygone times. Thus the outpourings of their rapture were as fervid and as enthusiastic as if it were a meeting of two

youthful lovers. There was a whole world of bliss concentrated in that first embrace, and joy has its ardour and its ecstasy, its bliss and its intoxication, for those of advanced years as well as for the young.

A few minutes afterward we may behold them seated together upon a sofa, their hands locked in a firm clasp, their looks riveted upon each other. Then the marquis saw that Mrs. Jameson had spoken truly when she represented how comparatively slight was the alteration which had taken place in the personal appearance of Lady Everton. Gradually a mournful feeling stole into the heart of Lord Eagledean, and as a long-drawn sigh rose up to his lips and half-found vent ere he could stifle it, Lady Everton said, in a low, deep voice, "Paton, there is yet a cloud upon your happiness."

"Do you not find me much changed, Alexandrina, oh, very much changed?" he asked. "Do you not see that I have grown old, while you have escaped the ravages of time?"

"Hush, Paton, speak not thus of yourself to me," said her ladyship, still in a soft voice and with looks of ineffable tenderness. "I behold you now through the medium of a faithful memory; I behold you only in the light of that love which I have ever borne you, and which never has been impaired by circumstance or by time. If you find me less changed than you expected, I rejoice, oh, I rejoice unfeignedly, for even now it is sweet to hear the language of admiration from your lips."

With these words Lady Everton threw her arms around the neck of the Marquis of Eagledean, and embraced him with as much fervour, with as much fond admiration, as if a long, long interval of years had not changed him nor made him old. The sadness fled away from his countenance, he smiled in happiness again, and sweet indeed were the smiles which played upon the lips of Lady Everton.

"It appears to me all like a dream," she said, "for I could not have hoped that there was any happiness in store for me in this world. And yet, I know not how it was, but still there would sometimes arise in my mind strange and unaccountable thoughts, that something would happen to alter my career upon earth, — some new phase in my destiny which was as yet unaccomplished. But, then, so often as I

found myself indulging in such fancies as these, I endeavoured to banish them from my mind as visions incapable of realization, and I essayed to settle my thoughts on a complete resignation to my present lot. Then again, I have experienced long, long intervals of a dull, listless, and mournful apathy, — a sort of tomblike sensation, as if though alive, I was already beneath the numbing influence of death. Ah! that was an awful state of feeling, and yet there was a depth of tranquillity in it, — an unnatural calm in which my senses were steeped. Had I given way to outbursts of anguish and all the wildness of a terrible excitement, you would not have seen me as you see me now; you would have found me a haggard, wretched, withered thing. But I abandoned myself not to those torrents of feeling, those frenzied outbursts of emotion. Hope appeared to be dead within me, save and except during those occasional intervals when the fanciful vagaries of which I have spoken would rise up in my mind. But the general tenor of my existence for some years past may be described as the long, long death of hope, — that torpor of the senses which is experienced when one knows that there is nought left in the world to crave for. However, this day has suddenly changed all that! It has given me back happiness, it has filled me with new joy, it has lifted up my soul from the depths of the sepulchre where it was benumbed, it has inspired me with fresh vitality, and with a renovated confidence in the world and in Heaven.”

And again, as she spoke, did Lady Everton lavish caresses upon the Marquis of Eagledean, and he also felt that this was a day of indescribable happiness for him. They sat together for more than an hour, talking of their feelings rather than of the circumstances which demanded their attention. They dwelt upon the emotions they experienced, and not upon the plans which they had to discuss and execute. They spoke of Adolphus, of Elizabeth, and of Frank, and the tender mother made the marquis give her the most lifelike description which words could frame of the personal appearance of each of those beloved children of hers.

“And now, my dear Paton,” she said, at length suddenly recollecting that after all their discourse nothing was settled, nothing resolved upon, “we must think of the future as well as of the present and the past. You can full well understand

that I yearn to fold those dear ones in my arms, that this solitude has suddenly become hateful to me, that I long to fly hence and seek the spot where dwell the objects of my love. Tell me, Paton, tell me, when you came hither this morning had you any fixed plan to propose? Any project to suggest?"

"My dear Alexandrina," he answered, "can you not perceive at a glance how much depended upon yourself? You bid me talk to you of the future. The first word I must say is a question that I have to put,— a question that may seem precipitate, but on the response to which does so much of our future plans depend?"

"Paton, I understand you," replied Lady Everton. "If you still think me worthy of bearing your name, you know not the happiness and joy with which I shall receive it."

The marquis carried her hand to his lips, exclaiming, "This is the assurance that I alone required to make me happy. And now, my dear Alexandrina, there are two distinct alternatives which I have to submit to your consideration. I allude to the course to be adopted in respect to our two dear children, Elizabeth and Frank. Adolphus is with them, but he knows not that they are his half-brother and sister. Is he to remain in ignorance of this secret? Or is he to be made acquainted with it? Those are the alternatives."

"Oh, my decision is given at once," replied Lady Everton. "Adolphus must know all, and God grant that he may not blush for his mother. When I become your wife, how can I possibly treat as comparative strangers, as visitors, or as guests, our dear Elizabeth and Frank? No, no; it were impossible. Let the world think what it will; our children must be acknowledged. I beseech and implore that you will grant me this. Whatever shame there may be to bear, it falls not on the man, it falls on the woman; it will not touch you, it will all become mine; and cheerfully, cheerfully shall I endure it rather than have to disavow those children who have been disavowed too long. I see things in a very different light from that in which I beheld them some years back. Tell me, then, that you will not be ashamed to own as your wife one whom the finger of scandal and scorn may perchance be pointed at when all the past becomes known."

Lady Everton had spoken thus with a wild, gushing vehemence which prevented the marquis from giving an immediate reply. It was a perfect torrent of feelings, — the feelings of a mother who now knew no other consideration than the duty which she owed toward the children of her only love, and whom she longed to acknowledge as her own.

“It shall all be as you desire,” answered the marquis. “It is for you to decide. Oh, believe me, if you have strength enough to dare the opinion of the world, I have lived long enough to be too independent of it to sacrifice any of my own feelings to its prejudices. Be it therefore as you say, dearest Alexandrina, and rest assured that Adolphus will not blush for you, nor hesitate to own Elizabeth and Frank as a sister and a brother.”

“Henceforth all our ideas of happiness,” said Lady Everton, “shall be centred in domestic joys. If we be blessed in our children, what care we for the world? And you will be a father to Adolphus, will you not? Yes, I know you will, for after all he has undergone, after that cruel and hideous captivity, his experience of the world must be circumscribed indeed, and he will require all the counsel and all the care which you can bestow upon him.”

“He shall have it,” responded the marquis “He shall be to me as dear as Elizabeth and Frank themselves. And let me add, my dear Alexandrina,” he continued, in a lower tone, “that the unsophisticated condition of Adolphus’s mind, his inexperience in all worldly matters, his ignorance of the selfish motives which sway men’s actions and opinions, and his appreciation of everything that is natural only, in contradistinction to everything that is artificial, will lead him to sympathize with a mother whose hand was sacrificed to one when her heart was engaged to another. No, there is not the slightest dread that Adolphus will blush when he learns that mother’s history.”

“What more have we to discuss?” exclaimed Lady Everton, now all in feverish anxiety to flee away from her present abode and hasten to where she could fold her children in her arms. “When shall we depart? My preparations will soon be made; an hour, half an hour, a few minutes will suffice. Oh, pray tell me, dear Paton, that we are to go at once! But, oh, I forgot!” she suddenly exclaimed. “You have travelled day and night, you only arrived here

late last evening, you cannot undertake the journey homeward without adequate repose. How selfish I was! But you will pardon me, for I have become another being, you have given me new life, I feel young, oh, so young, that I can endure all possible fatigues!"

"There shall be no unnecessary delay," responded the marquis. "Rest assured that I am as anxious as yourself for the arrival of that moment when Adolphus, Elizabeth, and Frank shall be folded in your arms. Yes, it will prove a spectacle that I long to gaze upon. Dear Alexandrina, though changed in appearance," he added, with a smile, "I am not so old that I need nursing. It is now nearly three in the afternoon; if you choose to depart in an hour, let a post-chaise be sent for from the town. Or perhaps you have your own travelling-carriage?"

"It has been unused for years," replied Lady Everton. "But we will have a post-chaise. We will commence our journey this evening; it will take us at least some distance toward the nearest line of railway connecting the principality with the metropolis. Worthy Mrs. Jameson and my faithful old footman Humphrey shall accompany us."

Having thus spoken, Lady Everton, who was full of a feverish excitement, presenting indeed a wondrous contrast to her slow, measured, and thoughtful movements when the marquis had first beheld her in the morning walking in the garden, — Lady Everton, we say, in this new state of mind, flew to the bell; and when Humphrey made his appearance, she issued her instructions in a tone of cheerful volubility that filled the old man with delight. For the faithful dependant had already learned from Mrs. Jameson who the visitor was, and the many glad tidings he had brought with him into Wales; so that he was overjoyed to read in his mistress's manner a confirmation of all he had thus heard.

It was about six o'clock in the evening of the second day after the incidents which we have been relating, that a hired vehicle from a railway station approached Stamford Manor, and in a few minutes entered the grounds in the midst of which the house stood. Elizabeth, Frank, and Adolphus had not long risen from the dinner-table and retired to the drawing-room, where they were seated at the moment



when the sounds of wheels reached their ears. The approach of a vehicle made them all three start up, for they were anxiously expecting either the return of the marquis, or some intelligence from him. They precipitated themselves down the stairs, but Lord Eagledean, rushing forth from the vehicle before they could perceive there was any one else with him whom he had left inside, met them in the hall, and bade them accompany him to a parlour opening thence.

"Now, Adolphus," he said, when he had embraced all three one after the other, "and you likewise, Elizabeth and Frank, prepare yourselves to behold some one who is most dear to you."

"Our mother," ejaculated Francis, heedless at the moment whether there were any longer the necessity to keep the secret from Adolphus.

"Yes, your mother, my dear boy," responded the marquis, in a voice full of emotion, "and your mother likewise, my dear Adolphus. Yes, I speak truly. Embrace Elizabeth and Frank, for they are indeed your sister and your brother, and your mother is also theirs."

Adolphus gave utterance to a cry of mingled amazement and joy, for without pausing to reflect how this could possibly be, his first feeling was one of ineffable delight to think that Elizabeth, whom he already loved as a sister, was indeed a sister, and Frank, whom he loved as a brother, was indeed a brother.

"I go to fetch your mother," said the marquis, in a hasty whisper to Elizabeth. "She longs to press you all three in her arms. During the few moments that I shall be absent you may tell Adolphus who I am — Yes, you may tell him that I am the Marquis of Eagledean."

Having thus spoken, he hastily quitted the room; but little more than a minute elapsed ere he returned again, accompanied by Lady Everton. Then ensued a scene which, for tenderness and excitement, for melting emotions and joyous outpourings alike of words and tears, for fervid embraces, repeated again, and again, and again, for fondest endearments and enthusiastic caresses, has had no parallel in this world.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE PREPARED PITFALL

WE must now pay another visit to Solomon Patch's public-house in Agar Town. It was between nine and ten o'clock in the evening, when Madge Somers, dressed in her usual gipsy-like style, — but looking more travel-soiled, weary, and care-worn than she had ever yet appeared, — dragged herself painfully into that den. She was evidently sinking with fatigue, and throwing herself upon a seat in the open space fronting the bar, she bade Solomon at once serve her with some liquor.

“ You seem ill, or else very tired,” observed the old man, as he presented her with a foaming pint of porter. “ There! take that, and if it doesn't cheer you up a bit, then my name isn't what it be.”

The woman placed the pint measure to her lips, and did not remove it till she had poured the whole of its contents down her throat. Then, as she handed back the vessel to Solomon Patch, she said, “ Yes, I am indeed tired. I have walked many weary miles to-day, but was resolved to reach your place to-night. Let me see, what is the day of the month? ”

“ Well, now, what be it? ” asked the old man, turning toward his wife. “ Why, the tenth of August, to be sure.”

“ Yes, the tenth,” repeated Madge Somers. Then, in an undertone to herself, she said, “ It was the twenty-first of July the appointment was made: in one month, day for day, and hour for hour, was I to meet him at his own house. That will be on the twenty-first instant at nine o'clock in the evening. Twenty days have elapsed, and I am no wiser than I was; I have eleven more days to find out what I want.”

“ And what is it you do want, Madge? ” asked Solomon Patch, for the woman had spoken those last words in a louder tone than the previous part of the sentence, and they had caught the landlord’s ear. “ I do really think she has lost her wits,” he observed aside to three or four customers of the Billy Goat, who were lounging and tipping at the bar-counter.

“ Not a bit of it! ” said Madge Somers, sternly, for her keen ears had caught the observation. “ But you ask me what it is that I want to find out? Well, I have come here this evening to set every one who is in the habit of frequenting the place on the alert to discover what I do want. Are there many people in the tap-room yonder? ”

“ Some dozen or so,” replied Solomon, “ and I tell you who’s amongst them, an old pal of mine that I haven’t seen for many a day, Bob Shakerly.”

“ The resurrection man,” observed Madge Somers.

“ Well, I don’t think he does much in that way now,” remarked Solomon; “ ’cos why, he finds it more to his account to cut up ’osses for sassage-meat and what not. Howsumever, he’s found his way down to the Goat this evening to smoke his pipe and take his rum and water, and there the old fellow is in the tap-room, as cosy as can be.”

“ Just come along with me, Solomon,” said Madge, “ and you also,” she continued, addressing herself to the loungers about the bar.

“ What on earth is she going to do now? ” asked Solomon of himself, as Madge herself led the way into the public room, where the usual number of ill-looking fellows and half-tipsy women were pursuing their orgy, old Bob Shakerly being one of the company.

“ Why, here’s Madge Somers,” said Tony Wilkins, “ and she looks as wild as if she was a witch.”

“ Witch indeed! ” she echoed. “ I am not witch enough to find out something that I want to discover, or, rather, I have not succeeded yet; but I will offer a prize and set all you folks on the alert, and see whether that will be productive of any good result.”

As she thus spoke, she took from beneath her garments a greasy pocketbook, and opening it, drew forth a number of bank-notes. These she counted, keeping some in her hand and putting the rest back into the pocketbook, her

proceeding being watched with mingled curiosity and suspense by all who beheld her.

"Now, Solomon Patch," she said, turning toward the landlord, "here's fifty pounds in good Bank of England notes, and I am going to entrust the sum to your keeping. You are all witnesses of the deposit."

"But what be it for?" asked the old man, gazing with astonishment upon Madge Somers, and almost hesitating to receive the money, lest some treacherous intent should lurk beneath this conduct on her part.

"Take it — do not be afraid," she said, "I will soon explain myself. And now listen, all of you. Some years ago there was the manager of a company of strolling players, whose name was Thompson, but what has become of him, I do not know. It is precisely this knowledge that I want to obtain. If any one will bring me the information I require before eight o'clock in the evening of the twenty-first of this month, the individual thus giving me that information shall receive the fifty pounds which I have just lodged in the hands of Solomon Patch."

Numerous voices shouted out the willingness of the speakers to enter upon the search.

"If he's above ground, I'm blowed if I don't ferret him out," exclaimed Tony Wilkins, darting from his seat with the air of one resolved to enter upon the search at once.

"I knows a many poor vimen as was vunce strolling performers," observed a half-tipsy female, with a hiccup at every second word she spoke. "It's astonishing how them poor creaturs comes down in their hold hage. There's vun as used to play queens and great ladies, and was very poppilar, but now she's took to get her livelihood by charing and what not."

"Oh you be hanged!" ejaculated a rough-looking fellow, eager to put in his word. "I'll have a try for the fifty pound prize. But can't you give us no more partiklers, Madge?"

"Nothing more," she responded, curtly.

"'Spose he's dead, this feller Thompson," observed Solomon Patch, "what then? It ain't no use looking arter him, be it?"

"Unless," remarked another of the women belonging to the company of revellers in the tap-room, "old Bob Shakerly here would have up his carkiss."

“A truce to this nonsense,” interrupted Madge, with a severe look. “I have said what I wanted, and the reward is lodged in Solomon’s hands. Those who like to undertake the search, can do it; those who don’t can leave it alone. But it may be that if the information is given to me at the time specified, I shall increase the amount of recompense according to my means.”

“Unless she loses every skurrick she’s got at the vimen’s gaming-table on Saffron Hill,” whispered one of the guests to another.

“Well, I’m off at once,” said Tony Wilkins. “Fifty pounds! my eye, it isn’t to be got every day!”

“One word more,” exclaimed Madge Somers. “From seven to eight o’clock on the evening of the twenty-first of August, I shall be here to receive the information required, if any one is enabled to furnish it. But I expect positive proof of the accuracy of this information. In short, Sol Patch will not part with the reward until the intelligence that may be brought is shown to be correct.”

Having thus spoken, Madge Somers turned abruptly around and issued from the room. Passing into the bar-parlour, she desired Mrs. Patch to give her some refreshments in the shape of eatables; and the order being obeyed, the woman commenced an attack upon the cold meat and other things placed before her, which showed that she must have been fasting some hours. Meanwhile Solomon Patch, having secured the fifty pounds in his strong box, experienced no small degree of curiosity to learn wherefore Madge was so anxious to find out this Thompson of whom she had spoken. Bidding his wife attend to the bar, he passed into the room behind, with two glasses of hot spirits and water, and placing them upon the table, seated himself opposite to Madge Somers.

“Come,” said he, “you won’t refuse to drink, for old acquaintance’ sake. Here’s a health to you, and wishing that the business you’ve been a-speaking of may turn out all right.”

“I hope it will,” she remarked, abruptly. “What news in Agar Town? Anything fresh?”

“Nothing partikler,” responded Solomon. “But about this little business of yourn, Madge, can I be of any assistance? Of course you must know summut more about the man Thompson than you’ve chose to say.”

"Nothing," she observed. Then in order to change the conversation, she asked, "Have you seen Chiffin lately?"

"Well, yes, I have," answered Solomon, and he seemed to speak with some little degree of hesitation.

"Is anything the matter with him?" asked Madge, looking at the old man fixedly. "Anything turned up about that barge affair?"

"No, it all seems to have died away as comfortable as possible. But here he be," and as he spoke, the Cannibal, dressed in his usual style, entered the bar-parlour.

"Hullo, Madge," he exclaimed, "who would have thought of seeing you here? Why, I've been up to your cottage yonder two or three times during the last week, and it was all shut up and as silent as a grave."

"Did you want me, then?" she asked.

"Well, I did rather. Just step along with me. Here, Sol, bring us up some liquor into the private room, for me and Madge have got some particular business to talk about."

"Ah! about them preparations that you've been making, I suppose," said the old man, with a sly look full of dark and sinister meaning.

"Well, it may be," growled the Cannibal, "but don't you let your tongue run quite so free, 'cos why, how did you know I was going to speak to Madge on that subject? And if I wasn't, then you would have made her suspect something."

"Oh, I only meant that if you are going to let her into the secret," replied Solomon, "I am glad of it, for she's a discreet woman, and you can trust her. Besides, as I won't do it myself —"

"Now hold your jaw, you cursed old fool," interposed Chiffin, his diabolical countenance contracting with an expression of hideous ferocity, while he grasped his club as if about to strike. "As you get old you become so precious talkative there's no doing nothing with you. How do you know that what's said in there, if spoke too loud, isn't heard by the people at the bar?"

"I didn't mean no offence, Mr. Chiffin," said the old man, trembling from head to foot, for he stood fearfully in awe of the dreaded Cannibal.

"Well then, look sharp, bring us up some brandy, and lend us this light."

Thus speaking, Chiffin took up the candle from the table, and led the way from the bar, followed by Madge Somers. He ascended to that miserable-looking room up-stairs which has been before described in earlier chapters of this narrative, and placing the candle upon the table, he said, "Let us sit down, Madge; we've got some business to talk about. But wait a bit till old Solomon has brought up the lush and the glasses, and then we shall be all to ourselves."

Madge Somers made no remark, but with her usual imperturbability sat down, patiently awaiting the promised explanations. While casually casting her eyes around the small and cheerless-looking room, she suddenly observed that a door had been pierced on one side.

"I see that Solomon has been making some alterations in his house," she said to the Cannibal.

"Ah! you mean that door," he remarked, with a smile of grim and sinister meaning which did not escape the woman's notice. "You know where it leads to?"

"It must lead into Solomon's own bedchamber," said Madge, after a moment's reflection, during which she passed in review the precise arrangements of the house and the distribution of the rooms, with all of which she was well acquainted. "To be sure! that door on the landing leads into Solomon's chamber, but what has made him have another door made, communicating from this room?"

"I'll tell you all about it presently," returned Chiffin, with another peculiar smile, which was about as pleasing as the grin of some horrible monster.

At this moment Solomon made his appearance with the liquor that had been ordered, and as he placed the tray upon the table, he threw a significant look at that new door which had been made, then bent his eyes upon Chiffin, next on Madge, and then retreated from the room, closing the outer door behind him.

"Now perhaps," said Madge Somers, "you will begin your explanations, and tell me what you want with me, because I can assure you my time is fully occupied."

"Then I suppose you've got plenty of business on hand?" said Chiffin, mixing himself a tumbler of brandy and water.

"Yes, you know full well that I am seldom idle. But you seem busy also. By the bye, I thought the last time I saw you, Chiffin, you intended to take a public-house or

settle down in some fashion or another. Don't you remember when and where it was? That night, on the bank of the canal — ”

“ I recollect all about it,” interrupted the Cannibal, savagely, as if he did not over and above like the particular allusion thus made. “ It was when you came to bring me the news that Lady Saxondale didn't mean to let the detectives go on against me and Tony Wilkins. Of course you guessed very well who it was that did the business for that scoundrel Tugs and his wife. They meant to do for me and get all my money, but I'm blowed if I didn't do for them.”

“ It served them right,” remarked Madge, coolly. “ But what business have you in hand? ”

“ Something that will put a decent sum into my pocket,” answered Chiffin, “ and then with what I have got already, I shall be ready to retire from business altogether,” he added, with a chuckling laugh; “ and instead of taking boozing-kens or lodging-houses, or anything of that sort I shall settle down as a genelman and live on my means. But as you have let me into a many good things with you, I'll let you into this with me, — leastways, I want some one to help in doing a certain thing, and as old Solomon won't have anything to do with it himself, I thought of you. So I have been up to your place two or three times, but couldn't find you — ”

“ Well, never mind,” interrupted Madge; “ you have found me at last. Here I am, and now for your explanations. What do you want me for? And what can I get by helping you? ”

“ Fifty guineas,” responded the Cannibal, “ and only for a few minutes' work.”

“ Well, proceed. My time is occupied, but still I can spare enough for your purpose, particularly if it is to be well paid.”

The Cannibal drew his seat a little closer to that where Madge was placed, and having drained his tumbler, and mixed himself another jorum of hot brandy and water, he addressed her in the following manner:

“ I am not going to mention any names, 'cause why it isn't necessary. But you must know that there's a certain party who wants two other parties put out of the way. It's



two genelmen whose disappearance I have got to bring about. The hint how to do it was given me by the lady — for it is a lady, and I don't mind saying this much — who is employing me. She doesn't want these two genelmen to have their throats cut and their bodies found anywhere above ground, which would only cause an immense sensation, as the newspapers say, and lead to no end of inquiries. But what she wants is for these two genelmen to slip out of the world just as easy as if the earth opened and swallowed them up, so that there sha'n't remain the least clue to show where they have gone. Their friends and relations may fancy they have ran away, or anything they like, but that's no business of mine. It's enough for me to know that if these two genelmen disappear all snug and comfortable, with no chance of never turning up no more, I shall get two — I mean a decentish sum, out of which I can afford to pay you fifty for helping me."

"Go on," said Madge, imperturbably. "I am listening."

"Well, you see," proceeded Chiffin, "I sha'n't be at any loss to entice those two genelmen here, because I know how to do it, and have got an excuse ready. And what's more, too, I have got the arrangements all made, settled, and done, to send them out of existence much nicer and easier than if they was let down on the drop at the Old Bailey; 'cause why, here there won't be no ropes around their necks to break their fall and hold 'em up tight."

"Go on," said Madge again, her countenance now exhibiting some degree of interest.

"Come and look here," said Chiffin. Taking up the candle, he opened that newly made door which had already engaged the woman's notice, and led her into the adjoining room, which for many years had served as the chamber where Solomon Patch and his wife were wont to sleep. Madge, as before stated, knew it well, but she now found it completely changed. The bed had been removed. It was no longer fitted as a sleeping-room at all, but was arranged as a parlour, though still meanly enough furnished. There were a few Windsor chairs; a table stood upon a carpet about twelve feet square; and a large piece of furniture, like a bureau, was placed against the original door of communication, which opened from the landing. This door we will henceforth call the old one, to prevent any confusion

when speaking of the new one which had been made to communicate with the adjoining room.

"Well," said Madge Somers, glancing around, "I perceive all the changes that have taken place here, but I cannot understand their purpose."

"I will soon tell you," replied Chiffin, with another of his half-ferocious, half-sinister grins, accompanied too with a low, chuckling laugh. "It was lucky I knew a capital feller of a carpenter, and another good chap of a bricklayer, — two blades of our own sort, and who were glad enough to work for a friend like me as long as they were well paid. Why, I was forced to give old Solomon fifty guineas to let me pull his house to pieces like this here. But I tell you what's more, I have humbugged him," added Chiffin, lowering his voice to a whisper, "that I will take the Billy Goat off his hands, and give him a thousand pounds for the good will. He knows I have got the best part of the blunt, and shall have the rest, and so he bit at it directly."

Madge Somers was too keen and penetrating not to have already suspected, from what the Cannibal had been saying, that the changed but tranquil aspect of the room concealed some preparations fearfully treacherous, and she bent a look of augmenting curiosity upon the Cannibal.

"Now, Madge," he said, continuing to speak in a low, mysterious voice, "you will understand it all in a few minutes. Didn't you know that in one of the cellars underneath this house, there's a thundering deep well, which hasn't been used for a great many years, because somehow or another the water was found to be putrid. It may be that a dead body found its way to the bottom a long time ago, which made the water bad; but whether or not, the well has never been used for the last fifteen years, and the mouth of it in the cellar was covered up with paving-stones. Well, the next thing I must remind you of is, that underneath this room where we are standing — and therefore betwixt this floor and the ceiling of the cellar — there's that scullery place which old Sol and his wife have never used except to put odd things in. One of the very first things that I had done was to have the bricklayer and brick up the window of the scullery that looks into the back yard, — all natural enough, 'cos why the window was broken out and Solomon pretended to be afraid that some of the

queer chaps which frequents the house might get in through that way and pay a visit to the premises which they are so familiar with. The next thing was to make a large hole in the scullery floor, which formed an opening, as you can very well understand, into the cellar, and of course it was managed that this opening should be just above the mouth of the well. The third thing to be done was to cut a square out of this floor here where we are standing — ”

“ Ah! ” ejaculated Madge, for a moment losing her presence of mind, as Chiffin pointed with his club down toward the carpet, and she instinctively started back.

“ Why, you ain’t such a fool, ” he exclaimed, with a chuckling laugh, “ to think that I am going to send you right bang through to the bottom, are you? Not I, indeed! You’ve never done me no harm, but some good turns at times — ”

“ Go on, ” said Madge, instantaneously recovering her self-possession; “ but it was enough to make one start to know that one was standing upon a trap-door which might suddenly fall like a gibbet-drop beneath the feet. ”

“ Yes, and it’s arranged just like a gibbet-drop too. Look here, the trap-door is exactly in this spot, ” and Chiffin kicked aside the carpet as he spoke, showing that the square cut out of the floor was just between the threshold of the new door that had been formed and the table.

“ I understand, ” observed Madge. “ You expect that the two gentlemen who are to be so pleasantly disposed of will pass, one close upon the heels of the other, through this new door, and then the instant they stand on the trap-door, down it is to fall. ”

“ If you had concocted it all yourself, you couldn’t have described it better, ” observed the Cannibal. “ You see, I shall lead the way, as if it was all fair and right enough, and make believe as if I was going to sit down with them swell coves to deliberate at this table. They will follow, and then, as you have so well twigged it, down they must go. You see, on account of the situation of the well underneath, it was necessary to have the trap-door exactly in this spot, and therefore it would not have done to introduce them by the old door. If so, when coming in, they would pass clear of the trap. Now, as it is, the moment they pass the threshold

of the new door, they put their feet on the trap, and it's done in a jiffy."

"And the assistance you require of me," said Madge, now fully penetrating the object for which her own services were needed, "is to pull the bolt, or touch the secret spring, or whatever the contrivance is, just at the proper instant?"

"Right again, old gal," answered Chiffin. "You see that great lumbering bit of furniture against the old door. Well, it's nothing but front and sides. The back and the shelves are all taken out, and so any person can hide inside of it. That's the place where you will be. There's a hole in the front here. Look, you see it, where you can peep through. You will have to go on your knees, because the spring that lets the trap fall is in the floor just behind that furniture. So, when once you have plumped down on your knees, not to say your prayers," parenthetically observed the Cannibal, with another diabolical laugh, "you can peep with one eye through the hole, and catch hold of the iron knob of the spring with one hand at the same time. It works precious easy, as I will show you when the moment comes. But you must take precious good care not to let me down through the trap instead of the two genelman."

Again did Chiffin indulge in a coarse but subdued guffaw, while Madge Somers, with her wonted imperturbability, remarked, "Don't be afraid, I shall be looking out for my reward, and as it will be in your pocket I shall not send you down into the well. But when do you think this business is likely to take place?"

"I only wanted somebody that I could rely upon to help," answered Chiffin, "in order to take the necessary measures to get the two genelman here as soon as possible. Now that I have seen you, and you've agreed, I'll set about it without delay. Perhaps, if you was to call here the day after to-morrow, I should be able to tell you more. Or shall I look up at the cottage?"

"No, I shall not be found there," answered Madge.

"Well, I think it was high time for you to leave that wretched, tumble-down crib," observed the Cannibal. "You will call here, eh?"

"Yes, the day after to-morrow. If you are busy elsewhere, leave word with old Sol when I am likely to be wanted,

and I will be punctual. And now, if you have nothing more to say, I shall wish you good night."

"Good night, Madge. But I say, by the bye," exclaimed Chiffin, "do you happen to have seen that Lady Saxondale of late; she, you know, that me and Tony —"

"As if I did not know perfectly well who you mean," interrupted Madge, fixing her eyes keenly upon the Cannibal for a moment, and then averting them.

"Of course, because you stalled her off from setting the detectives to work. How the deuce did you manage to have any influence with her?"

"We will talk upon that subject another day," responded the woman.

"Yes, and then may be — But no matter," said the Cannibal, interrupting himself, for he was afraid if he let drop any more, Madge would suspect that her ladyship was his employer in the present business, and that if she found out he had been promised the enormous sum of two thousand guineas for accomplishing the diabolical deed, she would not be contented with the fifty guineas which he had offered for her assistance.

"Good night," said Madge once more, and she thereupon took her departure from Solomon Patch's boozing-ken.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE FEMALE GAMESTERS

IT was about half-past ten o'clock when Madge Somers emerged from the precincts of Agar Town. For a little while she walked on slowly and thoughtfully, as if pondering deeply on all that had taken place at Solomon Patch's and likewise hesitating as to what particular course she should pursue. But by degrees her thoughts settled themselves into a resolution, and when this was once taken, she quickened her pace as she proceeded on her way. She reached King's Cross, and passed down Gray's Inn Road. In half an hour from the time she left Agar Town, she drew near the maze of streets, alleys, and courts which constitute that vile district whereof Saffron Hill may be deemed the principal thoroughfare. Still she walked on, and, at length, on reaching Saffron Hill itself, suddenly stopped short.

"No," she said, in subdued but vehement ejaculation, "I will not go there again. I have a duty to perform, and it must be done."

Nevertheless, there appeared to be an inclination in this woman's mind stronger than that sense of duty to which she had alluded, and while she fain would have obeyed the latter, she was irresistibly urged on by the former. She advanced for some twenty or thirty yards, and then stopped short again; a powerful struggle was taking place within her. But her weak point proved the stronger one, paradoxical as the expression may seem, and still she walked on. On reaching the entrance of a court, dismal and dark as the mouth of a cave, she paused once more, she endeavoured to turn her steps in another direction, but her evil genius prevailed. She plunged into a court, and muttering to herself, "Only just for one short half-hour," knocked

three times at the door of a house at the farther extremity.

It was opened in a few moments by a female, and a light glimmered faintly forth; but the door was only thus opened to the length of a chain which held it secure, until Madge Somers mentioned her name, for in the darkness of that court her countenance was scarcely discernible even with the glimmering light that struggled out. Then the chain was let loose, the door opened, and she exchanged a few words with the female who had thus given her admittance. This was the mistress of the house, — the presiding genius of one of the vilest dens which then existed, or still exist, in the British metropolis. She was an elderly woman, with a pale, ghostlike countenance, and small dark eyes, glittering like those of a reptile, but looking larger than they were by reason of the blue circles of the hollow caverns wherein they were set. Her features were sharp, even painfully thin, and her mouth, surrounded by wrinkles, was drawn in with a constant habit of compression. Some grizzly gray hair escaped from beneath a dirty white cap, which added to the corpse-like appearance of her countenance. Her figure was lean and shrivelled; she wore a soiled, rusty black stuff gown, and seemed to have but very little underclothing, for the skirt fell straight, without the slightest bulging out from the waist. Altogether she was a hideous-looking creature, — not merely repulsive, but a woman whose aspect was sufficient to make a beholder afraid. A capacity for any wickedness was as legible upon that vile countenance as if her character had been printed thereon.

She led the way down a narrow, dirty, dilapidated staircase, into a back kitchen. This place was not more than fifteen feet square, and all the centre was occupied by a large deal table. There was a rude form on each side, and a wooden stool at either extremity. Two tallow candles in brass sticks stood upon the table, around which were crowded — indeed, huddled as closely as they could pack themselves — a number of females, whose ages ranged from the young girl of thirteen or fourteen to the old hag of seventy or eighty. The heat was stifling, but the company present appeared not to feel the least inconvenience from that sickly atmosphere, — all their thoughts and all their senses being absorbed in the occupation that was going on. And this was gambling.

Yes, it was a gambling-house for females. None of the other sex was admitted there, and only those who were well known to the mistress of the den, or who were properly introduced by old-standing friends, could obtain ingress thither. At the head of the table sat a woman who was as much like the one we have already described as any human being can possibly resemble another. Indeed, they were sisters; but it was the elder one, who had admitted Madge Somers, that was the mistress of the place. The other was merely paid by the first-named to conduct the gaming-table. We are thus minute as to particulars, because it is no imaginary den which we are describing, but one which existed at the period whereof we are writing.

The woman who presided at the gaming-table kept a regular "bank" just the same as at the great gambling-houses of the West End, one of which we described in an earlier chapter of this narrative. The "bank," which was contained in a tin box with three distinct compartments, consisted of gold, silver, and copper money, and the woman who acted as croupier had a wooden rake to gather up or push the coin about in the most approved style of the avocation. An imperturbable gravity rested upon her thin, ghastly countenance, and if there were any personal trait in which she differed from her elder sister, it was that her eyes, though equally as sinister in expression, had a more steady gaze; but when fixed upon you, they produced the horrible effect of a snake that glares intently upon your countenance.

The female gamblers, assembled in this den, were not entirely of that excessively low description which the reader may possibly have anticipated at the outset. There were several women amongst them who, by their appearance, were evidently the wives of small shopkeepers residing in the neighbourhood; but three or four of the youngest were prostitutes, who plied their hideous calling in that vicinage, and who, when they obtained a few pence or shillings, rushed to this den in the hope of increasing by one vice the gains derived from another.

If we were to take a peep into the front kitchen of the house to which we have introduced the reader, we should find ample preparations in progress for a supper that was to wind up the night's amusements. A large table, twice the



size of that in the back kitchen, was spread for at least four and twenty guests. A number of black-handled knives and forks, pewter pots, metal salt-cellars, pepper-casters, and mustard-pots were spread upon a dirty cloth, and at an immense fire a horrid-looking old woman, evidently half-tipsy and who took quantities of snuff in the filthiest manner possible, was superintending the culinary process. A leg of mutton and a leg of pork, roasting in front of the grate, were both basted with the gravy that dripped from each and which united in a large yellow pie-dish set to catch it. Upon the fire, another leg of pork and another leg of mutton were boiling in an enormous cauldron, together with a piece of beef, and divers saucepans contained proportionate quantities of vegetables. It may be thought that these masses of provisions were immense, considering that the table was laid but for two dozen guests, but when it is stated that each one of those guests would anon be prepared to attack the provender with the utmost voracity, and to eat as long as the physical capacity would allow, it will be seen that the preparations were by no means on too large a scale. We must add that this supper was given gratuitously to all the frequenters of the house, who might drop in between the hours of nine in the evening and one in the morning to take their chance at the gaming-table. The supper, thus provided without cost to the devourers, was a great allurements for the establishment, but the profits of the gaming-table were ample enough to permit this spread to be given nightly.

All the upper part of the house remained unoccupied, except by the two sisters and the old cook; no lodgers were received, the great aim being to keep the real nature of the place as secret as possible. The elder sister, who was the mistress of the establishment, had kept it for years. She had amassed several thousand pounds, and in one of the northern suburbs of London there is a row of some ten or a dozen small cottages, built by means of that money upon freehold land, and all this infamous woman's property.

It was to the den which we have been describing that Madge Somers paid a visit after leaving Solomon Patch's house in Agar Town; and she was evidently as well known at the former as at the latter place, for on entering the back kitchen, nods of recognition passed between herself

and the assembled female gamesters. But few words were exchanged, as all were too intent on the chances of the dice to have much thought for other subjects. The stool at the foot of the table being vacant, Madge took it, and for some minutes she watched the game with the eagerness of one of its most impassioned votaries. All recollection of that duty which she had imposed upon herself, and which had more than once made her hesitate when on her way thither from Agar Town, was now lost sight of; she had no thought, no sense, no faculty for anything save and except the game that was progressing. At the expiration of about ten minutes, she drew forth her greasy old pocketbook, and producing a bank-note, requested change of the croupier. This was immediately given, and she staked a sovereign. She lost. Again she paused for a few minutes, ere she ventured another coin, but presently the chances of the dice seemed favourable once more, and a second piece of gold was staked. Now she won. Then followed a run of luck, and in about ten minutes twenty sovereigns were piled up before her. With a kind of desperate resolution she rose from her seat, and said she should go, but she was immediately assailed by numerous entreaties on the part of the players, "that she would take one more chance."

She wavered, the entreaties were pressed; she consented, and sat down again. In another ten minutes the pile of gold had disappeared, and another note from her pocketbook was changed. The run of luck was now against her, while a young girl of barely fourteen, who had commenced that evening with a few coppers, had ten or a dozen sovereigns in front of her.

The game continued, and presently the mistress of the establishment, who had quitted the back kitchen almost immediately after Madge's arrival, reappeared, bearing a tray on which was a single wine-glass, while in her right hand she carried a large stone jar. This contained gin, or, rather, a compound of the woman's own concoction, consisting of some of the distiller's spirit, with a very large amount of vitriol and sugared water. She filled the wine-glass, and presented it to the young girl who was winning gold. The lost creature took it and poured its contents with avidity down her throat, giving a sigh of pleasure when she had imbibed the deleterious fluid. The glass was refilled, and

presented to the female who sat next. In this manner it went the complete round, — Madge Somers being the only person who did not accept the proffered dram, for of all her vices a love of ardent spirits was not one.

The fiery liquor gave an unnatural exhilaration to the spirits of those who were already excited by the fluctuating chances of the game. But it must be confessed that the whole proceedings of this den were in one sense orderly enough. If ever a player attempted to quarrel, or disputed some particular point, she was instantaneously called to order by the croupier, and the effect was truly magical, for that woman had contrived to establish a despotic authority over the frequenters of the house, and thus was she invaluable to her elder sister. An occasional oath passed unnoticed, but if anything really obscene or disgusting was said, it immediately called forth a severe rebuke, accompanied by a threat of expulsion, in which menace the generality of the players seemed perfectly ready to back the croupier; for it must be understood, as already hinted, that there were several females present who called themselves “respectable married women.”

It requires but little effort of the imagination to penetrate the circumstances under which some of these “respectable married women” visited this den. We may suppose one to be the wife of a man keeping a potato and coal shed; that she had gone out to collect a few little debts owing by the poorer customers in that neighbourhood, and that with the few shillings thus gathered into her purse she dropped in with the hope of converting them into as many guineas. If she lost, she would go home full of excuses to her husband: the debtors had not paid, she had fallen in with her friend Mrs. So-and-so, who had engaged her to supper, and hence her coming home so late. Perhaps the husband himself was at the public-house, and reeling home half-tipsy at a still later hour, was unaware of the time when his wife had entered. Very likely a quarrel might take place, originating on one side or the other, but what might be still more certainly reckoned upon was that in the long run the principal profits of the business would go into the pocket of the woman keeping the gambling den, and insolvency would overtake the potato and coal shed.

From the little sketch thus hurriedly given, the reader

may form an idea of that class of "respectable married females" who frequented the den. There are at this moment several gambling-houses for females in London, and many a small tradesman finds out to his cost that his wife has been allured to one of these pandemonia. As a matter of course, the idea of those who frequent such places is, as we have above hinted, that they will convert their pence into shillings, and their shillings into pounds. Insensate fools! infatuated wretches! If they only paused and reflected for a single moment, they would perceive that the keeper of the gaming-house alone nets the profit, and that this profit is to the loss of the gamblers themselves.

But to return to the thread of our narrative: Madge Somers continued playing, at first cautiously, as we have seen her, then, as she lost, with a growing recklessness, and ultimately, as her losses increased, with a kind of desperation. She did not give way to any outburst of passion, she neither vociferated nor gesticulated, but her looks, her attitude, her entire bearing indicated one prolonged, continuous, and concentrated sense of terrific excitement. Now her eyebrows were drawn up, now they became corrugated; now her half-open mouth and the suspended breath showed the poignancy of her suspense, then the nervous quickness with which she drew forth another note and hazarded another stake served as a further proof of the desperate recklessness with which she was playing. Ultimately, at about two o'clock in the morning, she rose from her seat at the foot of the table, muttering to herself, "Not a shilling left! no, not a penny!"

But still she thrust her long, bony fingers into every recess of the greasy old pocketbook, to ascertain if perchance a bank-note, or even a sovereign, might have become embedded in some corner. No, it was empty, and she was indeed penniless. The remains of the last sum of money she had received from Lady Saxondale had that night been swallowed up in the same vortex to which hundreds and hundreds of pounds of the woman's money — the ill-gotten gains of long years of crime — had already found their way.

"Now then for supper!" ejaculated that same young girl whom we have already noticed as being in Fortune's favour on this particular night; and well she might speak exultingly,

for she was the possessor of thirty golden sovereigns, — a sum that appeared to her a colossal fortune.

“ You will stay and take some supper, Madge?” said the elder sister of the two who presided over that den of infamy.

“ Not I. You know I never stay to supper,” responded Madge Somers, and then, in a savage tone, she added, “ Come and open the door, and let me get away as quick as ever I can.”

The keeper of the gambling-house was too well accustomed to Madge Somers’s eccentric moods to take any notice of the present one, and she accordingly gave the inveterate female gamester prompt egress from the place.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### WILLIAM AND ANGELA

It was on the evening of the day following the incidents recorded in the previous chapter, that, between eight and nine o'clock, William Deveril and his sister Angela were seated together in the ground floor parlour of their beautiful little villa near the Regent's Park. The weather was warm, even to sultriness, for there was not the slightest breeze to dispel the heat which the sun of a glowing August day had left behind after sinking into its western home. The curtains had within a few minutes been drawn over the window, but the casement itself was open. A lamp burned on the table, and its light shone upon the handsome countenance of the young artist, and on the enchanting features of his sister, as they conversed together in a cheerful strain.

An angel in loveliness as well as in name, that beauteous creature might well be described as the most ravishing embodiment of female charms ever beheld by mortal eyes. We delineated her portrait in one of the earliest chapters of this narrative, when she appeared upon the stage of the opera; we described her when she burst upon the delighted vision of the thousands gathered there to pour forth their enthusiastic plaudits, which were as much a tribute to her matchless beauty as to her proficiency in the dance. We beheld her then, expressing and personifying the poetry of motion with sylphlike delicacy and winning grace. We now behold her at home, beneath her own roof, plainly but tastefully attired, and though the brilliancy of the portrait may be somewhat subdued, yet has it lost nothing of its beauty. The dress which she now wears sets off the exquisite symmetry of her shape to as much advantage as did the aerial drapery which she wore upon the stage; the

statuesque contours of her full and graceful form are developed, while at the same time they are concealed, by the costume which now clothes them. Her shining dark hair falls in massive tresses upon the softly rounded shoulders; her eyes, so large and dark, beam with the holiest lustre of purity and innocence. Bright as are those regards, yet are they full of a virginal chastity, for hers were looks which angels themselves might bend upon earth from the sunny regions of heaven. It needed but a single glance at Angela Deveril to convince the beholder that virtue had chosen her fair bosom as a temple wherein to establish its home, and that the purity of her thoughts had not been marred by her contact with the theatrical sphere.

We said that the brother and sister were conversing cheerfully, and it was so. For was not William now happy in his love for the beautiful Florina Staunton? And was not Angela happy at the success which thus promised to crown her brother's highest aspirations? She herself knew not what love was. She had never known it,—nought beyond the love which she had experienced for her parents, and which she felt for her brother; but to that other love which glowed in his heart toward Florina, and which Florina reciprocated so tenderly and so devotedly, the unsophisticated Angela was utterly a stranger. She however saw that it was potent to produce happiness or misery, and now that it was creative of the former feeling in respect to her brother, she rejoiced that she should know it and acknowledge its empire.

But let us listen to some part of the conversation which is taking place between them.

“It is close upon nine o'clock,” said William, looking at his watch, “and our kind friend Mr. Gunthorpe is always punctual.”

“What think you, dear William, that he can mean,” asked Angela, “by that expression in his note of yesterday which bade us prepare for some strange revelations in respect to himself?”

“I cannot conceive, sweet sister,” responded our hero. “But this I do know, and am rejoiced at, that in the same letter he emphatically repeated the assurance he gave me a little while ago, that you were to bid adieu to the stage.”

“Ah, is he not benevolent? Is he not good?” exclaimed

Angela. "How is it that we have found so much favour in his sight?"

"He is one of those men," responded William, "who are delighted in doing good. I fear from certain expressions which he has at times let drop that he has known much care and sorrow in past years, but instead of hardening his heart, instead of embittering his feelings against the world, whatsoever sufferings he has experienced have only tended to enlarge his philanthropy. There are few men like Mr. Gunthorpe, Angela, and there are few persons who, like us, possess so dear and valued a friend."

"It is indeed a source of infinite congratulation for ourselves," rejoined Angela. Then, after a few moments' pause, she observed, "You were not long with Lady Florina to-day."

"No, dear sister, because she also was expecting a visit from Mr. Gunthorpe. He had intimated his intention of calling in Cavendish Square at about three o'clock and it appeared that Lady Florina was likewise to hear something of importance relative to him. I therefore limited my visit. Besides, dear Angela, I do not choose to leave you too much alone. But, ah! there is another point in Mr. Gunthorpe's note to us, which has given me the most unfeigned delight, — I mean his promise that Lady Macdonald and Florina shall call upon you here to-morrow, to make your acquaintance and embrace you as my sister. This will indeed be a happiness for me. You will love Florina."

"Yes, for your sake as well as for her own, dear William. I am sure that the object of your love must be one meriting the highest esteem and admiration."

"Oh, she is! she is!" cried Deveril, enthusiastically. "She is one of the few flowers that do not sicken and wither in the tainted atmosphere of fashionable life."

"Ah, that wicked Lady Saxondale," said Angela, "to have spread such a story concerning you. But what course is now to be adopted with regard to her?"

"Doubtless Mr. Gunthorpe will inform us presently," replied Deveril. "The matter rests entirely in his hands."

"Do you not wonder, William, how it is that our good old friend possesses such influence with Lady Macdonald? It must be as we have conjectured, that he is the very intimate friend of the Marquis of Eagledean."



“ Yes, he himself has told me as much,” replied Deveril. “ But, ah, here he is!” he ejaculated, as the sounds of carriage-wheels reached his ears through the open casement.

The brother and sister rose from their seats, and hastened to the front door to meet the visitor, who proved to be the individual whom they were expecting. There were kind greetings and grasping of hands, and in a few moments the nobleman was seated between William and Angela in the elegantly furnished parlour. Now that the light of the lamp shone upon his features, they were both surprised as well as rejoiced to observe that he had an altered look, — but a look that was changed for the better. It was an expression of countenance indicative of heartfelt satisfaction and joy.

“ Ah! my dear young friends,” he said, smiling upon them both, “ you doubtless perceive some little alteration in me, and it is so. Thank Heaven, I find myself destined, in my declining years, to experience a happiness which for a long, long time past I had never dared hope to enjoy.”

“ You, Mr. Gunthorpe,” said Angela, her sweet musical voice being tremulous with emotions, “ who are always studying to do good to others, richly deserve whatsoever happiness has now become your lot.”

“ And believe me, my dear Angela,” responded the nobleman, “ that in my own felicity I shall not forget the pleasing duty of ensuring the felicity of others. First with regard to yourself, William,” he continued, now specially addressing himself to our young hero, “ I must explain the measures which I have adopted to ensure your welfare. I have this day seen your Florina, and have told her many things with which she was previously unacquainted. Of some of those things her aunt Lady Macdonald was already aware, though she had kept them profoundly secret, but even she knew not all. Now they are both acquainted with everything that concerns me. In a few weeks, William, you shall conduct Florina to the altar. It is my purpose to settle upon you an income of two thousand a year — ”

“ No, Mr. Gunthorpe, impossible! impossible!” exclaimed William, well-nigh overwhelmed by this surprising munificence. “ I could not thus become dependent on your bounty. Pardon me, my dear sir, for speaking thus frankly; you will not attribute it to ingratitude on my part — ”

“ I attribute it to the proper feeling which inspires you,

my young friend, and I honour you for it. But it suits my purpose and my intentions to give you this income. I will tell you why. Florina has certain claims upon me, and it is to her that I make this bequest. But as I cannot endure the idea of a husband being dependent on his wife, I choose to settle the money upon you instead of upon herself. Why, my dear boy, if you mean to marry a young lady of her rank, you must have a suitable income, and as for your toiling to earn a livelihood, it must not be thought of. You shall pursue your studies by way of amusement, and that is all. Now, don't interrupt me, I am doing everything for the best, and perhaps I shall tell you something presently which will show you that Florina has a perfect right to expect all this at my hands."

"My dear sir, I am at a loss for words," said William, profoundly affected, yet still loth to give an assent to the pecuniary arrangements proposed, "I know not how to express myself —"

"But I can understand all that you would say," interrupted his good old friend. "And now, Angela," he continued, turning toward the young lady, adown whose cheeks the tears of mingled joy and gratitude were trickling; for great indeed was that joy, and fervid also was that gratitude which she experienced toward the noble-hearted philanthropist who was displaying such splendid munificence toward her brother, "now, dear Angela," he said, "one word relative to yourself. Your engagement at the opera was for one season, and that season is over. I dare say you have already had an offer from the manager to renew it for the following season, and doubtless plenty of offers from directors of the Continental operas. But you will refuse each and all. At the same time you are not to be dependent upon your brother, although I know full well that everything he possesses is yours, and everything you possess is reciprocally his. But he and Florina must have their income to themselves, and you shall have yours. So you will permit me to settle upon you five hundred a year —"

"Mr. Gunthorpe," interrupted the young lady, "so much bounty on your part —"

"Do not say a word," he cried. "I am rich, — this you knew all along, but I am far richer than you ever imagined. Had not my own circumstances altered in another sense —"

as I will presently explain — I should have done much more for Florina, whereby you, William, would have been benefited. Ah! now I perceive that you both are simultaneously struck with the same suspicion, you have penetrated the secret I was about to reveal to your ears, you see that I am no longer plain and humble Mr. Gunthorpe — ”

“ No, my lord,” said William Deveril, “ you are — you must be — the Marquis of Eagledean himself.”

As he thus spoke, our young hero rose from his chair with a feeling of profound respect toward that good nobleman, while, on the other side, Angela sank upon her knees, and, taking his hand, murmured, “ My lord, we cannot love or revere you more than if you had remained as we had hitherto known you.”

“ My dear young friends,” exclaimed the marquis, compelling William to resume his seat on one side, and Angela to rise from her knees on the other, “ I have studied the excellence of your dispositions, I have marked the purity of your lives, and even if my duty toward my niece Florina had not impelled me to bestow a fortune to enable her to become your wife, William, I should nevertheless have given yourself and your amiable sister a proof of my regard. And now listen to me, while I relate many strange things, for I purpose to keep no secrets from you, as henceforth you will be welcome and honoured guests at my dwelling, and there are beings beneath that roof to whom I long to present you.”

The Marquis of Eagledean then proceeded to relate the history of his love for Lady Everton, and most of those details which are already known to the reader. But we need scarcely observe that he did not draw aside the veil from those lamentable circumstances which entered into the past career of his daughter Elizabeth Paton; and with these exceptions, he recapitulated all the facts which have occupied so many of the previous chapters of our narrative. William and Angela listened with feelings of the deepest interest, and when the marquis had concluded, they proffered their congratulations on his altered position in life now that he had found two children whom he loved, and was on the eve of being united to the object of his first and only affections.

“ William,” continued the marquis, “ there is one more

subject on which we have to converse. I allude to those proceedings that we have threatened to take against Lady Saxondale. You are now aware that Lord Harold Staunton is my nephew. I more than fear — indeed, it is certain from what we already know — that this bad woman has contrived to obtain no small degree of influence over him. It is my duty as well as my wish to rescue him from the circle of her fascinations. But considering the empire which she must have gained over his heart, to have been enabled to make him her instrument in the endeavour to take away your life, it can only be by revealing her true character to him in the blackest dyes that he may be weaned from his infatuation. I do not imagine that he is aware of the fact that she, for some deep and dark purposes of her own, was in correspondence with that dreadful character, the man Chiffin. It is necessary to ascertain for what purpose that man's services were required by her ladyship. Previous to leaving London, I sent a note to that man at the public-house in Agar Town, desiring him to let me know if anything new transpired in respect to Lady Saxondale, and telling him where he might send a letter to me. Of course I failed not to hint that his reward should be ample, and he has already had proofs that I am not niggard with my gold."

"And has he answered your lordship?" inquired Deveril. "Have you heard anything from him?"

"This very afternoon, on my return home from Cavendish Square," replied the marquis, "I found a note from Chiffin. In that scrawl he desires me, accompanied by yourself, to pay another visit to that den in Agar Town, to-morrow evening at nine o'clock, when he promises to have the most important information to communicate."

"Oh, my lord," said Angela, over whose countenance a shade had fallen, "do you not fear to expose yourselves to the dangers of that horrible den, and to the possible treachery of that dreadful man?"

"My sweet girl," responded the marquis, in a benevolent tone of reassurance and encouragement, "you have nothing to tremble for, either on the part of your brother or your old friend. The appointment is given for an hour when that place is frequented by a number of persons, and though they may be all bad characters, yet no outrage is ever attempted by a mixed company of that description. As for the man himself,

money is his idol, and as he doubtless thinks that he will make a good thing out of me from first to last, he will not kill the goose in the hope of obtaining all the golden eggs, at once. To-morrow," continued the marquis, "Lady Macdonald and Florina will pay you a visit between two and three o'clock. At five my carriage will be here to fetch you both to dine with me at the manor. I long to introduce you to Lady Everton, to Adolphus, to Elizabeth, and to Frank. Then, soon after eight, you and I, William, will repair to Agar Town. I shall devise some excuse, because no one at the manor must be made acquainted with the real nature of the business we have in hand, or the place to which we are going. In respect to what concerns yourself and Lady Saxondale, William, we shall know how to act better after this interview with Chiffin to-morrow evening. The greater the mass of evidence we can accumulate against her, the more easily shall we reduce her to terms. My object, as you may now comprehend it, is a double one: namely, to rescue my nephew from her clutches, and likewise to compel her to contradict the foul calumny she has propagated in respect to yourself. We may then leave the vile, bad woman to such chastisement as her own utter mortification will be certain to inflict. But as for this nephew of mine," added the marquis, shaking his head gloomily, "from all I have seen and all I have heard, I deeply fear that he has become inveterate in the ways of vice and demoralization."

"Let us hope for the best, my lord," said Deveril. "You know that so far as I am concerned, I freely forgive him."

"Generous-hearted boy!" exclaimed Lord Eagledean. "I know that you have forgiven him long ago."

"And even if I had not," rejoined our hero, "it would be sufficient to have learned that he is your lordship's nephew to induce me to bury the past in oblivion."

The Marquis of Eagledean now rose to take his departure, and the brother and sister accompanied him forth into the little garden front of the house. There his lordship took leave of Angela, shaking her warmly by the hand, and she retreated into the dwelling, for she perceived that the marquis desired to say a few words in private with her brother. And it was so, for the nobleman, taking Deveril's arm, led him slowly toward the gate, saying in a subdued voice, "William, you are now acquainted with all that has taken

place between myself and Lady Everton. The world will perhaps look upon her past conduct as frailty and levity, and upon mine as that of a seducer. Now, my dear boy, I have invited yourself and Angela to my house to-morrow, but if you have the slightest hesitation to bring your beautiful sister in contact — ”

“ My lord, not another word, I beseech you, upon this subject! ” interrupted Deveril. “ At five o'clock Angela and myself will be prepared to wait upon your lordship, and all those whom we may find beneath your roof. ”

The marquis said not another word, but pressed Deveril's hand cordially, and, entering his carriage, drove homeward.

## CHAPTER XXV

### LOVE - AFFAIRS

ABOUT four o'clock in the afternoon of the following day, Francis Paton might have been seen walking alone in a distant part of the grounds attached to Stamford Manor. He had sought the shadiest spot, not so much because the sun was still powerful, but because he wished to escape the notice of any persons who might be roving about, and likewise to be left in the companionship of his own thoughts. The youth was full of a nervous anxiety; there was a flush upon his cheeks, the glitter of uneasy suspense in his eyes, and from time to time, when his ear caught a sound like that of an approaching footstep, he stopped and flung an eagerly penetrating look through the shrubs and evergreens in the direction of the mansion. Then, as he descried not the person whom he expected, he walked on again, murmuring to himself, "How long the interview lasts!"

Indeed, for an entire hour — since three o'clock — had Francis Paton been walking to and fro in that shady retreat, and the interval which had elapsed appeared to him at least thrice as long. Twenty times had he looked at his watch, twenty times had he stopped short to glance in the direction of the manor, and again and again did he murmur, "How long the interview lasts!"

But at length he beheld his sister advancing hastily toward the spot where he was awaiting her arrival, and perceiving that she came quickly, and not with a slow, languid pace, his heart bounded with hope, for he thought within himself that she had pleasing tidings to communicate. As she approached nearer still, he saw in her looks sufficient to confirm this anticipation, and flying toward her, he exclaimed, "What news, dear Elizabeth? What does our father say?"

"We have both alike, my dear brother," she responded, "everything to hope."

A cry of joy burst from Frank's lips, and he embraced his sister with the warmest effusion of delight.

"Now tell me," he said, "everything that has taken place."

"Oh, then, dear Frank," she replied, archly, and yet with a softly blushing confusion at the same time, "you will now have patience to listen to everything that I may have to say?"

"Yes," he answered, "provided that you have nothing of a disagreeable nature to qualify the joyous intelligence already communicated."

"I do not think you will find it so," she rejoined. "But first, dear Frank, I will speak of your own little love-affair. Come, let me take your arm, and we will walk to and fro beneath this grateful shade. I represented to our father frankly and candidly everything which had taken place between yourself and Miss Juliana Farefield, as you had previously related it all to me —"

"You told his lordship everything?" murmured Frank, half-averting his blushing countenance.

"Oh, yes! Did we not agree, when I undertook to become spokeswoman in the matter, that our father was to be dealt with frankly and unreservedly? Well, then, my dear brother, I told him all, and at first he looked very grave and very serious, for more reasons than one."

"And those reasons?" asked young Paton, quickly.

"The first, as he explained them to me," continued Elizabeth, "was because he could not help thinking that it was a mere transient passion on Juliana's part, but yet he admitted that he might be mistaken."

"Oh, yes, he is mistaken!" ejaculated Frank, vehemently, "for I know that she loves me, and were it not an egregious vanity on my part to use such terms, I should say that she loves me devotedly — adoringly."

"So much the better, Frank, inasmuch as you, my dear brother, are so deeply enamoured of her. That however was one reason which made the marquis look grave. The second is, because he has no reason to entertain any good feeling toward Juliana's mother, Lady Saxondale. On the contrary, there are certain circumstances, which he partly



explained to me, and which have not only brought him already in collision with her, but now threaten to make a still wider breach between them. These circumstances relate to his nephew Lord Harold, and to Mr. William Deveril, whom you have often seen, and who is coming to dine here to-day."

"But no matter for the circumstances, my dear sister," exclaimed Frank, impatiently, "so long as our father has not placed his negative —"

"No, my dear brother, I have already assured you to the contrary. Now listen to what the marquis says. He himself has experienced too bitterly the fatal effects of thwarting the heart's affections to entertain the slightest idea of attempting a similar coercion with either of his children. No, no, he will not do that, — not for worlds would he adopt a course by which he himself and our dear mother were rendered such cruel sufferers. He would rather strain many a point, rather make much sacrifice of feeling as a parent, than practise such tyranny, such cruelty. This therefore does he propose, that you shall put Juliana Farefield's love to the test; he himself will suggest the means, and sketch forth the plan to be adopted, and in three or four days shall you repair into Lincolnshire for the purpose."

"Oh, that condition I cheerfully accept!" exclaimed Frank, "and I feel deeply grateful to our father, deeply grateful to you also, my dearest sister —"

"No gratitude to me, Frank," interrupted Elizabeth. "Heaven grant that the result of the test, whatsoever it may be, shall prove in accordance with your hopes and aspirations! The reason that made me so long ere I rejoined you here was because our father — after he had heard all that I had to say, both on your account and my own — proceeded to the drawing-room to consult our mother. Ah! you may suppose that during the twenty minutes I was left alone in the library, I endured some degree of suspense both for your sake and mine. And yet hope preponderated above fear, for the marquis had listened to me with so much benevolence, with so much paternal kindness, he had encouraged me in such gentle and soothing terms to proceed each time I hesitated, — in short, I saw full well that he would do all in his power to minister unto our happiness."

"And you were not mistaken, Elizabeth?" exclaimed Frank. "But in reference to yourself —"

"Our father will grant Don Diego Christoval an interview the day after to-morrow," answered Miss Paton, the rich blood again mantling upon her cheeks, "and I do not think there is any reason to apprehend an unsatisfactory termination to that meeting. To-morrow evening, you know, dear Frank," continued Elizabeth, speaking more seriously, "the hands of our father and mother will be united in the holy bond of marriage. The special license is already procured, — the various arrangements are made. But these indeed are few, inasmuch as the ceremony will take place with the utmost privacy. Perhaps this marriage may be followed shortly by several others."

"Oh," cried Frank, in the sanguine enthusiasm of youthful years, "how delightful would it be if Adolphus and Henrietta, yourself and the count, and — and —"

"Speak it out, my dear brother," said Elizabeth, with a smile upon her lips and a blush upon her cheeks; "Juliana and yourself, if we were all to be married on the same day — Well, we shall see."

"And now, dear sister, that you have at length learned what love is," continued Frank, "tell me, does it not constitute a new existence? Is it not a paradise in itself? Does it not seem to transport one, as it were, into another state of being? Oh, you who but so short a time back were almost boasting that your heart was inaccessible to love — Why, I do really believe that all along, from the very first moment you ever beheld your handsome Christoval in the Catalonian Hills, you really loved him; that is to say, the germs of love were engendered in your heart, but the circumstances not being congenial for their expansion and growth, they remained as it were latent, unknown, unsuspected, but not the less surely implanted there; and it only required a change of circumstances, such as those under which you and Don Diego recently met, to evoke these germs of love into active vitality and a recognized existence."

"There may be some truth in what you say, Frank," observed Elizabeth, in a subdued voice; "yes, there may be," and for a few moments she reflected profoundly upon the idea which he had suggested. Then, suddenly raising her magnificent dark eyes which had been bent downward,

she exclaimed, with her wonted blithness, "Come, Frank, we must hasten and dress for dinner. The Deverils and the Leydens are coming, and it will be a happy party."

The brother and sister sped back to the mansion, and it was indeed a happy party which was gathered in the splendid drawing-room at about six o'clock. William Deveril, who had seen Frank in his page's livery at Saxondale House, could not help thinking that handsome as he had looked then, he appeared to far greater advantage in his present elegant evening costume, and he shook hands with him in a manner so ingenuously cordial and warm, that it was as much as to imply the words, "We are bosom friends from this moment."

Angela — who, in a plain white dress, looked ravishingly beautiful — was heartily welcomed by Lady Everton, and she was soon on the most friendly terms with Elizabeth Paton and Henrietta Leyden. And here we may observe that it would have been difficult, if all England were searched through, to discover three more perfect specimens of female loveliness than Elizabeth, Angela, and Henrietta, or two handsomer youths than William Deveril and Francis Paton. But Adolphus, did he not also appear to advantage? Yes, and wonderfully improved was he alike in personal appearance and the tone of his intellect. Mrs. Leyden and little Charley were amongst the guests, and the sweet boy was full of the most joyous spirits. Altogether, we repeat, it was indeed a happy party.

Soon after eight o'clock the Marquis of Eagledean and William Deveril entered the carriage, which was in readiness, and which drove away in the direction of Agar Town.

"And so Florina and Angela at once became as affectionate as two sisters," observed the marquis, referring to some conversation which had already taken place between himself and William Deveril in the course of the evening.

"Angela was delighted with Florina," answered our hero; "indeed, how could she be otherwise? For the heart which is all amiable and pure is certain to love a being who is herself amiability and purity."

"No doubt of it," said the marquis. "I was convinced they would immediately experience a fondness for one another. Florina was already much prepossessed in favour of your sister, and of course Angela was equally prepared

to love the object of your affection. But Lady Macdonald, what think you of her? ”

“ Her ladyship was most amiable,” replied William. “ Altogether, both Angela and myself had every cause to be pleased and flattered by the visit. We are to dine in Cavendish Square the day after to-morrow.”

“ I know it, for we are to be there to meet you,” replied his lordship. “ Lady Everton will in the meanwhile have become Marchioness of Eagledean. Elizabeth and Adolphus will also be of the party.”

“ And Frank, your amiable son Frank? ” asked William.

“ He is going upon a journey, of which I will tell you more particulars another time. By the bye, I thought I had something to communicate, which perhaps is of more or less consequence, but whether it will prove so, we shall see. That woman whom you rescued from drowning, and who is to call at your residence in the evening of the 21st of this month, at nine o'clock, — is it not so? ”

“ Yes, my lord; it was in the evening of the 21st of July that she gave the appointment that day month, hour for hour. Oh, I have not forgotten it, and often and often do I ask myself what secrets he may have to reveal, or whether it were not all the outpouring of a half-crazed brain.”

“ No, I do not think so,” interrupted the marquis. “ From the particulars you narrated to me, I am inclined to anticipate that she will really have something of importance to communicate. But I was about to tell you something more concerning her. It happened that this afternoon my daughter Elizabeth had a conversation with me on certain matters regarding Frank, and in the course of what took place, she mentioned several little things which had occurred at Saxondale House during the last few weeks of his residence there. Amongst those occurrences were certain visits, paid under very mysterious circumstances to Lady Saxondale, by a woman precisely answering the description of that same person whom you rescued from the River Trent.”

“ Ah! then doubtless she was on her way at the time to pay a visit to the castle,” exclaimed William Deveril. “ I recollect that she spoke a great deal of Lady Saxondale. How peremptorily she demanded what I was doing in that neighbourhood. And how strangely she told me that if I myself had been to the castle, it was somewhat important

she should know it. I remember also that when I told her I had never set foot in Saxondale Castle in my life, she gave vent to such singular ejaculations, and looked at me with an expression of countenance that I never can forget. I besought her to explain herself; I told her that she was torturing me cruelly, — that by her looks and her language she was piling up mystery upon mystery, and yet she would not relieve me from suspense. But this was not all. When I spoke of those overtures which Lady Saxondale had made to me, she adjured me in the most solemn manner to tell her the truth, whether I had really rejected them. Then how suddenly satisfied and even pleased did she seem when I gave her a positive answer.”

“It is strange — most strange,” said the Marquis of Eagledean, in a musing tone. “No conjecture can possibly penetrate that woman’s meaning, or fathom the mystery. But still those visits which she paid to Saxondale House, — for there can be no mistake as to the identity of the woman whom Frank saw with that of the woman of whom you are speaking, — those visits, I say, would seem to show that she has some intimate knowledge of Lady Saxondale’s affairs, and hence her perseverance in questioning you. Yes, William, there is evidently some profound and important secret which your poor father vainly endeavoured to reveal on his death-bed, which the manager Thompson was likewise acquainted with, and of which this singular woman has some inkling. Well, the 21st is not very far distant now, and then we shall see whether the woman will keep the appointment. I have promised to be with you at the time, my dear William, and I shall not fail. But here we are at the spot where I bade the coachman halt.”

## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE SNARE

THE carriage had stopped in the same place where the Marquis of Eagledean and William Deveril had alighted on the former occasion of their visit to Agar Town, and the coachman being ordered to wait their return, they proceeded toward Solomon Patch's boozing-ken. On reaching the entrance of that establishment, the uproarious sounds of mirth and revelry rang forth even louder than usual, and on crossing the threshold, the visitors perceived the landlord and his better half serving malt and spirituous liquor to the ill-looking persons gathered about the bar. It was from the tap-room that the din of voices emanated, and the whole conversation of the revellers there appeared to be made up of oaths, obscenities, slang songs, and ribald jests.

The moment the marquis and William Deveril made their appearance, Solomon Patch, evidently prepared for their arrival, stepped forward to receive them with his usual cringing servility, and inducted them into the little parlour behind the bar. He officiously handed them chairs, and bustling about, drew a bottle of wine and put some glasses on the table, before they had leisure to utter a word, much less give a specific order for any refreshment, even if they had required it.

"Is a certain person here?" asked the nobleman, with a significant look at Solomon Patch.

"Yes, he be, sir," was the reply. "Mr. Chiffin, who is a genelman of the greatest punctuality, and never keeps nobody waiting for nothing whatsumdever, will show the light of his blessed countenance in less than five minutes."

"You seem to have a great deal of custom here," remarked

Lord Eagledean, perceiving that the landlord lingered in the room, and not choosing to be uncivil to him.

“ Well, sir, me and my missus is plain, simple bodies, — say-nothing-to-nobody kind of folks, and as long as we can earn our honest crustesses for tea, dinner, and breakfastesses, we don’t grumble. We pays the queen’s taxes as regular as clockwork, but we don’t pay no water-rates, ’cos why there’s no water laid on the place. The canal, you see, sir, is so precious handy.”

“ Very handy, indeed,” said the marquis, drily; then, as a sudden reminiscence flashed to his mind, sending a cold shudder through his entire form at the same time, he observed, “ By the bye, that dreadful murder which was committed close by here, in the barge, I mean, has any clue been ever discovered to the perpetrator of the deed? ”

“ Never, sir, that I’ve heerd of,” replied Solomon Patch, without the slightest change of countenance, although he knew full well that the murderer was beneath his roof at that very moment, and what was more, too, that he was deliberately and coolly planning another double murder for the hour that was passing.

At this moment the door opened, and Chiffin the Cannibal made his appearance. He took off his battered old white hat surrounded with the rusty black crape, and made what he intended to be a respectful-looking bow to the two visitors. Solomon Patch glided back into the bar, and Chiffin, closing the door, took a seat opposite to the marquis and Deveril.

“ So you got my note, Mr. Gunthorpe? ” he said, with a significant nod, as much as to imply that it was very important business to which it related.

“ That is the reason we are here this night, and at this hour,” replied the marquis. “ I suppose you have something to communicate concerning Lady — ”

“ Hush, sir, hush! ” said Chiffin, turning around and looking toward the door. “ That old Patch and his wife,” he continued, in a subdued voice, “ have got ears as sharp as their eyes, and I do believe they can see through a brick wall. I wouldn’t for the world have them know what you’ve come here about; they would fasten themselves upon me till they got out of me every farthing of the couple of hundred guineas you’re going to give me.”

"Humph!" said the marquis, drily. "You have fixed your price beforehand?"

"Rather so," responded Chiffin, with a cunning leer, "because I know the value of the information I am going to give you. Why, sir, I've got two letters — But I'm blowed if we can talk here," he added, again affecting to look uneasily around. "I know old Sol and his wife are pricking up their ears."

"Then why did you make an appointment for us to meet you here?" demanded Lord Eagledean.

"'Cos why I didn't know another crib where two gentlemen could meet a chap like me without exciting unpleasant notice. Besides, I live here —"

"Ah! you live here?" said the marquis.

"Why, yes, I've got a room of my own," observed Chiffin, "and a very tidy sitting apartment it is too. But come, before we go any farther, is it all right about the blunt?"

"If you mean the money," rejoined the marquis, "I have enough about me to satisfy your demand. Have you not already had proofs of my liberality? Depend upon it, I will give you a fair price for your letters."

Chiffin reflected for a few moments. He had been driving at a particular object: namely, to get as much as he could out of the two persons before he consigned them to destruction. His rapacity almost prompted him to be more explicit and eager in his demand, but he feared that if he were to display such greediness, a suspicion would be excited in their minds; for they would naturally argue that if he could transact the money part of the business in the bar-parlour, he could likewise show them the letters in the same place. He accordingly resolved not to risk the two thousand guineas which he was to receive from Lady Saxondale, by any further angling for the two hundred that he sought to obtain of his intended victims.

"Well, then, gentlemen," he said, suddenly rising from his seat, "let's to business." Then pretending to look anxiously over the blind of the window between the parlour and the bar, he again turned toward them, observing, in a lower tone, "I knew they were on the watch. Come along with me."

Thus speaking, Chiffin took up a candle, and opening the door, led the way toward the staircase.



“ Shall I send the wine and glasses up, Mr. Chiffin? ” asked old Solomon, by way of giving a complexion of fairness to the present proceeding.

“ Yes, you may as well, and some brandy too, for that matter, ” responded the Cannibal. “ Come along, genelman, this way. ”

For a moment William Deveril clutched the arm of the marquis, and threw upon him a significant look, — not one of actual fear, for our hero was no craven-hearted being, but one full of suspicion as to the integrity of Chiffin’s intentions. This removal from one room to another had struck him as being strange. The same idea had occurred to the marquis himself, and the look which he threw back upon Deveril implied the necessity of exercising the utmost caution. But then it simultaneously occurred to them both that as all the lower part of the house was full of people, it was by no means probable that any foul play could be intended them. They accordingly ascended the stairs, Chiffin the Cannibal leading the way with the light in his hand.

That little room which has been so frequently alluded to in former chapters was reached, and as there seemed to be nothing suspicious there, — no place where any murderous confederates of their guide could be concealed in ambush, — the marquis and Deveril did not hesitate to enter it. Still they were on the alert, and kept at a certain distance behind Chiffin, so as to guard against any sudden manifestation of treachery.

“ This is my room, genelman, ” he said, throwing open that new door which had been constructed; then, as he paused on the threshold, the light which he held in his hand as well as one that was already burning on the table affording them a full view of the interior, he added, “ You see it’s no great shakes, only just comfortable, and it’s here I’m going to transact my little business in future. Walk in, genelman, and I will show you these letters at once. We will then settle what they’re worth over the lush that old Sol Patch will bring up in a moment. ”

Despite his villainous-looking countenance, there was a certain degree of frankness and straightforward meaning in this speech of the Cannibal’s, which almost completely reassured the marquis and Deveril. They had moreover

looked into the inner room, they saw nothing suspicious, the outer door had been left wide open, and the merest cry would be heard down-stairs. Assuredly, then, Chiffin was acting fairly, and there was no perfidy to apprehend.

Deveril was the first to make a movement to follow the Cannibal, for he was resolved that if any traitorous intent should suddenly develop itself, he would be the foremost to bear its brunt, and to the extent of his power shield and protect his benefactor the Marquis of Eagledean. Chiffin, with the candle in one hand and his club in the other, advanced across the room from the new doorway toward the table, which stood against the opposite wall. Deveril had just crossed the threshold, the marquis was close at hand, when all of a sudden the floor appeared to give way beneath Chiffin's feet, the carpet sinking down at the same time. A horrible yell burst from his lips, the candle and the club fell from his hands, and in the twinkling of an eye he disappeared from the view. But where he had gone down, and the carpet with him, a square chasm remained open in the floor, black and yawning, as if it were the bottomless pit itself.

William Deveril and the Marquis of Eagledean recoiled in dismay from the astounding spectacle. Horror seized upon them with paralyzing effect, rendering them speechless, and there they stood for a few moments, gazing in the stupor of consternation upon the open trap-door through which the Cannibal had disappeared, as if having sold his soul to Satan, his time had come and an abyss had yawned to swallow him up.

Suddenly recovering their presence of mind, the marquis and Deveril exchanged looks of unutterable horror, and then they turned to flee from a place where such hideous pitfalls appeared to have existence. Be it understood that the candle which remained burning upon the table in the inner room (that which Chiffin had carried being extinguished as it fell) not merely lighted the scene of horror in the immediate vicinage, but also threw its beams into the smaller room where Lord Eagledean and Deveril now were. But on turning toward the outer door, they perceived that it was shut. This had been done by old Solomon Patch, who had stolen up-stairs just at the very time they were following Chiffin into the inner room, and he had shut that outer door to pre-



"THE FLOOR APPEARED TO GIVE WAY"

*Photogravure from original by Bird*





vent whatsoever cries might be uttered from reaching the ears of the people down-stairs. And here we may at once observe that Chiffin's yell could scarcely have penetrated beyond that door; or if it did, it was drowned in the uproarious din of revelry thundering forth from the tap-room.

The instant that the marquis and Deveril, on turning around to flee from the place, beheld the outer door closed, they again threw rapid and unutterable looks upon each other, as much as to imply that there was some hideous treachery impending. Our young hero, seizing upon a huge wooden stool, was about to batter down that door, taking it for granted, in the hurry and excitement of his thoughts, that it was fast secured outside, but it suddenly opened, and a female made her appearance.

"Ah!" he ejaculated, as he recognized the woman whom he had saved from drowning in the Trent, but she placed her finger to her lips, and he uttered not another word.

"Silence!" said Madge Somers, for she it was; "you have nothing to fear," and as she spoke, she entered the room, closing the door behind her.

The Marquis of Eagledean, from the description which had been given him of this woman, at once knew who she was, and both he and Deveril perceived by her manner, even before she spoke those reassuring words, that she was friendly disposed toward them.

"Do not excite yourselves. There must be no disturbance," she hastened to observe. "That pitfall was intended for you, — yes, both of you, — but I have saved you."

With an impulsive feeling of fervid gratitude, which was indeed natural enough under such extraordinary circumstances, Deveril caught the woman by one hand, the marquis by the other, and those hands were fervidly pressed.

"My good woman," said Lord Eagledean, "we owe you our lives. We understand it all, — that miscreant lured us hither to accomplish our destruction, you have saved us, your reward shall be immense —"

"Do not speak so loud," interrupted Madge Somers, and her words were uttered in that peremptory tone of command which she was so accustomed to adopt. "The people below must know nothing of what has happened."

"But it is impossible to pass over the transaction thus," cried the marquis. "Such a horribly treacherous con-

trivance could not exist here without the knowledge of the vile wretches who keep the place. They must be given up to justice."

"Silence, Mr. Gunthorpe, I command you!" said Madge Somers, planting her right foot foremost and assuming an attitude that was alike one of dominant command and stern menace. "I have saved your lives. You acknowledged but a few moments back how much you were indebted to me. The least you can do to testify your gratitude is to follow my counsel. I say, therefore, that there must be secrecy upon this subject; not a single syllable respecting the transaction of this night must pass the lips of either of you. I have saved your lives, I repeat; would you endanger mine? And what would my life be worth, if you blazoned all this forth to the world? Patch and his wife might go to the gallows, but would the law do nothing to me? Though Chiffin was a villain, a robber, a murderer, — ay, you may start; he was a murderer, and he would have been a murderer again to-night if it had not been for me. But though he was all this, yet I had no right to murder him, which I have done to save you both. The law might not hang me, considering the circumstances, but it would transport me, and a sentence of transportation would be death, because I would commit suicide. Even if I were pardoned, my life would not be worth a month's purchase. Chiffin has friends, the Patches have friends, and I should be waylaid, I should be assassinated by the sharp knife of vengeance. Now do you understand me, Mr. Gunthorpe? Do you understand me, William Deveril? In a word, I have saved your lives; do you wish to take mine?"

Both the Marquis of Eagledean and our young hero recognized the stern truth of all the arguments which Madge Somers advanced, and though they experienced an indescribable repugnance to throw the veil of darkness over this terrible proceeding, yet on the other hand they dared not perpetrate such monstrous ingratitude as to endanger the life of the woman who had saved theirs.

"You will follow my counsel?" repeated Madge Somers, her naturally harsh and forbidding countenance looking terrible in the present resoluteness of its expression; indeed there appeared to be an iron firmness about this woman, — an even more than masculine decision of purpose, which had



the effect of overawing the strongest and proudest minds.

“We will do nothing to hurt you,” said the Marquis of Eagledean. “No, not for worlds would we be guilty of ingratitude.”

“Heaven forbid!” ejaculated William Deveril.

“It is well,” observed Madge Somers. “I believe you — I put faith in you both, and therefore I exact not any solemn pledge or vow. In a few instants you shall depart. But stay, let us assure ourselves that the miscreant has met his righteous doom.”

Thus speaking, Madge Somers passed into the inner room, and making a slight circuit, so as to avoid the gaping chasm, she took up the candle from the table; then advancing to the very edge of the abyss, she stooped over, holding the candle above her head so as to obtain a greater benefit from the light.

“All dark — as dark as pitch,” she muttered. “A thousand candles would not throw a single beam down to the bottom.” Then she paused and listened for nearly a minute. “All is still, too, as still as death,” she said, turning away from the chasm, over which she had bent so far and so fearlessly that both Deveril and the marquis shuddered lest she should lose her balance and tumble in.

It was therefore quite a relief to them both, and they breathed freely once more, when she moved away from the edge of the pitfall.

“Now, my good woman,” said the marquis, “Heaven knows that we shall be full well pleased to escape from this den of horrors, but in the first place I wish to ask you one or two questions, and in the second place you must allow me to give you such reward as what I have about me will enable me to offer.”

“The questions first. Go on,” said Madge, curtly and peremptorily.

“Know you at whose instigation that miscreant” — and the Marquis of Eagledean pointed toward the dark yawning gulf — “sought our lives?”

“Perhaps I do,” answered Madge, “but the time is not come to satisfy you on this point. In short, I cannot be questioned now; I will not be. On the 21st of this month — and it is not many days hence — I have an appointment

to keep, and it shall be kept. Therefore say not another word; you must depart, and I also am in a hurry to begone."

"Here, my good woman, here," said the marquis, forcing upon her a purse well crammed with bank-notes at one end and with gold at the other. "Take this — take this. I shall see you again on the 21st, and will give you more."

But Madge Somers hesitated to accept the nobleman's bounty, and therefore have we used the term that it was forced upon her. What strange feeling was it — or what idiosyncrasy — that made this woman hesitate to receive that purse? She who was penniless at the moment, she who was ever ready to clutch greedily at the means of gratifying her infatuation for the gaming-table, she who throughout a long series of years had existed upon the proceeds of crime, robbery, and extortion, she who, in a word, had never scrupled at any deed of turpitude to obtain gold, — how was it that she hesitated? Ah! there was some strange thought uppermost in her mind, some remorseful sentiment, some compunctious feeling; for there are moments in the lives of even the vilest and the worst of human creatures when the heart is thus touched and the soul thus moved. Such are the inscrutable dispensations of Heaven! Such the mysteries of the character of mankind. And this woman, whose soul was saturated with vice, tanned, hardened, iron-bound, petrified, steeled, by a long career of guilt and enormity, — this woman whose life had been dragged through all the moral sinks, cesspools, heaps of feculence, sloughs of mire, bogs, morasses, and accumulated abominations which abound in this great metropolis of ours, — this woman it was that now hesitated to accept that purse! Strange indeed was her look as she fixed her eyes upon William Deveril, and then reverted them upon the countenance of the marquis.

"Yes, yes," said the nobleman, "you must take that money, and I will give you more, — much more the next time we meet."

Madge Somers weighed the purse in her hand, then opened it, drew forth a single gold piece, still clutched it, still hesitated, and at length all in a moment thrust it back upon the marquis, saying, in her habitually curt manner, "No, Mr. Gunthorpe, I will not take it. And now begone, both of you, begone, I say! But once more beware how you breathe

a single word of aught that has taken place here to-night. Begone!" and she extended her arm in a commanding manner toward the outer door.

"But my good woman," said William Deveril, "we cannot leave you thus. You have saved our lives, you must accept a reward."

"No, nothing more than what I have taken," and she displayed the piece of gold. "Why should you throw temptation in my way?" she demanded, almost fiercely. "Do you know what I should do if I were possessed of that money? I should speed with it to the gambling-table. Ah! you may both look startled and shocked and astonished, but it is the truth. And were I to hasten thither, I should be neglecting a duty which I owe to you, William Deveril. And now, not another word, depart — begone!"

Lord Eagledean and our young hero, astonished at what they heard, — astonished likewise at the singular character and conduct of this unaccountable woman, — hesitated no longer to obey her, but issued from the room. The staircase was quite dark, but they groped their way down it, and the moment they appeared in front of the bar, both Solomon Patch and his wife were seized with a ghastly terror. Neither the marquis nor William Deveril tarried to speak a word; they merely threw a look of mingled indignation and loathing upon the two wretches, and issued from that den of infamy and horror.

The moment they had disappeared from the view of Solomon Patch and his wife, these two exchanged deeply significant looks, in which suspense, consternation, and bewilderment were all blended. Then the man in a hurried whisper bade his wife compose her looks and go on serving the customers, while he sped up-stairs to learn what had taken place, for neither he nor Mrs. Patch could possibly conceive by what means the two visitors had come off in safety. Had the plot failed? Were they gone to give information to the authorities? Or had Chiffin concluded a better money bargain than that which had originally instigated him to the concoction of the snare?

Speeding up the staircase, three steps at a time, Solomon Patch found Madge Somers bending over the open trap-door. But where was Chiffin? The look which the old landlord flung hastily around encountered not the form of the Cannibal.

" Ah! is that you? " said Madge.

" Yes. But where is Chiffin? "

" There! " and she pointed down into the pit.

" There? " echoed Solomon, and starting back, he gazed in bewilderment upon the woman.

" Yes, there! " she answered, coldly. " Chiffin was caught in his own trap. It gave way as he was passing over it. "

" Ah! " cried Solomon, not for an instant doubting the truth of this explanation, which indeed appeared so rational and so feasible.

" He is done for, " said Madge, still bending over the abyss. " There is not a splash in the water, there is not a movement, there is not the slightest sound of a struggle. Nor was there from the very first. "

" Well, " mused Solomon Patch, in an audible tone, though not exactly intending to address his observations to Madge Somers, " I don't know, arter all, that it's such a very bad job. Chiffin was getting a regular devil; he had got us all under his thumb. We didn't dare say as how our souls was our own, and as for peaching agin him, that was out of the question; 'cos why he knowed too much of us for us to tell what we knowed of him. So, arter all, perhaps it's for the best. It's a hill vind that blows no good to nobody. "

" You are not altogether wrong, Sol, " replied Madge Somers, well pleased in her heart to find that the old landlord took the occurrence in this philosophic light. " But I say, we had better pull this trap up, and then it would be as well just to go and cover the mouth of the well with the big stones, for fear of an accident happening to anybody else. "

" Yes, yes, have it all your own way, Madge, " ejaculated Solomon. " But them two genelmen — "

" You have nothing to fear. I pitched them a beautiful tale that has made them quite comfortable. Hold your tongue about what has taken place, and don't for the world let any of the pals know what has happened to Chiffin. In a few days, when they miss him, you can say that he's wanted on account of that affair in the barge, and that he's keeping himself scarce. "

" All right, Madge, " rejoined Solomon, from whose mind an immense weight had been lifted by the assurance that the two visitors were not going to adopt any ulterior measures that might draw down the vengeance of the law

upon himself and his establishment. "But how about raising this here trap-door?"

"There's a bit of string to lift it," said Madge, "and the bolt will hold it fast. But it won't do to walk over it," she continued, by way of giving a colour to the tale she had already told, "for fear it should yield as it did under Chiffin's feet."

As she thus spoke, she stooped down, seized hold of the cord, and drew up the trap-door, which, catching with a spring-bolt, remained fixed in its setting. She then took the light from the table, and descended the stairs, accompanied by Solomon Patch. They passed into the scullery together, closing the door behind them, and there, bending over the brink of the well, Madge listened once more with suspended breath. She likewise endeavoured to throw the light of the candle down into the black depth, but without success; the inky darkness absorbed the feeble glimmerings of that light.

"All still," she said to the landlord. "What's the depth of that well?"

"About twenty feet," he replied.

"And the depth of the water?"

"When Chiffin measured it with plummet and cord t'other day, there was about six feet of water."

"Ah! then he was drowned in no time," observed Madge, and placing the candle upon the ground, she said, "Now let's put some of these big stones over the mouth."

Solomon Patch aided her in the task, which was soon accomplished, and the opening was completely closed by the flags which they placed upon it.

"Now, the best thing you can do," said Madge Somers, "is to get a carpenter to put your house to rights again, and secure that trap-door, for if you or your wife happen to walk in your sleep, it will be rather an unpleasant business."

Having thus spoken, the woman took her departure from the boozing-ken, the landlord of which returned to his wife in the bar, to take the first opportunity of giving her an account of all that had occurred.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### THE ENAMOURED SQUIRE

WE must now return to Saxondale Castle. Three weeks had elapsed since the accident with Mr. Hawkshaw's spirited steed which had happened to Lord Harold Staunton. He had remained confined to his room for several days, at the termination of which he announced himself as being perfectly restored to health and strength; and though he had since frequently complained of pains in the back and limbs, yet it was sufficiently evident that no serious consequences were to be apprehended. He continued to reside at the castle, notwithstanding his aunt and sister had taken their departure, and it began to be whispered amongst the domestics that he was to marry Lady Saxondale. It was known that the contemplated alliance between Lord Saxondale and Lady Florina Staunton had been suddenly broken off, and that Edmund had accompanied his guardian Lord Petersfield on the special mission with which that nobleman was charged to the Imperial Court of Vienna.

Meanwhile Squire Hawkshaw had continued unremitting in his attentions to Juliana Farefield, — not only unremitting, but, if possible, doubling them. He was completely infatuated with that superb creature, and she took good care to retain him captive in the snares wherewith she had caught him. He was a constant visitor at the castle, and every day was seen walking or riding out with Juliana. Still he had not as yet formally proposed for her hand. Be it remembered that he had firmly resolved to allow at least a month to elapse from the night of the ball at the Denisons' ere he confessed his passion and proffered his suit. It had cost him many an effort to keep back the tender avowal, but he had succeeded in doing so, under the impression that

it would not be delicate or proper to manifest precipitation in such a case. The month, however, had now drawn to a close. It was in the middle of July when the Denisons' ball took place; it was now the middle of August, and Mr. Hawkshaw hailed with delight the termination of the interval which he had imposed upon himself as a period of preliminary wooing.

But did Juliana ever think of Francis Paton? Yes, she was constantly devouring him, as it were, with all the intense fervour of her sensuous nature. The image of that beautiful youth was always uppermost in her mind, and when alone she revolved a thousand schemes for the gratification of her passion after the ceremony of marriage with Mr. Hawkshaw should have furnished a cloak for her proceedings. She determined, as soon as convenient and practicable after the nuptial ceremony, to adopt some measures to bring Francis into the neighbourhood. Might she not manage to introduce him as a page into Hawkshaw Hall, when she should become the mistress of that establishment? Or might she not secrete him at some humble but respectable dwelling in the neighbourhood, so that she might see him frequently and under circumstances of proper precaution? She did not entertain the slightest feeling of affection for Mr. Hawkshaw; she only received his addresses and purposed to accept him as a husband to suit her own selfish views. She wanted an established position, she wanted to separate from a mother whom she regarded with mistrust, aversion, and every feeling that was different from respect and veneration, she wanted also the means and opportunity of indulging her licentious passion for young Paton. But did she therefore love Frank in reality? The feeling she experienced for him she regarded as love, but it would be desecrating that pure and hallowed sentiment to affirm that it was a true and genuine love which fanned those devouring fires in the heart of Juliana Farefield. It was a fervid passion, but not a real love; it was a feeling of the sense, and not a sentiment; it fed upon the gross aliment of hot desire, and not upon the sweet manna of chaste and hallowed reflections. Had she really loved him in the true meaning of the term, she would have flown in the face of the world to become his wife, even while he was the humble and obscure page; she would have set at defiance all the con-

ventionalisms of society in order to ensure her own happiness and prove her devoted affection for its object. Therefore it was not a genuine sentiment which Juliana experienced toward Francis Paton, but a passion consisting only of a gross sensuality.

The time having now come, as we have above stated, for Mr. Hawkshaw to make a formal offer of his hand to Juliana, he resolved to avail himself of the first opportunity. This was easily found, for Juliana was enabled to be as much alone with him and as often as she thought fit. Lady Saxondale interfered not with her, while she on the other hand interfered not with her mother and Lord Harold Staunton.

It was a gorgeous morning in the middle of August, — the sun pouring its flood of unclouded effulgence upon the old castle, the river, and the surrounding scenery, — when Mr. Hawkshaw conducted Juliana forth at about eleven o'clock to walk in the garden. She had thrown on a simple straw bonnet, with a light scarf over her shoulders, and she looked most enchantingly handsome. With all the natural keenness of her penetration, she had at once discovered by Mr. Hawkshaw's manner that the wished-for moment was now at hand. The flush of anticipated success and triumph was upon her cheeks, mantling richly through the delicate olive of her complexion, and the light of joy danced in her magnificent dark eyes, brighter than if it were the sun's beams that were reflecting there. Her hair for the morning toilet was arranged in massive bands, and though she and her admirer sought the shadiest avenue in the garden, yet was the entire atmosphere so permeated with the gorgeous sunlight that the luxuriant masses of that raven hair shone with the richest gloss. There was a dewy moisture too upon her lips, which made them look redder than any one of the blushing roses which embowered the path sought by herself and her admirer, and riper than any luscious fruit that hung to the garden trees. Though the morning dress that she wore ascended to the throat, thus concealing the grand contours of her bust, yet was the swell of her bosom indicated by the rising and falling of the corsage of that white drapery, and its heavings could be felt by her companion's arm as she leaned upon it. Her looks, her air, her demeanour, her brilliant beauty, — everything about her, in fine, was but too well calculated to rivet



the chains which she had forged around the heart of George Hawkshaw, and if he had ever hesitated to propose himself as her husband, — which assuredly he had not, — he could no longer have possibly hesitated now.

“Miss Farefield,” he said, after the exchange of some casual and indifferent observations, “I have made up my mind — I have determined — to — to speak to you this morning on a subject closely regarding my happiness —”

“Indeed, Mr. Hawkshaw,” she observed, murmuringly, at the same time affecting the most delicious confusion.

“Yes, Miss Farefield — Juliana — dear Juliana,” he exclaimed, gazing upon her in rapture, “can you not comprehend me? I am not a man accustomed to make flattering speeches — I am frank-hearted and ingenuous, — such I believe is my nature, — but if you will accept the hand, as you already possess the love, of one who will make your happiness the study of his life, that individual now kneels at your feet.”

And suiting the action to the word, George Hawkshaw did fall upon one knee, and taking the lady’s hand, he pressed it to his lips. She murmured some words which were choked by the enthusiastic feelings of triumph and success which agitated in her bosom, and which the unsophisticated admirer attributed to a maidenly confusion. Encouraged and delighted by those few murmuring words, and by the manner in which they were uttered, he started up from his knee, and gazing with renewed rapture upon her downcast blushing countenance, he said, “Tell me, Juliana, tell me will you be mine?”

“I will,” she responded, still faintly and tremulously, and Hawkshaw, flinging his arms around her, strained her superb form to his breast, at the same time covering her warm, glowing cheeks with fervid caresses.

“You will be mine?” he said, in exultant tones. “This is the fulfilment of the dearest hope I ever cherished in my life. Oh, Juliana, you cannot conceive the joy that you have poured into my heart! And let me tell you that it is the heart of an honest man which you possess, — a heart that never loved before, — a heart that is yours, and yours only. Give me your arm, dear Juliana, and let us walk here together for a little while. I feel that I could become eloquent to a degree in promising all that I will do to ensure your happi-

ness, and I am confident that you will reciprocate this strenuous endeavour on my part. We are not mere children, Juliana; we understand our own feelings, and what we promise we know that we shall perform. On my side there is the fullest confidence that I shall be happy with you; tell me, dear Juliana, that you feel an equally strong conviction of being happy with me?"

For a moment Miss Farefield's heart was smitten with remorse at the idea of the basely treacherous part which she was playing toward a man who addressed her in such honest terms and in such noble language. But that compunctious feeling quickly passed away, her selfishness became paramount once more, and the words to which she gave utterance were spoken with every appearance of a congenial frankness and candour.

"My dear George, I have loved you from the first moment we met at Mr. Denison's. Perhaps I may even admit that on former occasions when in Lincolnshire, I did not behold you with indifference —"

"Oh, Juliana! is this possible? May I flatter myself that it is so?" and the confiding, noble-hearted Hawkshaw again spoke with exultant enthusiasm.

"It is true, dear George, it is true — most true," murmured the artful Juliana, appearing to be plunged into the modest confusion of a maiden from whose lips an avowal of the heart's feelings is elicited by the influence of sincerest love.

Mr. Hawkshaw was overjoyed by that assurance, which he firmly believed, for what will not a man believe when he is lip-deep in love, and when the things which he is called upon thus to put faith in are so intimately connected with that love of his? He and Juliana continued to walk together for three whole hours, until the bell rang for luncheon. Those were three hours of Elysian bliss to the fine-hearted squire, and they afforded Juliana an opportunity for setting to work all the tactics of the most delicate *finesse*. She had not only won the love of the squire, but also his implicit confidence. It was her purpose to retain both, though all the while resolving to deceive him. She had to affect a passion which she did not feel, but this she did the more easily because while responding to her admirer in the language of love, she pictured to herself that it was Frank Paton

to whom she was speaking. Thus substituting the image of Frank in its youthful, delicate, and almost effeminate beauty, for the image of George Hawkshaw in its fine, handsome manliness, she contrived to speak more from the heart than she would otherwise have been enabled to do. And when Hawkshaw's arm encircled her waist, she tutored her fancy to believe that it was young Paton's, and she felt a thrill of sensuous ecstasy sweep fervid and glowing through her entire form. And when too Mr. Hawkshaw pressed his lips to hers, it was still in imagination young Frank's mouth that thus grew to her own; and as the boiling blood ran like lightning through her veins, the effect was to impart a more rapturous fervour to her kisses.

At length the summons for luncheon, ringing forth from the belfry over the entrance tower, sprinkled the hot, stagnant air with its metallic sounds, and Mr. Hawkshaw led back his intended into the castle. After the repast the squire requested a private interview with Lady Saxondale, which was of course immediately accorded, for her ladyship had received a rapidly whispered hint from Juliana to the effect that she had received an offer of Mr. Hawkshaw's hand. Lady Saxondale led the way to the library, and there, without much circumlocution, the squire informed her of the step he had taken, and requested her assent to the match. Lady Saxondale, playing the maternal part to perfection, represented how dear to her was the welfare of her elder daughter, how jealously she had watched over that beloved child's happiness, how pleased and gratified she was to think that her darling Juliana had won the esteem and affection of so worthy a gentleman as Mr. Hawkshaw, and how cheerfully she (Lady Saxondale) gave her consent to the alliance.

The speech was altogether a very beautiful one, eminently touching and pathetic; the only misfortune was the utter hollowness of the sentiments themselves and the guileful hypocrisy of the lips from which they came. However, Mr. Hawkshaw regarded it as a genuine outpouring of maternal love and affection, and taking her ladyship's hand, he pressed it to his lips in token of gratitude for her kindness in consenting to part with such a matchless treasure as her daughter Juliana.

“I avail myself of this opportunity, Mr. Hawkshaw,”

said Lady Saxondale, "to make you in return a certain communication, which indeed I am bound to make, now that you will so soon become one of the family. You must have perceived that Lord Harold Staunton entertains a most affectionate regard toward me, and I do not know that there is any indiscretion in avowing that I reciprocate his love. He has offered me his hand. I have spoken to him most seriously on the subject. I have bade him remember that there is a considerable disparity in our years, and I have besought him to study his heart well ere receiving an affirmative answer from my lips. He has replied with all suitable frankness and candour. In a word, therefore, I propose to consult my own happiness by accompanying Lord Harold Staunton to the altar."

"I congratulate your ladyship," answered Mr. Hawkshaw, "upon a prospect which, from all that you have said, is so well calculated to consolidate your happiness. From what I have seen of Lord Harold, I have every reason to admire and like him. But when once you have obtained the influence of a wife over his lordship," added the squire, with a good-natured smile, "I hope you will prevent him from mounting strange horses and taking daring leaps."

"Depend upon it, my dear Mr. Hawkshaw," answered Lady Saxondale, while a blush rose to her cheeks, "that I value his life too much to permit him to risk it again in so venturesome a manner."

The squire took leave of her ladyship, and then proceeded to bid farewell to Juliana also, for he had some important business to transact at Gainsborough that afternoon, and had ordered the groom at the castle to have his horse in readiness at three o'clock. It was now close upon that hour, and therefore the squire could no longer delay taking his departure. He found Juliana alone in the drawing-room, and when he had bade her a temporary farewell, — only until the morrow, — he inquired where Lord Harold was. She answered that she thought he had ascended to his own chamber.

"I will just seek him there, to shake him by the hand," observed the good-hearted squire, "for as we are both to enter the family soon," he added, with a smile, "we must maintain all friendly courtesies. Besides, under existing circumstances, it is but right I should acquaint him with

what has taken place between you and me to-day, and also congratulate him on the change which his position is likewise to experience. One kiss more, dear Juliana, and I am off."

The kiss was given and returned, and Squire Hawkshaw, quitting the drawing-room, repaired to Lord Harold Staunton's chamber, which was on a higher story and in a remote part of the building. On knocking at the door, he was desired to enter, and he found the young nobleman making some change in his toilet. He proceeded to mention his engagement with Juliana, and likewise to offer suitable congratulations on Harold's intended marriage with Lady Saxondale. It struck him for the moment that a somewhat strange expression passed over the exceedingly handsome countenance of Lord Harold, — an expression which seemed to spring from the writhing sense of internal pain, but as it immediately passed away, and Staunton recovered his wonted cheerfulness of look as he reciprocated those congratulations, the squire thought no more of the circumstance, or if he did, he attributed it to the lingering effects of the severe fall from the horse.

"Why are you going so early to-day, Hawkshaw?" asked Lord Harold.

"I have some little business at Gainsborough," responded the squire. "In fact, a large farmer, who owes me some money, has called a meeting of his creditors at a tavern there, and as he is a worthy good fellow, I am going to give him what help I can."

"You are going to ride across?" asked Harold.

"Yes, and on that same thoroughbred, too, that you were so venturesome with. I am afraid that you sometimes feel the pain now. And yet — let me see — it must be a good three weeks ago —"

"Ah! but it was a very serious fall," rejoined Harold. "I am going to have two or three hours' fishing, under the shade of those trees yonder, till dinner-time."

"You seem to be fond of manly sports," observed Hawkshaw. "Ah! you have got a pistol-case here," and the squire, who possessed a perfect knowledge of every description of firearms, opened the box. "Double-barrelled, eh?" he said, taking up the only one it contained, for the other was not there, although the case was formed to contain two.

"This is a beautiful pistol, and an excellent maker's name, too, — one of the first in London."

"Yes, they are first-rate pistols," observed Staunton, turning aside to put on a shooting-jacket in which he was going on his fishing expedition.

"Where is the other pistol?" asked the squire; "there ought to be a pair. It would be a great pity to lose one. Besides, one of these days you and I will have a shooting-match. I will order my groom to bring over some pigeons from the hall — But where is the other pistol?" he again asked.

"Oh, I left it behind in London," responded Staunton, now bending over a long wooden case which contained some fishing apparatus for which he had sent a few days previously from Gainsborough.

"Oh, no matter," said the squire. "I have got a splendid collection of firearms, and when we do have our match, I will bring over a couple of rifles, which will be better than pistols. Are you a good shot, Staunton? I mean with pistols."

"I — I — am considered to be so. But confound this fishing-rod! there is something wrong with it."

"Let me see," said the squire, hastening forward to render his assistance. "I know all about fishing-tackle, and if I had known you wanted it, could have lent you a better gear than that — But, good heavens! my dear fellow, what is the matter with you?" for Lord Harold's countenance was as white as a sheet, and upon it was an expression of indescribable anguish, blended even with horror.

"Nothing, nothing, only those pains," was the quick and somewhat excited response.

"Ah!" rejoined the good-hearted squire, "you must really take care of yourself, Staunton. You were perhaps more shaken than any of us fancied at the time. But let us look at this rod. There! now it is all right, and I must be off, for it's past three o'clock. Do take care of yourself. Not too much exertion, mind! for these sprains and aches and twinges do hang uncommonly about one."

With these words, Mr. Hawkshaw shook Lord Harold cordially by the hand, and then hurried from the chamber. Having threaded the long corridor toward the staircase, he rapidly descended the flight, reached the hall, and issuing

forth, mounted his spirited steed, which was in readiness. Putting a crown piece into the hand of the groom — for the squire was generosity itself — he galloped away, made the circuit of the grounds, and thus getting on the rear, or northern end of the castle, proceeded along the bank of the river through the fields in the direction of Gainsborough.

He had ridden about a couple of miles, and on reaching a gate, Mr. Hawkshaw was stooping forward to open it, when several horses, that were in the field which he was about to enter, galloped, as if they were mad, but only in frolicsome sport, across the meadow. The thoroughbred which the squire bestrode instantaneously pricked up its ears, manifesting that sudden excitement which spirited horses are wont to do under such circumstances, and swerving abruptly on one side, the animal threw the squire completely over the gate into the next field. His hat fell off, his head came in violent contact with a stone, and he was completely stunned. In a few minutes he came back to consciousness, and found an exceedingly prepossessing, indeed beautiful, youth bending over him, bathing his face with a wet handkerchief, which had been dipped for the purpose in the river that flowed close by.

“Are you much hurt?” inquired the youth, in a gentle voice, expressive of sincere sympathy and concern.

“No, I think not,” said Mr. Hawkshaw, and then making an attempt to rise, he found that he was much better able to do so than might have been expected from the severity of his fall. “Thank God, there are no bones broken, at all events. A little pain in the head, but that is of no great consequence. Tell me, my young friend, is there much of a contusion on the forehead?”

“No mark is apparent there at all,” replied the youthful stranger, “but I felt a considerable swelling on the side. The hair, however, covers it.”

“So much the better,” ejaculated the squire, overjoyed at this intelligence. “Nobody need know anything of my misadventure. But where is the horse?”

“He made a long circuit, and then came back. There he is — just behind the hedge. I would have caught the noble animal, but did not like to leave you till I was assured that you were returning to consciousness.”

“It would have been more seemly,” exclaimed the squire,

“ had I expressed my heartfelt thanks first to you, my young friend, before I inquired for my horse,” and as he thus spoke, Mr. Hawkshaw took the youth's hand and shook it warmly. “ Yes, I am indeed most grateful; you have evidently done me no small service. Why, one might have died if left to one's self in such a state, or been kicked to death by those half-wild horses there, that are scampering about and which, by the bye, were the cause of the accident. But we must know more of each other,” continued the squire, and now that he surveyed the youth more attentively, he observed that he was poorly and indeed shabbily dressed, although his linen was scrupulously clean, and everything about him denoted as much neatness as the threadbare garments would allow their wearer to display.

“ I thank you, sir, for your kindness,” answered the youth; “ but I am a stranger in these parts, — my stay here will not be long — ”

“ Wait a moment,” cried Mr. Hawkshaw, and hastily opening the gate — for he felt but little inconvenience now from his accident — he fetched his horse from where it was browsing on the grass, and led the animal through the gate, which the youth civilly held open for the purpose.

“ Now, my young friend,” continued Mr. Hawkshaw, “ I repeat that we cannot part in this manner. In the first place, let me announce myself. Here is my card; my residence is a few miles distant in that direction. How long are you staying in these parts? Where are you at present residing? And will you shift your quarters to the hall? You shall be as welcome there as if we had known each other for as many years as we have minutes.”

“ Again do I thank you most sincerely for your kindness,” responded the youth, “ but I cannot avail myself of it. It were, however, churlish and rude not to say that on some future occasion, should I revisit Lincolnshire, I shall assuredly do myself the pleasure of calling at Hawkshaw Hall.”

“ Well, I take that as a promise,” exclaimed the kind-hearted, hospitable squire. “ But remember, it must be as faithfully kept as my invitation is sincerely given. And now tell me whose acquaintance it is I have had the pleasure of forming? ”

“ I have no card with me,” replied the youth, “ but my name is Paton.”



“Then let me henceforth call young Mr. Paton my friend,” said Hawkshaw, again grasping Frank’s hand. “But come now, don’t think me rude, and don’t be angry with me for what I am going to say. Is there nothing I can do for you? I have told you that I mean to regard you as a friend, and you must look upon me in the same light. You are very young, and I dare say that you have been brought up in a manner above your present means. Now, don’t be offended, for I do not seek to wound your feelings; no, not for the world. Perhaps if you had a good friend, a sincere friend, a friend who would take you by the hand, — a friend, in short, who would not let you want for a few hundred pounds to give you a fair start in life — ”

Frank’s countenance had become the colour of crimson, for he knew that all this was said in consequence of the shabby apparel which he wore. But at the same time he experienced a deep sense of gratitude toward his new friend, whose frank generosity of spirit it was by no means difficult to penetrate.

“To cut all this short,” said Mr. Hawkshaw, “will you come and take up your quarters with me at the Hall? It is not very far distant, and if you go to Gainsborough, there is a van leaving at six o’clock that will put you down at the park gate. Are you staying at Gainsborough?”

“Yes, I am staying there for the present,” replied Frank, who did not like to say too much concerning himself, because his business in Lincolnshire was, as the reader may suspect, of rather a secret as well as of a delicate nature.

“And may I ask,” pursued Hawkshaw, “whether you are rambling here with any fixed purpose, or only through curiosity? Perhaps you were on your way to see that fine old castle yonder? I have just come from thence; it is Lady Saxondale’s.”

“Yes,” observed Frank, with difficulty veiling his confusion at all the various associations conjured up by the mention of that name, “I was going to while away a few hours by looking at the castle. As for your invitation to stay at the Hall, I again express my sincere thanks, and with regard to all the other kind things you said, and the offers you so generously but delicately made — ”

“You refuse them?” said Mr. Hawkshaw, and he gazed upon the youth with growing interest as well as curiosity.

"Are you alone at Gainsborough? Have you parents, relatives, or friends there?"

"No, I came upon a little business of a private nature, which perhaps will not detain me beyond to-morrow. And now, sir, with your permission, I shall bid you farewell."

"And you will suffer me to do nothing for you," asked Hawkshaw. "I see that you are a young gentleman in speech, in manners, in everything — But will you be offended if I ask you for your address in Gainsborough, that I may leave there some little token of my gratitude for the service you have rendered me?"

"Again and again do I express my gratitude," responded Frank, "coupled with the assurance that I require nothing. On some future occasion we shall perhaps meet again. And now farewell, sir."

With these words Frank hurried away in the direction of Saxondale Castle, while Mr. Hawkshaw proceeded to mount his horse, saying to himself, "He is a nice youth, — a very interesting youth, — but somehow or another I can't make him out. I should like to know more of him," and he was half-inclined to ride back and renew the conversation; but fearing that his good intentions might be interpreted as mere inquisitiveness, or even construed into downright impertinent curiosity, he galloped away toward Gainsborough.

Meanwhile Francis Paton had hurried onward until the sounds of the retreating horse's hoofs no longer reached his ears, and then slackening his pace somewhat, he thought to himself, "This Mr. Hawkshaw is evidently a warm-hearted and excellent man. Had I wanted a friend, accident would have sent me one in him."

But his thoughts were speedily diverted into another channel, for, as the reader may full well suppose, it was not to survey the fine old castle that Francis Paton had come down into Lincolnshire, but to obtain an interview with the daughter of its mistress. Trusting to circumstances to furnish him with the desired opportunity, he approached nearer to the grounds, and skirting the park railing, plunged his looks into the enclosure of the spacious garden within. On reaching a gate, and finding it unlocked, he thought there would at least be no harm in entering the park; and once there, he naturally enough approached the garden all

the more readily and likewise the more anxiously because he beheld a form in white drapery moving in the midst of a shady avenue near the extremity. Nearer and nearer he drew, but cautiously, in case it should not be the object of his search, although his heart told him that it was, until at length he was nigh enough to clear up all doubt. Yes, it was she, Juliana Farefield, the idol of his youthful heart, the dearly beloved image that his soul cherished! It was she, robed in the same white drapery which she had worn in the forenoon, when walking in that very same spot with George Hawkshaw.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### THE TEST OF LOVE

THE moment that Frank Paton became convinced the form he beheld was that of Juliana, the moment he caught sight of her splendid countenance framed by those massive bands of glossy raven hair, he shrank into the shade of the densest shrub just within the railings, on the outer side of which he stood, so that it screened him from her view. How should he be received? Had she forgotten him? Or, at least, had she ceased to love him? Would she resent his appearing before her? Would she feel annoyed and indignant on beholding him in that mean, shabby attire?

Such were the misgivings which swept hurriedly through the mind of Francis Paton, and kept him transfixed with suspense and apprehension for upwards of a minute. But no, no, it was impossible! She could not have forgotten him. She could not have ceased to love him. She would not discard him because he came in poor apparel. And if she did, why, then the test would be accomplished, and it were better that he should learn his fate than linger on, entertaining hopes which after all would be never destined to receive fulfilment. Now was the moment to breathe her name. She was passing near the shrub, she was barely four yards from the spot where he was concealed.

"Miss Farefield — Juliana," murmured Frank, and he held his breath with renewed suspense.

"Who calls?" she ejaculated with a sudden start; then stopping short, she swept her bright looks around. "That voice, oh, that voice —"

A thrill of joy shot through the youthful heart of the lady's devoted lover, for in those accents there seemed to be wafted the assurance of continued affection, of delight, and of hope.

He sprang forward, — a cry of joy burst from Juliana's lips; he leaped over the low palings of the garden, he would have thrown himself at her feet, but she caught him in her arms.

"Dearest, dearest Frank," she murmured, pressing him again and again to her bosom, and covering his cheeks, his lips, and his forehead with the most impassioned kisses. "Dearest, dearest Frank, is it indeed you?" and more fervidly still did she embrace him, more glowing and rapturous were the caresses she lavished upon him.

"Beloved Juliana — Oh, my beloved one!" and he could say no more; his voice was choked with unutterable emotions of bliss and joy and ecstacy, and if he had leisure for a single thought apart from those feelings, it was in self-reproach that he had for an instant doubted her constancy or suspected her love.

"My own dear Frank — my heart's dearest Frank," she said, drawing herself the least thing back, but still keeping her arms thrown around his lithe and slender form, "let me look at you, let me gaze upon your beautiful face, let me look into the depths of those handsome eyes," — and as she thus spoke, with the rich blood mantling upon her own hot cheeks, her regards, half-tender, half-devouring, wandered from feature to feature of that youthful countenance which was indeed of the most exquisite beauty.

"Then you do love me, Juliana?" murmured Frank, with a sweet smile that revealed the brilliancy of his ivory teeth, but he was allowed to say no more at that instant, for his lips were sealed by those of the impassioned lady, who again and again pressed him to her bosom.

"Love you, Frank?" she said, in a deep, earnest voice, "love you? Oh, yes, I love you beyond the power of language to describe. You know that I love you. Did not your heart tell you so? Or else why did you seek me again? Yes, beautiful and adorable boy, I love you; by this kiss I love you. And by this — and this — and this!"

"Oh, my own Juliana," murmured Frank, "a thousand anxieties are now cleared up, — a thousand cruel fears dispelled."

"Ah, wicked boy!" responded the lady, now slightly relaxing the embrace in which she held him and looking with a sweet, deprecating archness upon his countenance,

“did you, then, think I had forgotten you? Why have you not sought me before? But come, we have much to say to each other; there is a shady arbour at the end of this avenue, we will proceed thither and converse. There is no fear of interruption. Come, dearest Frank, come,” and she gaily and blithely led the youth along.

They reached the bower formed by thickly twining jasmine intermingled with roses, the flowers of which were in full bloom, and the whole supported by an overarching trellis-work. Into this bower — one fully fitted for the sighs and the kisses and the language of love — Juliana Farefield conducted Frank, and they sat down side by side. She retained one of his hands between both her own, and then she looked at him, long and earnestly at first. It was with fondest adoration, this gaze of hers, fixed upon his glowing countenance, for the natural paleness of his cheeks was covered now by the mantling blood, and then it was with a growing expression of regret and sorrow on her part, as she surveyed the meanness and poverty of his apparel.

“Dearest Frank,” she said, “you are not happy; you are not prosperous in your circumstances. I fear me that the world goes not well with you?”

“Alas, no!” responded the youth, and deeper grew the colour upon his cheeks, and he became covered with confusion, for he was now suddenly seized with an intense dislike for the part that he was enacting; he thought that he had already received sufficient evidences of Juliana’s constant and devoted love to render a test unnecessary, and he was about to throw himself at her feet and reveal the motive for which he had come in that mean garb, when the thought suddenly flashed to his recollection that he had solemnly and sacredly promised his father, ere quitting London, that he would put her to that test, and that in no moment of weakness or infatuation would he abandon it ere ascertaining the full result.

“You were going to say something, Frank; you stopped short suddenly,” said Juliana, contemplating him with renewed, or, rather, with redoubled attention. “I see but too plainly, my dearest boy, that things are not well with you; but, thank Heaven! it is in my power to remedy them. Frank,” she continued, in a half-reproachful, half-tender tone, “if you wanted for anything, why did you not write

to me? You know that I am not without money, and even if I were, every jewel that I possess should have been placed at your service. Good God! my darling Frank, to think that you may have been in distress, to think that you could have lacked perhaps the necessaries of life — oh, the thought is more than I can endure!”

Again did she seize him in her arms, again did she press him with almost convulsive violence to her highly swelling bosom, and again, too, did she lavish upon him the warmest, most impassioned caresses. Then she released him from her arms, and as if he were indeed the bright and beautiful idol of her adoration, she sat gazing upon him with a voluptuous tenderness. Again was his purpose shaken; again did he feel more than half-inclined to avow his object in presenting himself before her in an almost pauper raiment; and there was a moment, too, when his heart swelled with a sense of the proudest feeling that he might, if he chose, proclaim himself to be rich, that he had found a father and a mother, and that they had promised to endow him with a fortune in case he should find Juliana all he hoped and wished, and should in due time lead her to the altar. But the very thought that he was in a condition to proclaim this triumphant intelligence had the effect of reminding him of the solemn sacred vow which he had pledged to his parents that the test should be persevered in until the very end.

“Now tell me, dearest Frank,” said Juliana, perceiving that he remained silent, — perceiving also that conflicting thoughts were agitating in his mind, but of what nature she could not guess, “tell me, my own dear Frank, what you have been doing with yourself? What has happened to you since we parted? It is nearly six weeks. Oh, it seems an age. But, thank God! it has only been for so short an interval, because whatsoever you may have suffered has not therefore been of long continuance. Ah! did you think that because on that day when you were driven by my wicked mother from Saxondale House, did you think that my lips would echo whatsoever taunts had flowed from hers? Did you think, my own dear Frank, that I could be so cruel or unjust as to visit upon you whatsoever deeds your sister might have done? No, no; you should have known me better — you should have known me better! But, thank Heaven! you are come back to me at last.”

"Yes, dear Juliana, I have come back to you with only one hope in my heart," and Frank gazed most adoringly, most enthusiastically upon the splendid countenance of the patrician lady.

"And that hope, Frank?" she murmured. "Ah! you need not tell me what it is, I can understand it full well; because I likewise have cherished such a hope, — the hope that our loves might be renewed."

"But let me explain this hope of mine, dear Juliana," continued the youth, now remembering the entire lesson which the Marquis of Eagledean had given him ere he left Stamford Manor. "You love me, Juliana, I know you do; the past has proved it, the present confirms it. But love has likewise a future, as well as a past and a present, and it is of this that I would speak to you."

"Proceed, my dearest Frank," murmured Juliana, suffering her head to droop upon his shoulder, so that his cheek rested against her polished brow, and the long curls of his hair fell upon her own massive bands. "The music of your voice sinks deliciously into my heart. Proceed, dear Frank, I love to listen to you."

"Well, then, my own Juliana," he continued, entertaining not the slightest doubt as to the result of the test to which he was upon the point of putting her, and longing to hurry it over that he might give her the assurance that it was nothing but a test, to be crowned by joyous revealings on his part relative to his own position, "since you will listen thus patiently, I will speak. I said that love has a future. What is to be the future of our love? I come to you, poor, unhappy, an obscure and unknown youth; my apparel denotes my condition, you yourself have already penetrated it, and you have given me your sympathy. Nay, more, you have assured me, in words as delicate as they were kind, that if I have suffered privations, it was my own fault for not applying to you, and that if I am still suffering under the cruel circumstances of the world, you will endeavour to amend them. For all this, dearest Juliana, accept my heartfelt, devoted thanks. No words are capable of expressing my gratitude."

"Not gratitude, Frank," murmured Juliana, in accents laden with a sensuous languor; "but speak to me of love."

"It is of love, dearest, that I am about to speak," he



continued. "I have said, therefore, enough to convince you of my position. You behold it, you have understood it. But poor as I am in purse, my heart is rich in boundless illimitable love for you. There are two alternatives between which I have to choose. An opportunity presents itself for me to seek my fortune in a far-off land. That is one alternative. The other is, that if you will bestow your hand on me, you will raise me to your own rank in life, and I may have a chance of obtaining a livelihood in my native country. Those are the alternatives, dearest Juliana; my decision depends upon the next words that issue from your lips."

If the Honourable Miss Farefield did not start, did not even raise her head from the youth's shoulder, when he thus undisguisedly, frankly, and even boldly demanded her hand in marriage, it was because she was seized with a perfect stupor of astonishment. But he himself noticed not the effect which his words thus produced upon her, inasmuch as he could not behold her countenance; his cheek rested upon her temple. And she was astounded. As the reader is well aware, she had regarded Frank only as the object of a passion that devoured her, only as the means of assuaging the fires that were consuming her, only as a being whom she could cherish as the idol of a secret and illicit amour. But to become his wife, to sacrifice herself to one who had been a lackey, to wed the poverty in which he seemed to be steeped, to descend from the pedestal of her patrician rank, and become the object of scorn and contempt on the part of all who knew her, to abandon likewise the brilliant prospect of becoming mistress of Hawkshaw Hall, with a husband whose generous confidence she felt assured of being able to abuse in all circumstances where her own particular pleasures and fancies might be concerned, — to consummate, in a word, all these tremendous sacrifices, no, Juliana Farefield was utterly unprepared for such a result. She was astounded therefore at a demand which, notwithstanding the fervid passion she experienced for Frank, she could not help regarding as a monstrous audacity on his part. Ah! it would have been very different indeed if he had revealed to her the whole truth, that he had found a father in the rich Marquis of Eagledean, that in due course he was to be publicly acknowledged as that great nobleman's son, and that his sire would give him a fortune, which, if

not so large as Mr. Hawkshaw's, would nevertheless be an ample one, — very different, we say, would it have been, if Juliana had heard all these things from Frank's lips. Then she would have followed only the dictates of that powerful passion which she believed to be love, then she would at once have clasped that charming youth in her arms, murmuring an enthusiastic "Yes," and throwing a veil over what he might have been in times past, she would have been proud, when she thought of him as her husband, for the present and the future. But as she knew nothing of all those things which young Paton might have revealed to her, had he chosen, she was at once struck with the seeming audacity and presumption of his demand, and not for a moment did she think of making what appeared to be so stupendous a sacrifice. Nevertheless, she could not endure the thought of losing him altogether, and she asked herself wherefore her original plans could not be carried out, — that she should wed Mr. Hawkshaw and that Frank should continue her paramour?

For upwards of a minute did she remain motionless, half-reclining in his arms, with her head resting upon his shoulder; then she slowly raised her countenance, and assuming her most winning, most seductive look, she said, "Listen to me, Frank."

"Proceed, dearest," he responded, for there was nothing in her mien or her manner to throw a damp upon his hopes.

"Listen, my dearest boy," she continued, "and I will tell you what I think, and what I propose after all you have said. As for the alternative of your fleeing from your native land to seek your fortune in other climes, it is cruel of you to hint at such a thing, and you must know perfectly well that I could not endure the thought. Then, as to the other alternative, we must look at it calmly and deliberately. Of what use would it be, Frank, for us to wed in order to be poor? I have no fortune, and I could neither endure poverty myself, nor behold you suffer it. You know that I love you devotedly, passionately, and you love me in return. We must make the best of circumstances, and they perhaps are not so unfavourable as you may apprehend. Now listen, dear Frank, and let me not see a shade gathering upon that beautiful countenance of yours; it must always brighten up with smiles to beam upon me, as mine shall

ever beam smilingly upon you. Dear Frank, I have received an offer of marriage — ”

“ Ah! ” and the youth gave a quick spasmodic start, while the colour which had been slowly fading away from his countenance during the latter portion of Juliana’s speech suddenly vanished altogether.

“ Why do you start thus? Why do you turn pale? ” she said, pressing his hand to her bosom, and at the same time looking with impassioned earnestness into his countenance. “ Hear me to the end. I have received, as I was saying, an offer of marriage. In a worldly point of view, it is an advantageous one, though I need hardly assure you there is no affection on my side, for all the love that my heart had to bestow is yours, and yours only. Well, but this marriage will give me a social position, and will also give me wealth, and you, my dearest Frank, shall continue to be the real object of my love. You shall have no care for your livelihood. No need to push your fortune in other realms — ”

“ And would you, Juliana, ” interrupted Frank, in a voice that was not merely low, but likewise hollow and gloomy, sad, and even startling to hear from the lips of one so young, “ and would you, Juliana, be guilty of such tremendous deceit toward a husband, and doom me to the degradation of being a hireling favourite — a pensioned paramour? ”

“ Dear Frank, how strangely you talk! One would really think, ” continued Juliana, “ that you were affecting to speak like a Puritan, ” and she gazed upon him searchingly, to see if he could possibly be in earnest.

“ Oh, Juliana, ” he exclaimed, with a sudden outburst of emotion, “ do not, do not let me think that it is you who have been speaking in a manner sufficient to astonish and bewilder me. Do not destroy the brightest dream that ever shed its golden influence upon the human heart. Recall everything you have said, tell me that you were seeking to put me to the test, that you were compelling me to pass through an ordeal for the purpose of assuring yourself that I am worthy to become your husband. ”

“ Frank, dear Frank, I am at a loss to comprehend you, ” and Juliana would have been really and truly angry, had not the youth seemed so eminently handsome at the moment, with the expression of lofty pride upon his brow, and of

an earnest entreaty on his eyes and his lips, that she could not bear to reproach him.

“Look me in the face, Juliana,” he said, his voice again becoming sad and mournful; “look me in the face, not as you are doing now, with all the blandishments of your beauty, but look at me seriously and steadily, and tell me deliberately and frankly whether you ere now expressed your precise meaning, and whether you still adhere to it, that you are to marry another, but that you will continue to regard me as — as — I cannot speak the word again. And yet pause, Juliana, before you answer me. Remember that your love has been given to me, and that we are already the same as husband and wife in the sight of Heaven. Can you in honour, can you in delicacy, can you in decency, accompany another to the altar? Can you so far deceive the confiding heart of some fond and no doubt good and honourable man by suffering him to suppose that it is a virgin bride whom he is to receive to his arms?”

“Frank,” responded the Honourable Miss Farefield, the flush of mingled indignation, shame, and humiliation rising to her countenance, for she was now truly indignant, and unable to conceal this anger of hers, “you are abusing the position to which my love has raised you in respect to myself. It ill becomes you, Frank, to make my weakness a subject of reproach, and did I love you less, I should be more offended still at this lecture which you are taking upon yourself to read me. Come, my dear boy, let me hear no more of such speeches from your lips. Have I not offered to do all that woman can for you? I must ensure my own position, and our happiness may remain uninterrupted. Dear Frank, tell me that you are satisfied with what I have proposed, and I will no longer be angry with you for the manner in which you addressed me. And now, do not be offended, my dear boy, but take whatsoever I have about me at this moment. Here is gold — ”

Thus speaking, Juliana drew forth her purse, but with a sudden cry of indignation and aversion — of wounded pride and bitter disappointment — Francis Paton sprang up from the seat in the arbour, dashed the purse from her hand, and bending upon the astounded and even affrighted lady a look so strange, so wild, and so full of ineffable feelings, that it was never afterward effaced from her memory, he

cried, "No, everything is at an end between us. I have put you to a test, and I have discovered your real character. Thank God that I have done so. The veil of infatuation has fallen from my eyes. Beautiful serpent that you are, there is guile on your lips, poison throughout your entire being. Farewell, farewell, for ever."

With these words he turned and fled precipitately.

"Frank, dearest Frank," exclaimed Juliana, speeding after him, "come back to me — come back to me, I conjure you."

But he heeded her not; the paling was reached, he sprang over it quickly, he flew across the park, and in a few minutes was out of sight.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### HAWKSHAW HALL

As if flying away from a spot where the spells of a worse than Circean enchantment were to be avoided, Francis Paton sped across the fields, reckless of the course he was taking, and having no thought for anything but the magnitude of that disappointment which had succeeded the bright hopes so recently entertained. Indeed, he hurried onward as if for the purpose of outstripping that very thought, — a thought which kept pace with him, haunting him, circling him roundabout, appearing here, there, and everywhere, racking his brain, torturing his soul, sending pangs through his heart, making him feel as if the earth had nothing that he now need live for. In this manner the unhappy youth sped along through the fields for more than half an hour, until at length, wearied and exhausted, he threw himself upon a bank beneath a verdant hedge, and covering his face with his hands, burst into tears.

This outpouring of his sorrow proved a relief, and by degrees he found himself enabled to reflect with comparative calmness upon everything that had just occurred. But for the first few moments he could scarcely bring himself to believe that it was all a reality; it appeared like a dream. Was it possible that Juliana had never loved him as he could only wish to be loved? Was it possible that he had merely served her sensual fantasy, and that he had been regarded as one who would accept the lot of a profligate lady's paramour? Oh, that he should have been insulted by such a degradation! Oh, that he should have been subjected to such a humiliation! To have been a liveried lackey in her mother's service was mortifying enough, now that his circumstances were so altered, but to be deemed so lost to all honourable

principle as to be proffered a position which was infamy itself, was enough to make his heart feel as if fiery scorpions were writhing around it. And then, too, to have seen the mask so completely torn away from the countenance of her whom he had so fondly loved, to be compelled to look upon her henceforth as a snake wearing a beautiful skin, to have the conviction so rudely forced upon him that she was a lump of moral rottenness, corruption throughout from head to foot, steeped to the very lips in depravity, oh, all this was sufficient to make him mistrust the whole world in future, — almost sufficient to induce him to escape from it as from a morass swarming with reptiles.

Ah! these were stern and severe truths indeed for Francis Paton to admit into his soul, but nevertheless they were truths, and not to be rejected. But the longer he sat meditating on that verdant bank where he had thrown himself, the more did he see reason to appreciate the wisdom and the foresight of his father, the Marquis of Eagledean, who had so earnestly conjured him to put Juliana Farefield to the severest test. Ah! and he, in his infatuation, in his blind besotted confidence, in his fervid and enthusiastic trustfulness, would at one moment have abjured that test as an insult to her love, — an outrage to the evidences of affection which she was lavishing upon him. Love! it was a mockery. No, it was the baseness of a depraved passion. Evidences of affection! No, they were the blandishments and the allurements in which the feelings of the profligate woman expressed themselves.

Francis Paton remained for more than half an hour seated upon that bank, giving way to his reflections. Suddenly, he looked at his watch, the chain of which he had been hitherto careful not to display, as the appearance of jewelry would but have ill-assorted with the studied penury of his garb. He looked at his watch, we say, and he found that it was six o'clock. The evening was delicious, but he had no power to appreciate the beauties of nature in the present condition of his mind. It was true that he had grown calmer through that half-hour's reflection, but still he was very far from being completely tranquillized. He was unhappy, restless, uneasy.

Rising from the bank, he wandered on again in a listless mood, not perceiving which direction he was taking, nor

caring whither he went. On, on he walked at a quick pace, for the excitement of his mind was still sufficiently strong to make him proceed thus hurriedly; but it never once occurred to him to cast a glance around and assure himself whether he were proceeding toward Gainsborough or not. In this strange condition of mind, the youth continued his way through the fields. Another hour had passed; again he looked at his watch, — it was seven o'clock. Yet, it was only in a sort of mechanical manner that he thus thought of the time, when he did not think of the path that he was pursuing, but presently the thought suddenly flashed across his memory that he was thus wandering aimlessly and without purpose. He now stopped short and looked all around. Saxondale Castle was no longer to be seen, nor was he near any town that might be Gainsborough. He was in the wide, open country, with here and there a few isolated cottages dotting the beautiful landscape. He began to compute that he must have walked some six or seven miles since parting from Juliana. He felt weary and faint, alike from fatigue and want of food, but he had no appetite, he craved nothing, he was sick at heart. He must, however, get back to Gainsborough as soon as possible, for his valet Edward, who had accompanied him into Lincolnshire, would be uneasy at his protracted absence. Bending his steps toward the nearest cottage, which was still at least half a mile distant, Francis Paton thus reasoned with himself:

“ Instead of giving way to sorrowful feelings, I ought to thank Heaven for having followed my excellent father's advice and put Juliana to this test. Perhaps if I had at once told her that I had found parents who were enabled to give me a fortune, she would have consented to marry me, and, oh, what an alliance would it have proved! Better, better far to place a viper in my bosom. Could I have expected that as a wife she would remain faithful to me? Ah! I should have believed it, I should have put confidence in her, — my soul would have given her all its most loving trust, — and some day, sooner or later, I should have been startled from my dream, I should have awakened to find myself deceived. Oh, it is a fortunate escape, and one that should fill my heart with gratitude instead of with useless repinings! But yet, but yet, it is hard to have had the golden bowl of hope thus rudely dashed from my lips to be broken



at my feet, and it is difficult to banish that bright and beautiful image — too bright and too beautiful — from my mind.”

While thus meditating, the youth reached the cottage, which stood in a narrow lane intersecting a wide expanse of verdant meadows. A peasant couple, evidently husband and wife, with three or four little children, were sitting at their evening meal. Frank asked for a cup of milk; it was immediately supplied him, and not choosing to remunerate the woman in a direct manner for her hospitality, he put some silver into the eldest child's hand, bidding him “purchase a toy with it the next time his father took him to Gainsborough.” He then inquired how far he was from that town. He was told eight miles. How far was he from Saxondale Castle? For he wished to ascertain what distance he had walked since parting from Juliana. He was told seven miles. Could he obtain any conveyance in the neighbourhood to take him to Gainsborough, for he had lost his way and was much wearied? But at the very moment that he had put this last question — and before it was answered — a gentleman on horseback rode up to the front of the cottage.

“Here's the squire,” exclaimed the peasant, rushing out to see what Mr. Hawkshaw wanted.

It was a glass of ale or cider, whichever might happen to be in the place, for Mr. Hawkshaw was thirsty. Frank's first impulse was to stand aside from the vicinage of the open door, so as to avoid being seen by the squire, for he did not wish to undergo the process of another interrogatory at that gentleman's hands, nor to have the pain of declining a renewed invitation which might possibly be put in respect to a visit to the Hall. But Mr. Hawkshaw had caught sight of him, and in a hurried whisper he asked the peasant whether a youth of such-and-such a description was not in the cottage. On receiving a reply in the affirmative, together with an account of the various inquiries Frank had been making, the good-hearted squire sprang from his horse, rushed into the cottage, and seizing the youth by the hand, exclaimed, “Now that you are on my territory, I take you prisoner. You have lost your way, you have been wandering about, you want a conveyance to take you back to Gainsborough, and you shall have one from the Hall,

but only on condition that you come and dine with me first. My house is barely two miles distant, and if you are too much fatigued to go so far, I will scamper home and send down a gig to fetch you. Come, give your assent at once, for I shall take no refusal."

"Indeed, Mr. Hawkshaw," responded Frank, "I know not how to decline your courtesy without seeming positively rude and churlish. But the fact is, my servant is at Gainsborough; he will be very uneasy —"

"Your servant?" and the squire could not avoid the ejaculation, for it certainly struck him as most singular that this shabbily dressed youth, of poverty-stricken appearance, should be attended by a valet. "Well," Hawkshaw immediately continued, fearful that he himself had been guilty of rudeness, "the moment we get to the Hall, one of my men shall take a chaise cart across to Gainsborough and fetch your servant."

At this moment the sounds of a vehicle coming along the lane were heard, and a gig, in which a stout, jolly-looking man was seated, came in sight.

"This is most opportune," ejaculated Hawkshaw, looking through the cottage window. "Here's Farmer Sladden, — a capital tenant of mine, by the bye, — and he will drive you on to the Hall. It won't be a quarter of a mile out of his way."

Frank could no longer refuse. He was too tired to think of walking any farther, and he had moreover conceived a friendship for the kind, frank-hearted Hawkshaw. He was likewise dispirited enough to feel that the companionship of such a host would be far from disagreeable, and he therefore accepted the proposed arrangement, with due acknowledgments of gratitude.

"You have nothing to thank me for, my young friend," said the squire. "I owe you a great obligation." Then rushing forth from the cottage, he beckoned Farmer Sladden to stop.

The gig drew up accordingly. Frank entered it; Mr. Hawkshaw requested Mr. Sladden to drive the young gentleman as far as the Hall, and remounting his horse, which the peasant had meanwhile been holding, he rode on a little in advance. In a short time a large and imposing-looking mansion, in the Elizabethan style of architecture, gradually

stood forth from amidst the stately trees of an immense park, and Farmer Sladden informed his young companion that it was the Hall. He added that as far as the eye could sweep all around did Mr. Hawkshaw's domain extend. In a few minutes the porter's lodge at the entrance of the park was reached, the gates flew open, and the gig followed Mr. Hawkshaw up a gradual ascent of gravel road to the entrance of the Hall. There Frank alighted, thanking Mr. Sladden for his courtesy, and the worthy farmer drove away.

"Now, my young friend," said the squire, when he had conducted his guest into a spacious, lofty, and handsomely furnished apartment, "tell me at once where your servant is to be found in Gainsborough, and one of my grooms shall go over and fetch him without delay. We will then have dinner, for I dare say you are hungry, and my appetite is marvellously keen. I am uncommon glad I was detained so long at Gainsborough, since it has afforded me this unexpected pleasure of meeting a second time with you."

Frank mentioned the hotel at Gainsborough where the servant would be found, and pulling out a well-filled purse, he begged that Mr. Hawkshaw's groom would become the bearer of the requisite funds to settle the account at that hostelry. While in the gig, Frank had fastened his handsome watch-chain in the usual manner to one of the buttonholes of his waistcoat, and the sight of this appendage, together with the production of the amply furnished purse, made the squire wonder more and more what possible mystery there could be about his new friend, and why with such adequate means his apparel should be so wretchedly mean and shabby. The youth was, however, still too much abstracted to reflect that these circumstances must indeed appear strange to his host, and therefore he thought not of volunteering any explanation. Of course the squire spoke not a word calculated to show that he sought one.

The groom was despatched to Gainsborough, and immediately afterward dinner was served up. The repast was alike substantial and excellent; there were no other guests, but until the dessert was placed on the table, a couple of footmen, in handsome though somewhat old-fashioned liveries, remained in attendance. The discourse, therefore, which passed between Mr. Hawkshaw and young Paton

was only upon indifferent and every-day subjects. But when the cloth was removed, and the board was covered with fruits and wines, the domestics withdrew, and then Frank, who in the meanwhile had found leisure for reflection as to the singularity of his position, thought that it was time to give a few words of explanation.

"Mr. Hawkshaw," he said, "in the first place I must renew my thanks for this generous hospitality on your part —"

"Not a syllable, Mr. Paton," interrupted the squire. "I have already told you that I consider myself your debtor. Thank Heaven, the hurt I received has proved much more trivial than might have at first been anticipated."

"I am rejoiced to receive this assurance," answered Frank. "But I was on the point of observing that you must doubtless consider it strange to have beheld me wandering about in such a manner, and also," he added, with a mournful look, "that I should be so poorly apparelled, although possessed of the amplest means."

"I don't seek to penetrate into your affairs, my young friend," observed the squire, "and if you consider it necessary to give me proofs of your respectability, I can tell you at once I don't want them. Your speech, your air, your manners, are those of a young gentleman, but even if you were not, it would be all the same, for I am not merely under an obligation to you, but I have likewise conceived a great interest on your behalf."

"For this reason, therefore, Mr. Hawkshaw," responded Frank, "and in return for that generous assurance, I consider it my duty to tell you something respecting myself. Nay, permit me to do so. There is perhaps some little romance in the tale that I am about to narrate, and at all events it will serve for conversation as well as another topic."

"If you regard the matter in this point of view," observed Hawkshaw, "you shall have your own way. Now, fill your glass, and let us enjoy ourselves. I am sorry to see that your spirits are none of the best, but I must hope to contribute toward cheering them somewhat. I dare be sworn it is some love-matter, but pray do not for a moment fancy that I seek to make light of it, as I myself must plead guilty to having recently surrendered up my heart to the keeping of the most beautiful and virtuous of her sex."

Frank heaved a profound sigh, for he could not help envying Mr. Hawkshaw the mingled confidence, satisfaction, and pride with which he was enabled — or at least thought himself enabled — to speak of the object of his affection.

“ Yes,” said the youth, “ you have discovered the true key to the reading of my unhappiness. I have loved where I ought not to have loved. But permit me to give you some few words of explanation. And first of all, start not when I tell you that but very recently I was in a menial capacity, though having been well educated and properly brought up. However, such was the case. I was a menial, wearing the badge of servitude, an obscure and humble individual, more than half-suspecting that my parentage was good, and yet without any certainty upon the subject. Indeed, I had not the remotest idea who my father might be, though, as I have already hinted, I had some reason to imagine my mother was a lady of rank. Well, Mr. Hawkshaw, it was my good fortune — as I thought at the time, but my misfortune as I now discover it to be — to become the object of what I took to be love on the part of a young lady of marvellous beauty. I will not mention her name; I will not even give you the slightest idea of her portraiture. God forbid that, having loved her as I have done, I should do her an injury by proclaiming her secret! Suffice it to say that I saw she loved me. I loved her in return. Yes, ardently, fondly, adoringly did I love her! She was to me the object of a worship; her image sat enshrined in my heart like an idol in a temple. I would have laid down my life for her; there was no sacrifice possible to make that I was not prepared to make if called upon, and if such sacrifice on the part of so humble an individual as I was then would have benefited her. Methought that she loved me as fondly and as well. Mr. Hawkshaw, inasmuch as I have not mentioned her name, — as I shall not mention it, and as not a syllable will pass my lips to furnish an idea of her identity, should you ever meet her in the world, — there can be no harm in confessing that she gave me the utmost proof which woman could give of her attachment.”

Francis Paton stopped short. He wished he could have recalled the statement he had just made; he was fearful he had gone too far. It now struck him that Mr. Hawkshaw had casually mentioned, a few hours back, at the time of

the accident, that he had just come from Saxondale Castle. He therefore knew Juliana; possibly he might some day learn that he (Francis Paton) had been in Lady Saxondale's service, and should this fact come to his knowledge, he might put two and two together, and thence arrive at the conclusion that Juliana herself was the heroine of the present narrative. Such was the transient fear which shot through the youth's brain. But it was only transient, for on a second thought, he saw that it would be very difficult indeed for Mr. Hawkshaw to imbibe any such suspicion or frame any such conclusion. Frank had been speaking vaguely; he had not said that it was a lady in the same house where he was a menial, who had formed an attachment for him. But would it not appear strange that he should this day have been seen in the vicinage of Saxondale Castle? Might not this circumstance lead Mr. Hawkshaw to suspect something? Again did Frank see the perilous ground on which he had been treading, and the danger there was of seriously compromising Miss Farefield, which he was far too generous-hearted and too magnanimous to do. He therefore at once saw the necessity of deviating somewhat from the truth of his narrative, and making it appear that the lady of whom he was speaking resided in quite a different neighbourhood from that in which he had first encountered Mr. Hawkshaw.

Such was the train of reflections which swept rapidly through the youth's brain, and though it has required a long space to record them, yet in reality they occupied but a few moments. Mr. Hawkshaw perceiving that he paused and reflected, attributed this to the peculiar mood of his mind at the instant.

"Yes," continued Frank, "this lady of whom I am speaking gave me the utmost proof of love, and methought that it was a real love, the sincerest and the fondest. Then came a whirl of circumstances, hurrying me on to the solution of the strangest destiny. I suddenly quitted the family where I was in service, I was separated from the object of my adoration, the mystery of my parentage was cleared up, I found that my preconceived suspicions were correct, my mother was a lady of quality, and more than this, I discovered that my father was a man of exalted rank. My fortunes changed all in a moment. After years of separation, my father and mother were brought together again. They

are now married. You understand, Mr. Hawkshaw, from what I have told you, that I was not born in wedlock; nevertheless, I was the offspring of the tenderest and most faithful love. My parents are immensely rich; my father will give me a fortune whensoever I am prepared to settle in life. A few days back he learned the history of my love for this lady of whom I am speaking. How did he act? Not sternly and implacably, as many fathers would, but generously, kindly, and considerately. He said, 'Go to where the object of your affection is at present to be found; appear before her in the meanest and poorest costume; suffer her to think that you are steeped to the lips in poverty; tell her a tale of hopeless prospects in this country, and of offers to amend your fortunes in a foreign clime, then ask her to become your wife. If her love be sincere, she will make every sacrifice rather than renounce you; if it be a mere gross passion, selfish and egotistical, she will refuse. By these means, my son, you will put her to the test. If she come out worthily from the ordeal, I will settle upon you two thousand a year, but if it prove otherwise, you will be rejoiced to think that you have escaped from your infatuation in respect to one so utterly undeserving of your regard.' Thus spoke my father, Mr. Hawkshaw, and I came down to Gainsborough. For it is in the town of Gainsborough, at this moment, that for a few days the lady of whom I speak is staying; she is there on a temporary visit to some elderly relatives, who, though not so well off in the world as her own family, are nevertheless highly respectable."

The reader will perceive, in the latter portion of Frank's speech, those ingeniously contrived variations from the real circumstances of his story, which, while they did not impair the general truth of the narrative, were perfectly sufficient to conceal the identity of his heroine with Juliana Farefield.

"Having arrived in Gainsborough," he continued, "I dressed myself in this humble apparel which you see, and appeared before the young lady. I adopted the course which my father had recommended. But upon the details of the scene which ensued I cannot dwell further than to give you the briefest outline possible. Would you believe it, Mr. Hawkshaw? She refused to bestow upon me her hand, but she shamelessly proposed to make me her pensioned

paramour. She said that she would marry, she would contract a brilliant alliance, — one that would give her riches; and that though she would take a husband's name, yet that my image alone should rule in her heart. I scorned her proposition, I repudiated it with loathing and horror. I fled from her presence. Cruelly excited, I wandered out of the town, along the bank of the river, not knowing nor caring whither I went."

"And it was under such circumstances as these that I met you?" observed Mr. Hawkshaw, deeply sympathizing with Frank's affliction. "Ah, my poor young friend! you had indeed enough upon your mind at the moment, and yet you could so generously bestow your ministrations upon me! You will forgive me for having made certain offers —"

"Forgive you, Mr. Hawkshaw," ejaculated the youth, "how can you address me in these terms? Shall I ever forget your generosity? You fancied me poor, you offered to give me a start in life, — it was most kind, most noble. For the present there are circumstances which induce my father to preserve an *incognito* before the world, — he has a nephew to reclaim, — but rest assured that when the moment comes that there is no longer any need for preserving this mystery, I shall write to you from London, I shall tell you who he is, he himself will write to you, and he will thank you for your kindness toward his son. He bears one of the proudest names of the British aristocracy, and well assured am I that you, Mr. Hawkshaw, whenever you visit the metropolis, will be a welcome guest at his house."

"I shall be delighted, Mr. Paton," returned the squire, "to renew in London at some future period the acquaintance that has commenced thus singularly between us in Lincolnshire. And perhaps I shall have the pleasure of seeing you again before long, for, as I just now hinted, I am about to change my bachelor condition for the marriage state, and after the nuptial ceremony I shall repair with my bride to London. Ah, my young friend, how different is she whom I shall soon lead to the altar from the heartless creature of whom you have been speaking! The object of my affection is all amiability, virtue, and excellence. She has been reared by an affectionate mother, — a woman of strong mind, and who knew how to perform her duty to her children. The object of your love is handsome, you say; so is the object



of mine, — grandly handsome! — but therein is the only point of similitude between the two. Ah! what a tale of shameless profligacy have you revealed to me. Thank Heaven, you have been discreet and delicate enough not to mention that lady's name, for if by chance I ever met her in society, I could not possibly help testifying the contempt and abhorrence with which her conduct has inspired me. You have indeed experienced a most fortunate escape, and instead of being downcast and unhappy, you ought to be cheerful and glad."

Frank sighed, but made no answer. The image of Juliana had been too deeply impressed upon his heart to be effaced all in a moment, and he wished that she were far less beautiful than she was.

The conversation was interrupted by the entrance of a footman, to announce that the groom had returned from Gainsborough, accompanied by Mr. Paton's valet, who had brought his master's luggage with him.

"Now, my young friend," said the squire, when the footman had withdrawn, "I do not intend to part with you so easily as perhaps you may imagine. You must at least give me two or three days of your company here. You need not go near Gainsborough, the residence of your faithless one, but I will do the best I can to amuse you. There is to be a grand ball at some friends of mine — the Denisons' — to-morrow evening, and I shall be delighted to introduce you. You will meet all the nobility and gentry of the neighbourhood, with their families. Do not say nay! Would you pine and mope for the sake of a worthless woman? Come, Mr. Paton, take my advice, seek rational pleasure and recreation, as the best means of driving her image from your memory."

Frank had drunk half a dozen glasses of wine, and his spirits were already somewhat cheered. He thought the squire's advice sound and good. It was not merely his wish, but also his duty, to triumph over the unfortunate attachment which he had formed. He had moreover received such kind hospitality from Mr. Hawkshaw that he did not feel himself justified in running away the first thing in the morning. And now, another idea flashed to his mind. He had parted from Juliana, leaving her with the impression that he was indeed the poor humble and obscure youth he

had represented himself to be; he regretted that he had not tarried at least long enough to make her aware that it was not really under such circumstances he had sued for her hand, but that he was merely putting her affection to the test. He did not wish to expose her to the world, but his own sense of pride would not suffer him to leave her under the impression that it was a poverty-stricken, homeless, brokendown youth whom she had rejected. And again, too, so long as she laboured under that impression, she might fancy that he had been only influenced by selfish motives in endeavouring to win as a wife the elder daughter of the proud and magnificent Lady Saxondale. He could not endure the thought of being deemed thus selfish — thus egotistical, and therefore did the idea suddenly spring up in his mind that his own pride and sense of honour required that Juliana should be disabused upon all those points.

Now, it was reasonable to suppose that she would be at the ball on the ensuing evening. What if he were to appear there also? He would not expose her; he need not speak to her, he need not even seem to notice her, but she would see him there, elegantly dressed, introduced by Mr. Hawkshaw; and as the squire was acquainted with her, he would no doubt take an opportunity of whispering in her ear “that Mr. Paton was a youth in whom he felt interested, that he had only recently discovered his parentage, that this was noble, though he himself was illegitimate, that his prospects were brilliant, and that he had a fortune at his command.”

Such were the thoughts which swept rapidly through the youth's mind, and perfectly consistent they were with his tender age, his inexperience in the world, and the natural feeling of pride that he entertained on account of his altered circumstances. Had he been twenty-eight instead of eighteen, he would have possibly reflected and acted otherwise, but as it was, he suddenly resolved upon the course which was thus chalked out. He accordingly accepted Mr. Hawkshaw's invitation to remain a day or two at the Hall, and the squire was heartily glad at the decision to which he thus came.

Perceiving that his youthful guest was very much wearied, Mr. Hawkshaw proposed that he should retire for the night, and with a cordial shaking of the hands, they separated.

## CHAPTER XXX

### THE BALL

WELL indeed might Francis Paton be wearied and exhausted, after the many long miles he had walked that day, and the excitement of mind through which he had passed. Scarcely, therefore, did he lay himself down to rest in the handsome but old-fashioned chamber to which he was shown, when sleep fell upon his eyelids.

On awaking in the morning, the sun was shining in at the window. He looked at his watch, and found that it was nearly ten o'clock. Springing from the couch, he rang the bell, and his valet soon made his appearance. All that Frank required of him was to put out a more suitable apparel than that which he had worn on the preceding day; and when this was done, Edward was dismissed while the youth performed his toilet, for he was neither affected nor fastidious enough to need assistance during the process.

But while he was thus engaged, he reflected more seriously and more deliberately than he was enabled to do on the preceding evening, on the course he had resolved to adopt by appearing at the Denisons' ball. All the motives above specified, and which he had already weighed, remained undisturbed, but there was a danger, which now occurred to him, that made him hesitate. What if Lady Saxondale should herself be at the ball, and should take it into her head to denounce him as the brother of a female highwayman? thus renewing the malignant spirit in which she had expelled him from her mansion. Yet would she dare do this? Would she take so bold a step when she found him in the companionship of a man of such evident wealth and standing as Mr. Hawkshaw? No, it was not probable. Besides, Frank could not see how her ladyship entertained

any spite against himself. He was unaware that she had discovered his amour with her daughter, and therefore he came to the conclusion that if she beheld him at Mr. Denison's she would pass him by unnoticed, perhaps not even recognize him at all. But still there was another consideration: might not Juliana, on beholding him there, become overwhelmed with confusion, and thus betray to Mr. Hawkshaw that she was the lady of whom the squire had heard so sad a tale? We have already said that Frank did not seek to expose her; he was too generous, too noble-minded, and there was a sufficiency of love lingering in his heart to render him averse to the infliction of any unnecessary pain upon Miss Farefield. Should he, then, go to that ball? Ah! did he not know that Juliana had an immense power of command over herself? Yes, surely; and on second thoughts he calculated she would pass him coldly by, with the air of one who had never seen him before in all her life. Therefore, everything considered, Frank decided upon remaining fixed in the resolve formed on the preceding evening.

Having completed his toilet, he descended to the breakfast-parlour, and Mr. Hawkshaw, who was already there, rose to welcome, not the poor-looking youth of the previous day, but an elegantly dressed young gentleman. The squire had been up for hours; as early as seven o'clock he was galloping over his estate, and returning by nine, had taken a tankard of ale and a somewhat massive sandwich to allay the cravings of hunger until his guest should descend to the breakfast-table. And sumptuously provided was this breakfast-table, to which they both sat down: the board literally groaned beneath cold viands, pies and poultry, ham and tongue, various sorts of potted meats and marmalade, besides some fish, fresh caught from the river that morning. The squire did the most ample justice to his own good things, and if he had confessed to Frank the little incident of the tankard of ale and the huge sandwich, the youth would have stared in most unfeigned wonder at the havoc which Mr. Hawkshaw was still enabled to make among the comestibles.

"I have been thinking, Mr. Paton," said the open-hearted gentleman, "what I can best do to amuse you to-day. I I sha'n't offer to take and introduce you to any of my friends in the neighbourhood, because I know that the mere cere-

mony of morning calls is irksome and uninviting enough. Besides, you will see all the élite of the county at the Denisons' in the evening, and then you can take your choice in respect to those whose acquaintance you may choose to form. I myself usually make one call every day," he added, with a smile, "and you can guess upon whom, — the lady who is to be Mrs. Hawkshaw, but I will send a note presently to excuse myself for this one occasion — "

"I beg and beseech that you will do nothing of the sort," interrupted Frank. "I should be truly sorry to deprive you of the pleasure of paying your accustomed visit. I myself shall be well pleased to ramble through your beautiful grounds — "

"No, my dear Mr. Paton," said the squire, "I am not going to leave you to your own resources. So not another word upon that subject. But, by the bye, did you go and have a look at Saxondale Castle yesterday? Ah! I dare say you were in no humour for anything of the kind — "

"Nevertheless," responded Frank, successfully concealing the agitation which this allusion to Juliana's home conjured up, "I did approach near enough to that fine old edifice to see as much as I cared for. But I have no great taste that way; I feel no particular interest in seeing antique buildings. I would much rather go and take a long ride or walk through the midst of the charming scenery which I behold from this window."

"As for walking, my dear Mr. Paton," replied Hawkshaw, with a smile, "you must have had enough of it yesterday, so if you please, we will take a good ride together. According to your proficiency in horsemanship can I accommodate you. If you like a somewhat spirited steed, be it so, but if you prefer a quiet, gentle animal, but a fast trotter withal, such a one shall be at your service."

"I must confess," said Frank, "that I should prefer the latter, for I cannot pretend to have any equestrian skill at all."

The squire and his guest now rose from the breakfast-table, and proceeded to the stables. Mr. Hawkshaw possessed a large stud, comprising some of the finest horses in the county. He had a pack of hounds and harriers, and an hour was spent in the inspection of the equine and canine departments of his spacious establishment. All the while

he conversed with such frankness of heart and in such cheerful spirits that young Paton felt himself considerably elevated from the despondency and gloom into which he had previously been plunged. It was impossible not to catch some portion of the squire's exhilaration; besides, Frank was little more than eighteen years of age, and that was not a time of life when disappointment in love renders the victim so utterly disconsolate as to think seriously of quitting the world and turning hermit.

Mr. Hawkshaw and his youthful guest, mounting the horses that were gotten in readiness for them, rode forth across the country. There was a variety of beautiful scenery on the squire's estate, with the contemplation of which Frank was much charmed, for his was a mind that could appreciate the loveliness of nature, and receive, as it were, poetic inspirations therefrom. Nor less was he in reality curious and interested with regard to fine specimens of architecture; he had therefore done himself an injustice when at the breakfast-table he affected an indifference with regard to Saxondale Castle. But this, as the reader has no doubt understood, he did for the purpose of preventing Mr. Hawkshaw from starting a proposal to take him in that direction.

After a long ride, a farmhouse was reached, where the squire purposed to halt and take lunch. He was well known there, although it was not upon his own estate, and most welcome were he and Frank made by the occupants of the homestead. Having refreshed themselves, they remounted their horses and returned to the Hall by another route, so that Frank had further opportunities of beholding the charming scenery of that part of the country. It was about four o'clock when they reached the mansion, and the interval until dinner-time was occupied by an inspection of the interior of the house itself. There was a fine library, consisting chiefly of old works accumulated by Mr. Hawkshaw's father, who was much more of a bookworm than his son and successor. There was likewise a fine gallery of pictures, and there were a few good busts and statues. Thus, in the inspection of these objects of interest, the time passed away quickly enough till six o'clock, when dinner was served up. After the repast Frank and the squire adjourned to their respective chambers, to dress for the grand ball that was to take place at the Denisons' that evening.

It was with a beating heart that Frank performed this toilet; and now he did suffer his page Edward to assist him, for he was resolved to lose none of the advantages that dress might bestow. Not that he entertained the slightest idea of endeavouring to assert so complete an empire over the heart of Juliana as to pave the way for a reconciliation, to be crowned by marriage. No, he vowed within himself that everything should indeed be at an end between herself and him. But if the plain truth must be spoken, it was with a feeling of boyish vanity, natural and intelligible enough, that Frank on the present occasion made the best of all the resources and advantages of the toilet which were at his disposal. When it was achieved, he could not be otherwise than well satisfied with his own appearance, for he looked eminently handsome. The well-cut garments set off his slender and symmetrical figure to the fullest advantage; the evening costume became his somewhat feminine style of beauty most admirably. The flutter of his heart's feelings sent up the colour to his cheeks, which were usually of a classic paleness; and when he descended to the room where Mr. Hawkshaw was waiting for him, the worthy squire felt quite proud of the interesting youth whom he was about to introduce to the circle of his acquaintances, for he foresaw that Frank's presence there would cause a complete sensation.

The old-fashioned chariot — which had belonged to the squire's grandfather, and which the squire himself so very seldom used, save and except when going to evening parties — was in readiness soon after eight o'clock. The place of destination was about seven miles distant, and it was reached at nine, for in the country such entertainments as these commence at an earlier hour than in London. Mr. Denison's mansion was of an immense size, and contained suites of apartments spacious and lofty enough to remind one of the baronial halls of former times. The family itself has already been spoken of as one of the oldest and richest in all Lincolnshire. The father and mother were kind-hearted, hospitable persons; the old gentleman was sure to form a friendship for any one who would praise his wines, — the lady was as certain to take a liking to any one who appeared to relish the substantial fare served up at her board. They had several sons and daughters, most of them married and

settled in different parts of the same county. These were all present at the ball of which we are speaking. Most of the guests had arrived when Mr. Hawkshaw's carriage drove up to the front of the mansion. There were perhaps three hundred persons altogether assembled, and, as the squire had hinted to his youthful companion, these consisted of the élite of the entire neighbourhood for several miles around.

It was with a heart beating more violently than while performing his toilet or during the drive thither, that Francis Paton, arm in arm with Mr. Hawkshaw, followed the powdered lackey up the spacious and well-lighted staircase, to the first of the suite of rooms which were thrown open for the reception of the company. It was here — in what was called the anteroom — that Mr. and Mrs. Denison had stationed themselves to receive their guests. Immediately upon crossing that threshold, Frank swept his quick glances around, but amongst the ladies and gentlemen who were lounging there previous to passing into the next apartment, which was called the saloon, he discerned not Juliana Farefield. The footman announced Mr. Hawkshaw in a loud voice; Mr. and Mrs. Denison at once came forward to receive him. Cordial shakings of the hand took place, and the squire hastened to observe, "Permit me to introduce a young and very particular friend of mine, Mr. Paton. He is on a visit to me at the Hall, and I have taken the liberty of bringing him hither, knowing that he would be welcome."

"We are delighted to see Mr. Paton," said Mrs. Denison, at once, and with more cordiality than would have been shown in the less genial circles of London fashionable life, extending her hand to greet the youth.

"Any friend of my friend Hawkshaw," said old Mr. Denison, "is sure to receive a kind welcome here," and he in his turn shook Frank by the hand.

Some other guests were announced at the moment, and the squire, accompanied by Frank, strolled into the saloon, where the bulk of the company were assembled, and where tea and coffee were served up. This was an immense apartment, and it was not with the first quickly sweeping glance that Frank was enabled to discern whether Juliana was there or not. All around — on chairs, ottomans,



or sofas — elegantly appressed ladies and well-dressed gentlemen were seated. Here and there small groups were standing to converse; and in other parts ladies were sitting, while gathered around them was a knot of young gentlemen standing in that gracefully lounging attitude which is so often seen. The immense apartment was flooded with the light poured forth by three superb lustres, and which was reflected in the magnificent mirrors, as well as by the diamonds and the costly ornaments worn by the guests. Among the female portion thereof there was no insignificant display of beauty, and bright eyes, as well as mirrors and gems, shone brighter in the powerful effulgence streaming from the lustres.

Mr. Hawkshaw, with Frank on his arm, strolled through the saloon, nodding familiarly to those with whom he was most intimate, bowing more formally to those with whom he was less acquainted, and also looking around to see if a certain lady guest had yet arrived. Need we say that the object of his eyes' research was Juliana Farefield? And thus was it that, without having the most distant suspicion of the fact, he and his young friend were both alike on the lookout for one and the same being. She was not however there, and having reached the extremity of the room, the squire and Frank sat down, while a footman hastened to serve them with coffee.

As Mr. Hawkshaw had foreseen, Frank's appearance at once created much curiosity and interest. All eyes had followed him as he walked through the apartment, leaning on the squire's arm. The exquisite beauty of his countenance, his symmetrical and graceful figure, the aristocratic polish which appeared to invest him as naturally as if he had passed all his life in patrician halls, attracted the notice of every one present, and made him the "observed of all observers." Who was he, this interesting young stranger? Such appeared to be the general question, whispered in some parts of the room, asked by means of a rapid exchange of glances in others. The squire and Frank did not remain long alone where they had seated themselves; some of the principal male guests approached to shake hands with their friend Hawkshaw, and they were of course introduced to Mr. Paton. A little knot was soon collected there, and the youth became engaged in discourse with his new acquaint-

ances. Presently Mr. Denison approached, and seizing an opportunity when Frank was talking to some others, the old gentleman whispered to Hawkshaw, "You have brought us quite an acquisition this evening. I can assure you that a great number of ladies have already been asking Mrs. Denison who the interesting young stranger is."

"He is connected with one of the highest and noblest families of the British aristocracy," responded the squire, aside to Mr. Denison. "He is well off, too," he added, with a smile, "and if it be any satisfaction to the fair sex, you may safely whisper that on the day of his marriage his father will give him a fortune of a couple of thousand a year."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Denison. "He certainly is a most interesting and fascinating youth. Does he purpose to make a long stay in Lincolnshire?"

"I am afraid not," responded Hawkshaw. "I mean to keep him as long as I possibly can, but I know that he is very anxious to get back to London."

"That's a pity," rejoined the old gentleman. "However, we must make the most of him while he is in the county. By the bye," he added, jocularly, at the same time poking the squire in the ribs, "are you serious in your intentions in a certain quarter? You know where I mean. Come now, Hawkshaw, don't make a mystery of it. All the county is talking of your constant visits to the castle. But it is also rumoured that Lady Saxondale herself is likely to change her condition, and that Lord Harold Staunton is to be the happy man. I don't know how true it may be, but you at least ought to be in the secret."

"Well, I suppose," responded the squire, laughing, though amidst some little degree of confusion, "there is no use making a mystery of it. All that you have surmised is correct. But don't go and tell everybody that I am engaged to Miss Farefield. I only proposed yesterday, and you are the first person outside the walls of Saxondale Castle that I have mentioned it to. I would much rather keep it as quiet as possible till the event comes off, for when these things get known, one is stared at, and so bantered, and I really can't bear jesting on such a point."

"Well, well," answered Mr. Denison, laughing in his turn, "I will keep your secret, Hawkshaw. But the music

has struck up in the ballroom. I must go and get Mrs. Denison to find a suitable partner for your young friend here, for of course he dances."

A splendid band, which had been procured from Lincoln, had commenced playing at the moment when Mr. Denison spoke of it; and the company were beginning to move through the immense folding doors of the saloon into the adjacent apartment, where the dancing was to take place. Mr. Denison, retracing his way across the saloon, returned to the anteroom, where his wife was receiving the guests. At this moment the footman announced Lady Saxondale and the Honourable Miss Farefield. Mr. and Mrs. Denison hastened forward to receive these two brilliant arrivals, and when the usual greetings were exchanged, the lady of the mansion said, "But how is it that Lord Harold Staunton is not with you? I felt certain that your ladyship would have ensured us the honour of his presence."

"He went on a fishing excursion yesterday," responded Lady Saxondale, "remained out till late and caught a severe cold. I can assure you, my dear Mrs. Denison, that he deeply regrets his inability to wait upon you this evening. I am afraid we ourselves are rather late, — the company appears to be already numerous —"

"The ball is about to open," responded Mrs. Denison. Then addressing herself to Juliana, she said, "Will you permit me to introduce as your partner, for the first quadrille, such a charming acquisition which we have received this evening, and whom Mr. Hawkshaw brought us?"

"Indeed!" said Juliana, with a smile, for she little suspected what she was about to hear. "Who is this phoenix of whom you are speaking?"

"Mr. Paton," replied Mrs. Denison. "Look! he is standing at the farther extremity of the saloon, talking to Lord Blackwater and Sir John Knightley. What an elegant youth."

Fortunate was it alike for Juliana and Lady Saxondale that at the very moment Mrs. Denison mentioned the name of Paton, both she and her husband turned their heads to look through the wide open doorway into the saloon where the youth was standing. For while on the one hand Lady Saxondale turned pale, on the other hand the colour mounted in its deepest crimson glow to her daughter's

cheeks. Yes, sure enough, there was Frank, elegantly attired, looking as if he had never been otherwise than the occupant of splendid drawing-rooms, the handsomest, the most tastefully dressed, and the most interesting of all the guests present upon this occasion.

Lady Saxondale was utterly ignorant of all that had taken place between Frank and her daughter on the preceding day. She did not even know until this instant that he was in Lincolnshire at all. She had for some time past ceased to think of him, though the moment the name was mentioned it conjured up into her mind all past circumstances with regard to himself and Juliana. Her ladyship was astounded and bewildered to behold the youth there, elegantly dressed, looking as if he were as perfectly at home in a splendid drawing-room as if he had never dwelt in a servants' hall, and introduced, too, by Mr. Hawkshaw, her daughter's intended husband.

On the other hand, Juliana was equally astounded and bewildered. What could it mean? How came he thus handsomely dressed? He who on the previous day had appeared before her in the meanest garb. But how had he fallen in with the squire? Had there been explanations between them? Had Frank betrayed her secret? Had Hawkshaw decked him out in order to bring him thither to consummate a terrific exposure of herself? For an instant she felt as if she could pray that the floor would open under her feet and swallow her up, but the next moment she said to herself, "No, Frank would not betray me; he is too generous. There is some strange coincidence, the mystery of which has to be explained. In any case, however, I have a difficult part to play. Courage, courage! and above all things, calmness and composure!"

"And pray, who is this Mr. Paton?" asked Lady Saxondale, in a somewhat cold and proud tone, for she thought it best to ascertain at once under what circumstances the youth could have formed the acquaintance of Mr. Hawkshaw, and thereby gained an introduction to the mansion where he was now found.

"Oh," quickly replied Mr. Denison, "he belongs to one of the best and highest families in the kingdom. He is very well off too, — at least a couple of thousand a year. Hawkshaw told me so just now. He knows all about him,

but I hadn't time to learn any more particulars, for the music struck up and I was coming to ask Mrs. Denison to select a partner for Mr. Paton."

At this moment some new guests arrived; Mr. and Mrs. Denison hastened to greet them, and Lady Saxondale stepped aside with Juliana to exchange a few hurried observations.

"Can you read this mystery?" inquired the mother.

"I confess that I cannot," answered the daughter.

"But is it possible, think you, that this boy has told Mr. Hawkshaw —"

"No, I do not think so," interrupted Juliana, the liveliest carnation again mounting to her features. "He would not do it, and if he had, the squire would not make a scene here. No, it is ridiculous."

"Well, you know them both best," said Lady Saxondale. "But you will not think of dancing with that boy? No doubt he has invented a tissue of falsehoods to impose upon Mr. Hawkshaw about his rank and his fortune. Indeed, the whole thing looks ominous, Juliana."

"Mother, recollect our compact," said the daughter, impressively. "The affair is mine, — leave me to manage it. Depend upon it I shall know how. On your side, breathe not a word relative to Frank's antecedents; you had better pretend not to know him."

"I shall certainly follow your advice," answered Lady Saxondale, half-haughtily, half-sarcastically.

"Now, Miss Farefield," said Mrs. Denison, "when you and her ladyship have taken a cup of coffee, I will introduce Mr. Paton to you. Permit me to escort you both into the saloon."

We must here observe that at the spot where Francis Paton and Mr. Hawkshaw were located at the farther extremity of that immense apartment, they could not see what was taking place in the anteroom where the Denisons received their guests; and it happened that just at the moment when Lady Saxondale and Juliana looked through the doorway and beheld Frank in the manner above described, neither he nor the squire was glancing in the same direction at the time. But Frank had heard, from some remark which had been made close by, that Lady Saxondale and her daughter were expected to be present at the ball, and he

had therefore armed himself with all his presence of mind, all his coolness, all his self-possession, in order to meet the crisis, whenever it should arrive, in a becoming manner. On the other hand, Mr. Hawkshaw — as we have already seen in his conversation with Mr. Denison — did not wish it to be generally known at once that he was engaged to Juliana; he had remained a bachelor long enough to dread the sly jokes and bantering jests of his friends at the approaching change in his condition. He therefore had made up his mind not to rush forward with a marked and pointed eagerness to greet Juliana when she should make her appearance.

And now Lady Saxondale, accompanied by her daughter, and escorted by Mrs. Denison, entered the saloon, after the above-described little scene in the anteroom. The mother was, as usual, invested with that well-bred but graceful dignity which sat upon her like a superb mantle elegantly worn, and no one who looked upon her exceeding handsome countenance would for an instant suppose that on entering that brilliantly lighted suite of apartments she had experienced the minutest incident calculated to excite her vexation or her alarm. As for Juliana, she likewise was collected and self-possessed to all outward appearance, reflecting the calm and high-bred dignity, mingled with the graceful ease and elegance which characterized her mother; but her heart was fluttering and palpitating, not through any lingering apprehensions on account of Francis Paton's presence there, but at the idea of meeting him again so unexpectedly and under such unaccountable circumstances.

"Here are Lady Saxondale and her daughter," observed Sir John Knightley, with whom Frank and Mr. Hawkshaw were conversing at the moment.

"Ah!" said Frank, affecting just that degree of interest which might be supposed to be excited by the mention of a name of no small consequence in the county, "that is Lady Saxondale?"

"Yes, and the other is the Honourable Miss Farefield," rejoined Sir John. "Do they not look more like sisters than mother and daughter?"

"Take care, Knightley, what you are saying," observed Lord Blackwater, in a jocular tone, and with a sly glance toward Hawkshaw. "The squire is smitten in that quarter, you know."

“Come, let us go and pay our respects,” interrupted Sir John Knightley, and taking his lordship’s arm, they lounged with fashionable ease toward the ottoman on which Lady Saxondale and Juliana had that moment seated themselves.

Frank, more absorbed than he had fancied he should have been, was looking in a furtive and sidelong manner toward Juliana at the moment when Lord Blackwater made that allusion to Hawkshaw, and therefore it was lost upon him. As for the squire himself he was likewise too intent in gazing upon the object of his adoration to notice the little circumstance. Thus did these two continue totally unsuspecting that the same being was engrossing so large a share of each other’s attention.

We must now interrupt the course of our narrative to describe a little incident that took place at this particular juncture. Mr. Denison had remained in the anteroom, conversing with some gentlemen, after his wife had escorted Lady Saxondale and Juliana into the saloon. Scarcely had those ladies thus passed into that splendid apartment, when a footman made his appearance and handed Mr. Denison a letter. Apologizing to those gentlemen with whom he was discoursing, for leaving them for a few minutes, Mr. Denison stepped aside to read the epistle which, having come by the evening mail from London to Lincoln, had been sent over to his mansion. Its contents ran as follows:

“STAMFORD MANOR, LONDON.

“August 14th, 1844.

“MY DEAR DENISON:— You will no doubt be surprised when you perceive the signature of your old friend. Years have elapsed since we met and since we corresponded, but I know your kind heart too well to entertain so injurious a suspicion as that the friendship which commenced in our school-days, was renewed at college, and was continued for some years afterward, is in any way impaired, on your part, by the lapse of time. You may believe in my sincerity when I assure you that I long to shake you by the hand.

“I am once more in England, but for the present it suits me to preserve a strict *incognito*. I am married to the object of that love which I confided to you long years ago, and which has never ceased to animate my heart. But though you were acquainted with that love of mine, you suspected

not all the circumstances attending it. You knew not that I was a father. Such, however, was the case. I cannot now enter into particulars; those shall be given when we meet, which I hope will be soon.

“ My object in penning these few lines is to inform you that my beloved son, Francis Paton, is at the present time in Lincolnshire. He is to be found at the principal hotel at Gainsborough. It is possible — if circumstances cause him to prolong his stay there — that he may need the counsel of one who, through friendship for his father, will advise him kindly and conscientiously. Is it, therefore, asking you too much to seek him at that hotel? Show him this letter, and he will confide to you the object of his visit into Lincolnshire. But forget not, my dear friend, that for the present I do not wish it to be known that I am in England.

“ Yours most sincerely,  
“ EAGLEDEAN.”

Mr. Denison read this letter with feelings of mingled astonishment and gratification, — astonishment that the youth whom accident had brought to his house should be the son of his oldest and most valued friend, and gratification to think that he should thus have already been enabled to show him some little attention, even before knowing who he was. But Mr. Denison was a discreet man, and he determined therefore to observe inviolably the secret which had just come to his knowledge. Putting the letter in his pocket, he at once passed into the saloon, and advancing straight up to Francis Paton, began to converse with him in the kindest and most friendly manner. Mr. Hawkshaw, perceiving that Frank was thus the object of special attention on the part of the host, did not now scruple to leave him for a few minutes while he proceeded to pay his respects to Lady Saxondale and Juliana. Mr. Denison then took Frank's arm, and gently leading him away into the ballroom, still continued to converse in the most affable manner, though upon general and indifferent topics. They passed through the ballroom, traversed a smaller apartment, and then entered a conservatory filled with evergreens, orange-trees, rare plants from the tropics, and a variety of choice flowers. This place was lighted with wax candles,



and in its coolness was most refreshing after the heated atmosphere of the other rooms.

“ My dear young friend, for so you must permit me to call you,” said Mr. Denison, “ I wish to know whether there be any way in which I can serve you? Whether you need the counsel or succour of one who feels a deep interest in you? But stay,” he exclaimed, perceiving that the youth gazed upon him in surprise, “ read this, and then you will understand wherefore I am thus familiarly addressing you.”

Frank took the letter which Mr. Denison handed him, and having perused it, he remained lost in thought for upwards of a minute, while a profound sadness settled upon his countenance.

“ Mr. Denison,” at length he said, “ I return you my sincerest thanks for the kind feeling you have demonstrated toward me. Before I left London, my father mentioned that he had an old friend residing in this county, to whom he offered to give me a letter of introduction, but I thought not that my stay would be prolonged, indeed, it was by mere accident that I became Mr. Hawkshaw’s guest.”

“ Then Mr. Hawkshaw is acquainted with all to which this letter alludes? ” said Mr. Denison, inquiringly.

“ No,” responded Frank, “ he knows nothing beyond the mere fact that my parents are rich and noble, and that I myself, alas! am the offspring of a love which, at the time of my birth, bore not the sanction of marriage.”

“ But the purpose for which you are come into Lincolnshire? ” said Mr. Denison.

“ Yes, Mr. Hawkshaw is to a certain extent acquainted with that,” rejoined Frank. “ It is somewhat a long tale to tell — ”

“ And evidently not a pleasant one,” interrupted the worthy old gentleman, grasping the youth’s hand and pressing it kindly. “ We will not converse any more upon the subject now. To-morrow you and the squire must come across and dine with us. For the present, endeavour, my dear young friend, to enjoy yourself and enter into the gaieties of the evening. And now let us return to the saloon, where Mrs. Denison will be proud to find you a suitable partner.”

Again taking the youth’s arm, Mr. Denison conducted him

away from the conservatory, through the ballroom, back into the saloon.

In the meantime Squire Hawkshaw, as already stated, had proceeded to pay his respects to Lady Saxondale and Juliana, who were seated with Mrs. Denison. He placed himself next to his intended, and for the first few minutes the conversation was confined to mere drawing-room generalities; but Juliana, as well as her mother, was convinced by the squire's manner that he had heard not a syllable from Francis Paton's lips to alter his sentiments in any way with regard to the former.

"By the bye," observed Lady Saxondale, after a brief pause in the discourse, "you have a friend here with you this evening, Mr. Hawkshaw?"

"Yes, and it was owing to that horse of mine — you know," he continued with a smile, "to which I allude? — that I formed Mr. Paton's acquaintance. In short, I met with a little accident yesterday. I did not mean to tell you of it, but since it is necessary to account for my falling in with that very interesting young man —"

"An accident?" said Juliana, in a low tone, and pretending to fling upon the squire a look full of apprehension, which Mrs. Denison could not help noticing, and she was at no loss to suspect the cause, although she certainly little thought that it was assumed.

"Oh, but it was nothing, I can assure you," said the squire. "I was thrown at a gate, not leaping it, it was all my own fault, sheer carelessness on my part — However, Mr. Paton, who was passing along at the time, rendered me the requisite assistance, and the result was his visit to me at the Hall."

"And does he purpose to make a long stay in Lincolnshire?" asked Lady Saxondale, as if merely in a conversational manner.

"No, it was with some difficulty I could induce him to remain a day or two with me. He is a well-connected youth —"

"Do you know anything of his family?" inquired Lady Saxondale, still with the same seeming indifference.

"No, but I have heard enough from his lips to be assured that he is of the highest respectability. Indeed, his whole appearance, his manner, his conversation, stamp him as the well-bred young gentleman."

Lady Saxondale drew herself up slightly, but made no further remark; she remembered her compact with Juliana, and did not choose to violate it.

“ I dare say,” observed Mr. Hawkshaw, addressing himself to Miss Farefield, “ that you will become acquainted with my young friend in the course of the evening, and I am sure you will be pleased with him.”

Mrs. Denison was at the moment making some remark to Lady Saxondale, and Juliana said, in a low, quick whisper, to Mr. Hawkshaw, but with an arch smile upon her countenance, “ And shall you not be jealous, my dear George, if you see me dancing with that handsome youth whom you have brought hither to turn all the ladies’ heads? ”

“ Not I indeed!” he responded, also with a smile, but which was as replete with frankness and ingenuous confidence as that of his intended was hypocritical and feigned. “ I think too highly of you, my dearest Juliana, to be jealous.”

“ I am glad to hear you speak thus,” she responded. “ But have you mentioned to Mr. Paton that — that — we are engaged? ”

“ No; I don’t talk of those things. Of course the Denisons and many others suspect it — ”

“ To be sure!” rejoined Juliana, “ but I agree with you it is much better to say as little as possible on such a subject. How elegantly Mr. Paton is dressed!” and this remark she made to endeavour if possible to elicit from the squire the cause of the discrepancy between the youth’s apparel on the present occasion and that which he had worn on the preceding day.

“ Yes, he dresses with great elegance. But,” added the squire, laughing, “ it was not exactly so when I first met him yesterday. He told me in confidence what brought him into Lincolnshire, and I should not breathe a syllable to anybody else but yourself — ”

“ Ah! dearest George, you and I, you know,” observed the wily Juliana, with a tender glance, “ have no secrets from each other, and whatever you may tell me is of course sacred and inviolable.”

“ Poor fellow!” continued the squire, still speaking in a subdued undertone, “ he is over head and ears in love, or rather was — ”

"Ah! then he is not now? Does he consider himself fortunate in his escape?" and it was with a palpitating heart but with unmoved countenance that Juliana asked the question.

"Well, I think he has good reason to believe himself so. But pray don't mention a word of all this to your mother or any one else."

"Not for the world!" rejoined Juliana. "Pray go on. I see that there is something very romantic and interesting about this youth, — all the more interesting too, my dear George," she added, with witching cajolery, "since you yourself have formed a friendship for him."

"The fact is," proceeded Hawkshaw, "he was in love with some lady whose name he very discreetly suppressed, and of course I did not question him upon the subject."

"A lady in this neighbourhood?"

"Properly belonging to London, but staying at Gainsborough just for the present. My young friend's fortunes have recently changed, so he came to put her to the test, dressing himself out in the shabbiest and meanest style."

"Oh, what a device!" observed Juliana, and she affected to titter gaily, while inwardly she was racked with the bitterest feelings. "And what was the result?"

"Unpropitious to my young friend's view. But where is he?" suddenly exclaimed Hawkshaw. "I left him with Mr. Denison at the other end of the room. Pray excuse me for a minute, I must not leave him alone, as he is a perfect stranger here. He will feel awkward and embarrassed in the midst of a crowd of persons unknown to him. And mind, dear Juliana, not a syllable to your mother of all I have been telling you."

"Oh, fear not, dear George. You know you can trust me."

Mr. Hawkshaw flung upon her a look full of tenderness, and then rising from the seat where he had been carrying on this whispered discourse with Juliana, — while her mother and Mrs. Denison were conversing together on their side, — the squire proceeded toward the ballroom. At that instant Mr. Denison and young Paton were returning into the saloon, and they accordingly encountered the squire on the threshold between the two apartments.

"I shall leave you, Mr. Paton, with your friend Mr. Hawk-

shaw for a few minutes," said the worthy old gentleman, "while I go in search of Mrs. Denison that she may do the honours of the house toward you."

With these words he hurried away, and was traversing the saloon, when he perceived his wife in company with Lady Saxondale and Juliana. He immediately accosted the group, saying to his spouse, "I was looking for you, my dear, that you may fulfil your intention of introducing Mr. Paton to Miss Farefield."

"Mr. Paton's appearance beneath your roof, Mr. Denison," said Lady Saxondale, "seems to have excited quite a sensation. I have been asking Mr. Hawkshaw who his young friend is —"

"And Mr. Hawkshaw has told you, mother," interrupted Juliana, with a quick deprecating look at her parent, as much as to remind her of the previously expressed desire that she would not meddle in the matter, "Mr. Hawkshaw has told you precisely what Mr. Denison himself had already stated."

"To be sure!" ejaculated this gentleman. "Am I to understand that there is the slightest doubt as to Mr. Paton's respectability?"

"Oh, far from it!" exclaimed Juliana. "My mother could not possibly mean such a thing. It is sufficient to find Mr. Paton within these walls to be assured of his respectability."

"But what is more," rejoined Mr. Denison, emphatically, "I can answer for it — I will guarantee it. There may perhaps be some little mystery attending him, but which will all be cleared up in good time. Suffice it to say that I know who he is —"

"Indeed!" said Lady Saxondale, fixing her eyes keenly upon the old gentleman, to ascertain, if possible, to what extent his knowledge thus reached.

"Yes, I know that his father is a nobleman of very high rank," responded Mr. Denison.

"Is this youth, then, the Honourable Mr. Paton?" inquired Lady Saxondale, "or Lord Paton — or —"

"Unfortunately," answered Mr. Denison, in a subdued voice, "there is a circumstance connected with his birth — But I need say no more. Suffice it to add that I do know who his father is. He is a very old friend of mine, immensely

rich, and fully able to give his son a proud position in the world."

"Dear me, Mr. Denison," said his wife, "how came you to learn all this? I am sure I am delighted to hear it, for I felt quite an interest in that youth the moment I beheld him —"

"This is no time for explanations," interrupted Mr. Denison. "I only tell you what I know and what I will guarantee. Come, my dear," he added, still speaking to his wife, "let Mr. Paton join the next quadrille with Miss Farefield, if she will permit us to introduce him?"

"Oh, with much pleasure," said Juliana, in a most courteous and affable manner.

Thereupon Mr. and Mrs. Denison hastened away to fetch Frank, and Juliana whispered quickly to her mother, "You perceive therefore that Hawkshaw has not been misinformed, and that the youth has not devised any false statements."

"It is altogether a mystery," replied her ladyship, "which I cannot comprehend."

"But at which I am less astonished than you, mother," responded Juliana, "for I all along knew that there were strange things connected with the parentage of Francis Paton."

"He is approaching, Juliana," said Lady Saxondale. "Take care, take care how you play your cards, or you will lose Mr. Hawkshaw."

A few moments after these words were uttered, the Denisons came up with Frank, and the lady of the house introduced him in the usual manner. Lady Saxondale bowed with a cold and distant reserve, Juliana with as much affable courtesy as under the circumstances she dared show; but with all the power of control she was enabled to exercise over her feelings, she could not prevent the colour from coming and going rapidly on her cheeks. Frank, on the other hand, was very pale, but perfectly collected. As he gave his arm to Juliana, he felt that her hand trembled as it touched him, and a galvanic gush of indescribable emotions was sent thrilling through his entire form.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### THE CONSERVATORY

MRS. DENISON remained in conversation with Lady Saxondale, Mr. Denison hastened to receive some fresh arrivals of gentlemen, Juliana and Frank passed on into the ballroom, neither of them giving utterance to a single word. Mr. Hawkshaw, well pleased in the generosity of his heart to perceive that his young friend had thus become introduced to his intended bride, joined a knot of gentlemen who, like himself, did not dance, and fell into conversation with them.

Frank and Juliana entered the ballroom. The first quadrille had just terminated; in a few minutes the second would commence. They took a seat during the interval. Both felt the embarrassment of their position, but each was inspired with very different sentiments from those which animated the other. On the one hand Frank merely wished to assure himself that Juliana was already acquainted, through the medium of Mr. Hawkshaw or Mr. Denison, with his altered position, but if not, it was his purpose to make it known, so far as he dared with due regard to his father's *incognito*. When once this should have been accomplished, there need be no further intercourse between them, for although Frank could not so suddenly fling off the spells which the lady's beauty and fascinations had cast upon him, yet was he firmly resolved not to suffer himself to be betrayed into any weakness.

On the other hand, Juliana felt that she had a difficult and delicate course to pursue. She had no longer any doubt, after all she had just been hearing, that Frank's social position was indeed greatly changed; and she was most anxious to learn whether he would now constitute a match

sufficiently eligible to warrant her in jilting Mr. Hawkshaw. If so, she was prepared to take that step. Although now acquainted with the stratagem which Frank had executed to put her to the test, she had such confidence in her own charms, her fascinations, and her endearments, as to flatter herself that she need only bring them all into full play in order to reduce him to the condition of a suppliant at her feet. Nevertheless, with all her natural effrontery, with all her spirit of intrigue, with all her worldly-minded calculating disposition, she could not help feeling embarrassed and awkward during the first few minutes they were thus thrown together on the present occasion. Moreover, her pride would not suffer her to be the first to break the silence which still reigned between them, and there was also a certain amount of rancour and bitterness in her mind at the test to which young Paton had so ingeniously put her.

Frank likewise experienced all the awkwardness of this silence, and if he did not immediately speak, it was that he knew not how to commence the conversation. He more than half-regretted having placed himself in such a position. He began to comprehend that it was his own little pride and boyish vanity, more than anything else, that had all along urged him to be present at this ball; and he felt somewhat humiliated in his own eyes, lessened in his own conceit, diminished in his own opinion, at the thought that he should have been guilty of such weakness. But soon he began to reflect that having become Miss Farefield's companion for the present, he had no right to treat her with a reserve or coolness that could not fail to be shortly noticed by other couples lounging or sitting in the ballroom, and notwithstanding all circumstances, he saw that he was bound to treat her at least with a show of external courtesy and politeness.

"Do you prefer to remain seated here, Miss Farefield?" he inquired, not knowing what else to say, "or would you rather walk a little?"

"I am perfectly well contented," she responded, "to do whichever Mr. Paton thinks fit," and as she thus spoke, in a tone of mingled reproach and archness, she accentuated his name.

"The quadrille is about to commence," he said; "shall we stand up and take our places?"

"With pleasure. Are you fond of dancing?"



“Perhaps,” he rejoined, in a cold, ironical tone, “you meant to ask me whether I could dance? You forget, Miss Farefield, that I was well educated and trained at Southampton, before circumstances reduced me to a menial condition.”

“This observation on your part, Mr. Paton,” she replied, in a voice that trembled as if her feelings were indeed much hurt, “is most ungenerous and uncalled for. When I asked you if you were fond of dancing, I meant no more than would have been intended by yourself, had you put the same question to me. I think, Mr. Paton, if you will condescend to tax your memory, you will find that, while you were as yet in ignorance of your parentage, I expressed the conviction that your birth was infinitely superior to your condition at the time.”

“True!” murmured Frank, and the recollection that Juliana had spoken nothing but the exact truth struck him with a feeling savouring of remorse for the coolness which he himself was now maintaining toward her; moreover, he felt that he had been unjust in the harsh rebuke he had administered, — a rebuke, too, which according to her assurance she had so little deserved.

“Yes, it is indeed true that I thus spoke to you at the time,” she said, perceiving that there was a change in his countenance, and penetrating the feeling which had produced it. “Had it not been my conviction that you were of gentle birth, never, never — But I ought not to be speaking thus. After what took place yesterday, I presume that I am to consider everything to be at an end between us?”

“Miss Farefield,” answered Frank, again recovering the perfect mastery over himself, “I have a few words of explanation to address to you, but it is impossible they can be spoken in this ballroom. For your sake, much more than for mine, the greatest discretion must be used. When the dance is over, if you will favour me with a few minutes’ attention, we may perhaps find an opportunity to speak in that conservatory which opens from the adjoining apartment.”

The quadrille now commenced, and Juliana, perceiving at a glance that Mr. Hawkshaw was not amongst the lookers-on in the ballroom, resolved to play off all the artillery

of her charms upon Francis Paton, but at the same time not to do this in a manner that should be noticed by the guests generally; for if in the long run she should either lose Frank, or else come to the conclusion that Mr. Hawkshaw was the preferable match, she did not wish to stand a chance of alienating the latter. But there are a thousand and one ways in which an artful and designing woman can play the game of witchery and fascination unperceived by those around. A tender glance quickly darted and as quickly withdrawn, a gentle pressure of the hand, a half-stifled sigh, to be heard only by him whose ears it is specially intended to reach, and that momentary fond clinging which the routine of the dance allows, — these are the means by which the artful fair one may, under such circumstances, conduct the campaign against the object of her wiles.

Frank saw it all, felt it all, but could not comprehend it all. Did she really love him? Did she regret the scene of yesterday? Was she making as much amends as, without too much self-prostration of her own pride, she could possibly offer? Ought he to pardon the circumstances of the previous day? Ought he to make allowances for them, considering her position? In a word, what ought he to do? What ought he to think? He was bewildered, and he was too young, as well as having been but too recently under the spells of this dangerous woman, to remain insensible to those pressures of the hand, those tender looks, those softly subdued sighs, those transient but raptured clings to him in the mazes of the dance. And it was not all acting nor simulation on Juliana's part, for, as the reader is aware, she did love this beautiful youth, — that is to say, loved him after the fashion of her own sensuous nature, and at all events it was a strong passion on her part. But at length the dance was done; the couples promenaded around the room, and Frank conducted Juliana into the adjacent one. Thither they strolled without the appearance of premeditated design, and as any others might have done. No one was there; they passed into the conservatory, and here likewise they were alone.

We should observe that Miss Farefield was dressed for the present occasion in a style of simple elegance. She was arrayed in white, for the olive of her skin was of that delicate and transparent tint which rendered this virgin attire per-

fectly compatible with her complexion and her style of beauty. Indeed, it served to set it off to the utmost advantage. She usually wore her hair in bands, but this evening she appeared with it showering in myriads of luxuriant ringlets down upon her shoulders. Oh, how bright was the gloss upon that raven hair! How it shone with a natural glory, all its own! A single camellia with a circlet of pearls made it look darker than the darkest night, and yet it was a lustrous cloud which thus framed the superb countenance. The low corsage of the dress displayed the sculptural richness of the bust; the excitement of the dance and of her own feelings sent the rich blood glowing and mantling upon her cheeks. Altogether she appeared of a more splendid beauty on this occasion than ever she had seemed before in the eyes of Francis Paton. He felt troubled and bewildered, fully aware that the spell of almost irresistible fascinations was upon him, yet equally well-knowing that it was his duty to shake them off, and more than half-fearing, as he had thought on the previous day, that this splendid creature was but a snake wearing the loveliest skin.

“And now, Frank,” she said, in a low, melting, murmuring voice, and fixing upon him those lustrous eyes that were brimful of passion, “you have some words to address to me. Remember that we cannot remain too long here, we shall be missed, we shall be sought after —”

“Miss Farefield,” responded the youth, endeavouring to speak as coldly and collectedly as he could, “I will not detain you many minutes.”

“Wherefore do you address me in this formal manner?” she asked, with reproachful look and voice. “Am I no longer Juliana to you?”

“How can you be?” exclaimed Frank, at this moment feeling that he had regained complete power over himself, as all the incidents in the arbour on the preceding day trooped through his mind. “Did you not tell me that you meant to marry another? By what right, then, can I address you with the insolence of familiarity?”

“Insolence — familiarity! Oh, dearest Frank, is it possible that such words as these are to pass between us?”

“Listen, Miss Farefield,” interrupted the youth, drawing himself up in a dignified manner. “Yesterday I offered you my hand, and you refused it. It is therefore as a re-

jected suitor that I stand before you. Think you not that I have my own feelings of pride? And is it possible that what took place in that arbour can be recalled? No, impossible! But I would not have you think that I was selfish and egotistical in seeking the hand of the elder daughter of the titled and brilliant Lady Saxondale. Circumstances have much altered with me of late, but not in the sense that I gave you to understand yesterday. It is true that what the world may call a stigma rests upon my birth; nevertheless my parents are of noble rank, my father possesses immense wealth, and he will shower riches upon my head. He and my mother are now married. They are acquainted with the love which I had cherished for you — ”

“ Ah, then, dear Frank, you did love me, oh, you did love me, and you must love me still! ” and as Juliana thus spoke, she threw her arm around the youth's neck, and ere he could disengage himself from her embrace, she had imprinted a kiss upon his lips.

Nevertheless he did so disengage himself, for he had been speaking of his father and his mother. Their images were now in his mind, he remembered his duty toward them, he remembered the counsel he had received, and he was determined to follow it.

“ You draw yourself away from me, ” said Juliana, and she spoke coldly and distantly, for her pride had just sustained a severe shock.

“ You told me that you would marry another, and whoever the man of your choice may be, ” responded Frank, “ I will not be guilty of any outrage toward him. ”

“ Ah, all this is intended as a bitter sarcasm to myself! ” and now tears started forth from Juliana's eyes, but tears of mingled spite and vexation.

“ Do not weep, ” said Frank, much moved, for he comprehended not the true source of those tears. “ Heaven forbid that I should speak sarcastically or upbraidingly toward you! I only reminded you of your duty, or, rather, proclaimed what I felt to be mine. ”

“ Ah! now you speak kinder, Frank, and I am soothed, ” said Juliana, taking his hand, which was not immediately withdrawn, and she pressed it tenderly. “ Think you not that I am delighted to hear of this change of fortune which you have experienced? Yes, most sincerely do I congratu-

late you, and all the more so, because, as you remember, I foresaw it. I all along knew, from the very first moment I beheld you, that you were above your condition, infinitely above it. You told me as much of your history which you yourself knew at the time. Do you not mean to make me your confidante in respect to the remainder? Who is your father, Frank? Do not think that I ask out of mere curiosity — ”

“ Miss Farefield, I cannot tell you now. Suffice it to say that his title is that of a marquis.”

“ Miss Farefield — still Miss Farefield,” she murmured, reproachfully and sorrowfully; “ is the rupture then complete between us? Oh, Frank, I forgive you for the cruel test to which you put me yesterday; will not you forgive me for what fell from my lips? You say that your parents are acquainted with our love; was it they who suggested that you should put me to such a test? ”

“ It was,” rejoined Frank. “ I do not attempt to deny it. But pray understand me. That test I regarded as conclusive. I fled from you in disappointment, in despair. I did not pause to tell you that the representations I had made were false, that I had purposely appressed myself in mean clothing to give a colour to my story; I did not wait to tell you all this, because I was not master of my feelings at the time. But subsequently, on calmer reflection, I felt that I could not leave Lincolnshire without giving you the fullest explanations. I did not wish to pass in your eyes as a miserable, needy adventurer, seeking a patrician marriage as the stepping-stone to better fortunes. I felt that if you looked upon me in this light you would have but too good reason to despise me, and to rejoice that you had refused me your hand. But this is what I wish you to understand, — that inasmuch as you loved me when I was poor and humble and obscure I felt proud and rejoiced at the thought that fortune had suddenly placed me in a position when I might on terms of equality offer you my hand. Ah! had you told me yesterday, Juliana, — Miss Farefield, I mean, — that no matter how poor and humble I might still be, you would sacrifice everything to become my wife, how different would our feelings be at this moment! Now I have no more to say. Let me conduct you back into the other rooms.”

“ No, not yet, Frank, not yet!” murmured Juliana, again

clinging to him, but not kissing him this time, only looking up earnestly and appealingly into his countenance. "You have said all that you have to say: hear me a few words in reply. It is true that I spoke to you yesterday in a manner that may have shocked you, but did I not likewise speak with tenderness and with love? Did I not offer to make every sacrifice that one in my position could possibly consummate? If I dreaded poverty, it was as much on your account as on my own, perhaps more on yours. To acquire gold, therefore, that I might conduce to your comfort, I said that I would marry; and how great must my love be for you, when I was enabled to tutor my soul to think of the marriage tie as a mere expedient for ensuring our happiness, and not as a barrier against it. Do you not think, Frank," continued the wily Juliana, but still tender and impassioned, even at the time when she was thus exercising all her astuteness and all the powers of her sophistry, "do you not think, Frank, that it cost me a pang to propose that I would become a wife only to deceive a husband in order that the progress of our loves might continue uninterrupted? But perhaps you consider me a being lost to all sense of delicacy and propriety — Oh, Frank, can it be possible that you entertain such an evil opinion of one who loves you so tenderly and so well?"

She was still clinging to him as she thus spoke; she was gazing up into his countenance with a look of the most tender and impassioned appeal; she had thrown into her voice all the most melting cadences of its natural harmony; she omitted no single one of the many blandishments which a woman of artful nature and glowing temperament could possibly exercise on such an occasion. Again was Frank bewildered and troubled, again was he uncertain how to act or what to think. He disengaged himself not from the half-embrace in which she retained him, but he averted his countenance as if the only hope that remained for him was in not beholding that beautiful, too beautiful, face, which was upturned toward his own.

"Frank," she continued, thoroughly prepared to jilt Mr. Hawkshaw if young Paton would now succumb to her wiles, "Frank, is it possible that you can forget the interview of yesterday? Is it possible to efface it from your mind, — to blot it out from your memory? If so, ask me once

more whether I will accompany you to the altar. Ah, it is a hard thing for a young lady of my rank and position to have to put this restraint upon her feelings and do this violence to her pride, which I am doing now, when suing to him who is of that sex which generally sues to mine! Yes, Frank, I ask you to recall your decision of yesterday; I beseech you not to judge me by it. I tell you that if you still love me, if you think that you can be happy with me, it will be the most joyous day of my life when I take your name and look upon you as my husband. And, Frank," she continued, in a still softer, more tremulous, and more murmuring voice, "remember that I have some claim alike upon your indulgence and your love, for am not I already the same as your wife in the sight of Heaven?"

This last appeal completed the trouble and bewilderment which were influencing young Paton at the moment. He felt that it had gone to his very heart, that there was as much justice as there was truth in it, that he owed her forgiveness because he owed her reparation. Infatuated boy! He did not pause to reflect at the moment that it was not he who had seduced Miss Farefield from the path of virtue; it was she that seduced him. That he never should have dared to make the slightest overture to her, but that every encouragement and provocative had come from herself. Of all this he did not think; he heard the appeal, it murmured in his ears, it thrilled through his brain, it went down into his heart, it excited the most generous feelings of his soul. He looked upon her as if she were a young creature who in all trusting love had surrendered up her honour into his keeping, and to whom he was bound to make every possible atonement. Juliana comprehended full well everything that was passing in his mind. She saw the advantage she had gained, and her bosom already swelled with the exultation of approaching triumph, for she had rather, much rather, marry this youth who was the object of her passion, now that she knew him to be the son of a wealthy marquis, than she would wed George Hawkshaw, although the fortune of the latter might be greater than Frank could hope to receive from his sire.

Another moment, and young Paton, forgetting his father, forgetting his mother, forgetting all their counsels, lost in the intoxication of love, entangled in the maze of witcheries

and sophistries, blandishments and appeals, which the siren had put in play, — in another moment, we say, he would have yielded, he would have succumbed. His eyes were already bent adoringly upon Juliana, he was drinking deeper and quicker draughts of Lethean bliss from her own warm and glowing regards, his arm was tightening around her, he was on the point of straining her to his breast, and murmuring the affirmative which would have been so delicious to her ears and so fatal to his own happiness, when all in an instant the sound of a footstep and a loud cough startled them both up from the trance of their feelings.

Rapid as lightning was the look which Juliana flung upon Frank, to bid him summon all his self-possession, as she collected hers; and the next instant she said, as calmly and quietly as if there had been no excitement of feelings, no whirlwind of emotions, "Yes, as you were observing, Mr. Paton, this is indeed a rare collection of plants."

The next moment Mr. Hawkshaw made his appearance from behind the mass of evergreens and exotic verdure. The first thought that flashed to the mind alike of Frank and Juliana was that he had overheard all, for his countenance looked pale. But this apprehension was cleared up almost as soon as formed, when he said, in his usual offhand, open-hearted manner, "Well, you have sought the coolest spot, and really I am not surprised, for those rooms are suffocating."

"I could not endure the heat any longer," said Juliana, "and I requested Mr. Paton to accompany me hither for a few minutes. I felt as if I were about to faint —"

"Indeed! I am truly sorry to hear that," ejaculated the squire, with a look of concern. "I hope you feel better now?"

"Yes, much, much," responded Juliana. "And now I shall take your arm, Mr. Hawkshaw, and accompany you back into the saloon. Mr. Paton," she added, turning around and flinging a rapid but significant look upon the youth, "I have not forgotten that you have engaged me to dance again in the third quadrille after the one which is next to take place."

Frank bowed, and Juliana, with a graceful salutation in acknowledgment, took Mr. Hawkshaw's arm.

"You are coming with us, are you not, Paton?" said the



squire, "for as you are comparatively a stranger here, we must not leave you alone."

The youth muttered something, he knew not what, and in a strange state of bewilderment he followed Mr. Hawkshaw and Juliana out of the conservatory. The terror which at first seized upon him had left a sort of stupor behind; yet it was only on Juliana's account that he had been thus alarmed, for he still entertained not the remotest suspicion of the attachment subsisting on the squire's part toward her, or the engagement formed between them. But now that he heard Mr. Hawkshaw conversing with even more than his wonted hilarity with Juliana, as she leaned upon his arm, he felt convinced that nothing had been overheard by him; for he remembered how emphatically the squire had said on the preceding evening, that if he were to meet the lady who had behaved in such a manner to Frank, he could not possibly be civil to her.

As for Juliana herself, she was equally well assured that the squire had not caught a syllable of what was taking place in the conservatory at the time he entered. She attributed that appearance of pallor on his cheeks to the flickering play of the lights, which were partially agitated by some little currents of air which penetrated through the glasswork in the conservatory. The young lady, though still bent upon her project with regard to Frank, was resolved to retain two strings to her bow even until the very last, so that should one fail, she might adopt the other.

Passing into the saloon, Mr. Hawkshaw conducted Miss Farefield to the sofa where Lady Saxondale was seated, while Mr. Denison intercepted Frank and conducted him to the refreshment-room, for the worthy host was anxious to pay all possible attention to the son of his old friend the Marquis of Eagledean. On returning to the saloon, the youth was introduced to a young lady of great beauty, with whom he danced the next quadrille, and for each of the two following, other partners were also provided by Mrs. Denison. Then Frank recollected the hint he had received from Juliana, to the effect that he was to consider himself engaged to her for the dance next ensuing, but for a moment he hesitated whether to attend to it, or not. He had reawakened from the trance of fascination, he was master of himself once again, he remembered his father's counsel, and his conscience

told him that he should be doing wrong if he were to yield to the influence of Juliana's endearments. Still he felt that he could not so far insult her as to take no notice of the hint she had given him, and he resolved that, though he would dance with her, he would not again conduct her to the conservatory. Approaching the spot where she and her mother were seated, — Mr. Hawkshaw having in the meantime sought the refreshment-room, — Frank made his bow. Juliana bestowed upon him a sweet smile and a tender glance, and they proceeded to the ballroom together.

"When the quadrille is over," said Juliana, "we will find an opportunity of exchanging a few more words. But be guarded — be cautious!" she immediately added, for as her eyes swept rapidly around the ballroom, she perceived Mr. Hawkshaw amongst the lookers-on at the extremity.

The warning would have been quite unnecessary, inasmuch as Frank, now having complete control over his feelings and his actions, was resolved to give no encouragement to Juliana, but to show to the utmost of his power that he was proof against all her blandishments and endearments. She herself, throughout this quadrille, was particularly guarded, — the only indication of tenderness which she bestowed being the pressure of the hand, but not even a significant look, nor a sigh, nor a whisper did she vouchsafe. She appeared to converse only with the courteous and easy politeness which a young lady might be expected to observe toward a young gentleman with whom she was but very slightly acquainted. After the quadrille — and while promenading around the room — she bethought herself of a dozen different expedients to obtain five minutes' unobserved and unrestrained discourse with Frank; but Mr. Hawkshaw was there, and she dared not risk the danger of exciting his suspicions by accompanying the youth a second time into any secluded place. The moment arrived when he must conduct her back to her seat, and as they were proceeding thither, she hurriedly whispered to him, "If we do not find an opportunity to converse presently, you must meet me to-morrow, soon after midday, in the castle garden, at the same spot where we met yesterday."

Frank made no reply. Indeed, if he had wished to give one, he could not, for by the time Juliana had finished speaking, they were too near the spot where Lady Saxondale

was seated for him to do otherwise than make his bow, leave Juliana there, and turn away to another part of the room. Again did Mr. Denison accost him; they joined a group amongst which was Mr. Hawkshaw, and there they stayed conversing for some time. Frank refused to dance any more, and he accordingly remained altogether with his friend the squire, until supper was announced. Then Hawkshaw proceeded to conduct Juliana to the banqueting-room. Mrs. Denison requested Frank to escort a young lady, to whom she introduced him for the purpose, and when seated at the table, there was a considerable interval between himself and Miss Farefield. We need scarcely observe that the repast was of the most sumptuous description, or that the hospitalities of the host and hostess were administered in the most cordial manner.

After supper the party began to break up, for it was now two in the morning, and in the country, where the guests have frequently long distances to go on their return home, these entertainments are seldom protracted until as late an hour as in the metropolis. Juliana found no opportunity of saying another word to Frank in private upon this occasion, — a circumstance at which he was very far from being displeased.

Ere he and Mr. Hawkshaw took their departure, Mr. Denison said to the squire, “Remember that you and our young friend are to dine with us to-morrow.”

## CHAPTER XXXII

MR. DENISON

FRANK slept till a very late hour; for he was much wearied with the excitement of feeling as well as with the festivities through which he had passed. Indeed, it was close upon eleven o'clock when he descended to the breakfast-parlour. Mr. Hawkshaw had been for a long ride, and had eaten his first breakfast on his return home. He however sat down to table to commence a second one when Frank made his appearance.

"We are to dine with the Denisons this evening," said the squire. "Perhaps you would do well to write a letter to your father, and inform him that you will not be home for a day or two?"

"I could have wished to return to London to-day," replied Frank, "only that it would be most ungracious not to accept Mr. Denison's very kind invitation."

"Ah! you would like to quit Lincolnshire to-day?" said the squire; then, with a laugh, he added, "And have you really no inclination to visit Gainsborough and see that lady of whom you spoke to me?"

Frank felt that he was blushing, and scarcely knew what reply to give, but Mr. Hawkshaw seemed so busy with the viands as not to notice his young guest's confusion.

"Why should you think," asked Frank, after a pause, and endeavouring to laugh also, "that I am desirous to see that lady again?"

"Because, my dear Paton," responded the squire, "it would only be consistent with the weakness of human nature if you did entertain such a desire. Besides, you are so young, so inexperienced —"

"However," interrupted Frank, speaking with the firm-

ness of a fixed resolve, "I have made up my mind that I will not see that lady again."

"And you act very wisely," rejoined Hawkshaw. "Now, take my advice, my dear young friend, for so I am sure you will permit me to call you: shun that lady, whoever she may be, as if she were a reptile. I have been thinking very seriously over all you have told me, because the more I see of you, the more I am interested in you, and I should be very sorry to think that you were ensnared or entrapped by such a base, heartless, intriguing creature. I don't know much of the female sex, but this I do know, that such a woman as the one you have described to me must be capable of any sophistry, hypocrisy, and dissimulation, in order to carry a point. Therefore, if you give me the assurance that you do not intend to use any exertion to see her again, it will be taking a weight off my mind."

"My dear Mr. Hawkshaw, I cannot thank you sufficiently," responded Frank, with grateful fervour, "for the kind interest you take in my behalf. I should be unworthy indeed of such a generous friendship, if I did not give you the pledge you ask. And that pledge I do give you, solemnly and sacredly."

The squire shook Frank's hand in the most warm-hearted manner; he even wrung it with effusion, and then he hastened to observe, "The truth is, my young friend, if I thought that you were at all inclined to throw yourself again in the way of that siren, whoever she may be, I should not consider myself justified in keeping you at the Hall another minute. Much as I should regret to lose you so abruptly, it would be my duty to urge your speedy return to London. However, you have given me the pledge, and I am satisfied. I must now inform you that my friend Denison last night took an opportunity of telling me that he received a letter from your father, who is a very old friend of his. Your father, as I already knew from your lips, is preserving an *incognito*, — he enjoined the strictest secrecy to Mr. Denison, — and Mr. Denison has not violated it. He did not tell me therefore who your father is, and of course I did not seek to know. Stop, do not tell me that secret, Frank! I would rather not learn it at present. When you return to London and inform your parents that you have formed the friendship of blunt George Hawkshaw, you can then, with their

permission, write and tell me whatsoever you may have to unfold. In the meanwhile you are a welcome guest here, and I hope that the friendship which has thus commenced will last throughout our lives. And now for the amusements of the day."

"Yesterday, Mr. Hawkshaw," observed Frank, "you denied yourself the pleasure of paying a visit to your intended bride, and from all that I noticed, you did not see her last evening at the ball —"

"Oh, you sly dog," ejaculated the squire, with a loud and somewhat boisterous laugh; "you were looking out, were you, to see if I paid particular attention in any quarter?"

"No, Mr. Hawkshaw," was Frank's quick response; "I am incapable of undue curiosity. But what I meant you to infer was, that I did not see you pay any such particular attention, for if you had, I could not have failed to observe it. Taking it for granted, then, that you did not see your intended bride last night, I cannot possibly think of being so selfish as to engross you all to myself. Therefore you must pay your accustomed visit, and I shall indulge in a ramble through your beautiful grounds."

"No, my young friend," replied Hawkshaw, smiling, "I do not mean to leave you to yourself, or throw you so completely on your own resources. I have already despatched a note which will leave me free to remain altogether with you. So now, if you please, we will take a scamper and shake off the effects of last night's dissipation."

There was no possibility of offering any further remonstrance to the good-natured squire's plan of proceedings, and Frank accordingly suffered him to have his own way. In respect to writing to his father, he said that this would be unnecessary, as he must positively start for London on the ensuing morning. The horses were saddled; he and the squire rode forth, and several hours were passed in the same manner as on the preceding day. At four o'clock they returned to the Hall to dress for dinner, and a little before five the old-fashioned carriage was in readiness to take them to Mr. Denison's. On arriving there, they received the kindest welcome from their host and hostess, by both of whom Frank was especially made much of. It was a small party, the other guests consisting only of some of Mr. Denison's own family.

In the course of the evening Mr. Denison took an opportunity to conduct Frank into his library, and there, making him sit down, he said, "My young friend, I have to repeat the question I put to you last night: whether there be any way in which I can serve you? You saw the letter which your esteemed father wrote, and you must speak to me with the same confidence as if you were addressing him. Banish all reserve, I am not disposed to be a harsh or severe mentor."

Frank felt that it would be most ungracious toward his father's old friend if he did not show him at least the same degree of confidence which he had placed in Mr. Hawkshaw, and he accordingly proceeded to give him precisely the same details as he had already narrated to the squire, still suppressing Juliana's name, and still making it appear as if the lady of whom he spoke was temporarily residing in the town of Gainsborough. Mr. Denison listened in silent attention; he did not speak a word until Frank had finished, and when the youth had done, he appeared to reflect profoundly for some time.

"Now, my young friend," he at length said, speaking gravely and solemnly, but still with a truly paternal kindness, "you will follow the advice of one who is old enough not merely to be your father, but your grandfather. Avoid this woman as the mariner would a rock on which his vessel must inevitably suffer shipwreck; avoid her as if she were a moral pestilence. You are too young, and your life is too full of brilliant hope, for you to sacrifice yourself to such a shameless profligate. Am I not giving you the advice which your revered father would proffer were he present on this occasion?"

"You are, my dear sir, you are," responded Frank, seizing the old gentleman's hand and pressing it warmly. "I have already pledged myself to Mr. Hawkshaw that everything shall be at an end between that lady and myself; I renew the same pledge to you."

"It is well," rejoined Mr. Denison, "and I am gratified with this evidence of your sincerity. But there is still something more that you must do, and now I am again counselling you as if it were your own father who in his loving care was proffering his best advice. That woman — for it is scarcely possible to call her a lady after all you have told me — will not leave you unmolested; she will take the earliest measures

to obtain an interview with you, and for your own sake you ought not to incur the risk of being drawn within the magic circle of her charms. Therefore, my young friend, let me entreat you to take a bold and decisive step, which shall at once put that woman to confusion."

"What would you advise, sir?" asked Frank.

"I would advise that you write a letter, telling her that you have penetrated her character, that you look with loathing and abhorrence upon the woman who could make up her mind to become the wife of an honourable man, merely for the purpose of deceiving him, and using the sanctity of the marriage state as a cloak for a guilty connection with a paramour. This would I do, my dear Frank, and in the name of your father I enjoin you to adopt the course which I recommend. There are writing materials; pen the letter at once, and entrust it to me for delivery."

Frank started, and gazed upon Mr. Denison with a kind of vacant bewilderment. Was he aware, then, who the lady was that formed the subject of conversation? Had he seen or heard anything on the previous evening to make him suspect the actual truth? Or did he mean to inquire presently the name and address of this lady?

"My young friend," said Mr. Denison, looking grave and serious, "I know more than you have imagined, or perhaps not more than you at this moment suspect. The female who has degraded the sex to which she belongs, who beneath a brilliant exterior nourishes the most detestable passions, and whose beauty serves but as a disguise for her vices, that foul creature is Lady Saxondale's daughter, Juliana Farefield."

Frank made no immediate observation. He did not choose to deny an assertion which Mr. Denison had made with the positive manner of one who was neither speaking on conjecture nor at random, and yet, on the other hand, the youth was loath to admit that his secret had been rightly read.

"No matter, my young friend," continued Mr. Denison, "how I have made this discovery; you perceive that I am better informed than perhaps you at first imagined. But the topic is evidently too painful a one to be dwelt upon at unnecessary length. Follow my advice, pen a letter in the sense I have suggested, and leave the rest to me."

The youth felt that Mr. Denison was speaking to him with



the same authority with which his own father would have spoken, and with an equal amount of true paternal kindness. He therefore hesitated not to obey the suggestion he had received, and placing himself at the writing-table, he took up a pen. But when he had written the first line he felt totally unable to proceed; his ideas were rapidly falling into confusion, and he was at a loss for the most fitting language wherein to shape the document.

“Suffer me to prompt you as to what you ought to say,” observed Mr. Denison, and as Frank acquiesced, the old gentleman proceeded to dictate a letter couched in terms of the most cutting severity.

“Do you not think that this is going somewhat too far?” inquired Frank, presently stopping short.

“Would you use delicate language and mincing phraseology toward a creature of such a stamp?” demanded Mr. Denison with something like sternness in his accents. “Understand me well, Frank, I wish you to write such a letter that Miss Farefield, notwithstanding all her effrontery, will never dare molest you again. Indeed, if she possesses one single spark of pride, she will endeavour to banish you from her thoughts.”

“But is this generous,” asked Frank, “toward one who has perhaps loved me?”

“Love!” ejaculated Mr. Denison. “Desecrate not the term by using it in such a sense. Is it possible that you can endeavour to blind yourself to the full extent of Juliana’s profligacy? No, I think too well of you to entertain such an injurious opinion.”

“Proceed, sir, proceed,” said Frank; “I am in your hands.”

Mr. Denison continued the dictation of the letter, and in a few minutes it was brought to a conclusion.

“Now,” he said, as he locked it up in his desk, “we will return to the drawing-room.”

“But one word more, my dear sir,” said Frank. “Mr. Hawkshaw, is he to be made aware of all this? Does he already know as much as yourself? In a word —”

“Mr. Hawkshaw,” interrupted the old gentleman, “will not, I think, speak to you any more upon the subject, and you yourself will scarcely revive it in his presence. Tomorrow morning you are to start for London, and much

as it would please me to see more of you on the present occasion of your visit into Lincolnshire, I cannot, in justice to your own interests and to my friendship for your father, counsel you to prolong your stay."

Mr. Denison and Frank now retraced their way to the drawing-room, where coffee was served up. An hour was then passed in agreeable conversation upon various topics, and soon after ten o'clock the squire's carriage was announced to be in readiness. Having taken leave of the kind-hearted Denisons, Frank accompanied Mr. Hawkshaw back to the Hall, and on the following morning he took his departure for London. But he did not separate from the squire without expressing his fervid gratitude for the hospitality he had received, coupled with the assurance that he should write to him with the briefest possible delay.

But in the meanwhile, what were Juliana's thoughts and feelings in respect to Francis Paton? It will be remembered that the last words she had spoken to him on the night of the ball consisted of a hurriedly whispered entreaty that he would meet her in the castle grounds on the ensuing day. Shortly after breakfast one of Mr. Hawkshaw's servants arrived at the castle, with a note from his master, addressed to the Honourable Miss Farefield. It was couched in affectionate terms, and besought her to excuse him from paying his wonted visit that day, as his young guest had claims upon him which, in the true spirit of hospitality, could not be violated. Juliana, on the receipt of this note, foresaw that Frank would not be enabled to keep the appointment she had given him. If the squire remained in constant companionship with him, he could not possibly find an opportunity to come such a distance as that between the Hall and the castle. Juliana was profoundly vexed and annoyed at this disappointment, but she nevertheless went to stroll in the gardens at about midday with the faint hope that Frank might yet possibly come to her. The time passed, and still he appeared not. The day went by, and not the slightest attempt was made on his part to obtain an interview with her. She thought to herself that on the morrow he would be sure to come, for she argued that Mr. Hawkshaw must surely have some business to attend to, of some kind or another, that would leave Frank his own master for a few hours. Not for an instant did she suspect that anything

prejudicial to her schemes was taking place; nor did she apprehend that after all that had occurred between herself and the youth at the Denisons', he would be in a hurry to leave Lincolnshire.

This was the second day after the ball; it was the one on which Frank had departed in the morning. The hour of noon came, and Juliana again walked alone in the garden. She kept near the spot where Frank had so suddenly appeared in her presence three days back, and wistfully did she gaze through the foliage in the direction by which she thought he would come. But he came not. Presently she heard footsteps approaching along the gravel-walk behind; those footsteps were at once recognized, — she knew them to be Mr. Hawkshaw's. Having, as the reader is aware, made up her mind to keep the two strings to her bow, she suddenly put on her brightest looks, and sped to meet the squire with every appearance of affectionate delight.

“ Well, Juliana,” he said, after the wonted embrace, “ I suppose you did not think to receive another note of excuse from me to-day? ”

“ Certainly not,” she replied; “ it would have been too unkind, — almost unpardonable,” and she bent upon him a look in which love's beams appeared to kindle. “ I know very well that a guest has claims upon one, but still one must not forget the claims of others, — at least not altogether.”

“ Rest assured, Juliana,” rejoined Hawkshaw, “ that even if Mr. Paton had remained at the Hall to-day, I should have flitted away from him for an hour or two to visit the castle.”

“ Ah! then your young friend is gone? ” said Juliana, scarcely able to conceal her mingled astonishment and vexation at this announcement; but the next moment it occurred to her that Frank, though having quitted the Hall, had probably remained in the neighbourhood in a secret manner, as the only means of being enabled to find an opportunity of obtaining an interview with her.

“ Yes,” observed Mr. Hawkshaw, carelessly, “ he has returned to London. My own lumbering carriage took him as far as Lincoln, and he is now no doubt journeying rapidly homeward.”

“ You soon lost him,” said Juliana, not knowing indeed exactly what she did say, for the hope which she had formed

suddenly died within her, and she could scarcely doubt any longer that Frank had really left Lincolnshire.

"Yes, he was anxious to get back to his parents. And natural enough, as he has only so recently discovered them. By the bye, dear Juliana, you have not told me yet what you think of him? Is he not a very nice young man?"

"Oh, he is a mere boy, — almost a child."

"Well, call him a boy, if you like," responded the squire, laughing. "Do you consider him a nice boy?"

"My acquaintance with him was so short; I merely danced with him twice, you know."

"True! But one soon forms an opinion of persons. For my part, I like him exceedingly. He is an amiable and generous-hearted youth, — much inexperienced in the world, however."

"Necessarily so," observed Juliana, "because he is so young."

"Last evening we dined at the Denisons'."

"Ah! and Mr. Paton was with you, then? I am sure that if he had remained any longer in Lincolnshire, my mother would have been delighted to have shown him every attention as a friend of yours, because you know, my dear George, that every friend of yours will always be welcome at Saxondale Castle."

"Thank you for this assurance, my dear Juliana. And now," continued the squire, assuming a more serious tone, "I am going to ask you a very singular question, but I will soon explain my motive."

"Indeed! a singular question?" and a queer feeling that bordered upon alarm, though she scarcely knew why, flitted across her brain, so true is it that a guilty conscience is ever a fertile source of apprehension.

"Yes, it may seem singular, but I hope not impertinent," and the squire appeared to hesitate.

"How strangely you are talking, George!" cried Juliana, fixing upon him a keen, penetrating look, but she read nothing in the honest, open-hearted countenance of Mr. Hawkshaw to warrant her apprehensions.

"Well, then," he continued, "I will come to the point. Are you aware, Juliana, whether the day for her ladyship's nuptials with Lord Harold Staunton is fixed? Or what ar-

rangements her ladyship proposes to make with regard to the ceremony? ”

“ I have not yet heard. Hy mother is somewhat reserved toward me upon those matters,” and Juliana experienced a great relief when she thus discovered what the topic was that Mr. Hawkshaw had prefaced with a somewhat alarming degree of mystery. “ The truth is,” she added, in a confidential tone, “ my mother perhaps feels that she is about to take a step that the world may consider ridiculous or impolitic, marrying a man so much younger than herself.”

“ Oh, but if people consult their own happiness,” exclaimed Mr. Hawkshaw, “ they may defy the opinion of the world.”

“ And yet you, my dear George, shrink somewhat from announcing to your acquaintances our engagement? But perhaps,” added Juliana, as if quite in a careless manner, “ you have mentioned it to one or two? I dare say, if the truth be known, you told it to Mr. Paton.”

“ No, on my honour I did not!” responded the squire emphatically. “ Did not you yourself the other night counsel me at the ball not to make it the subject of any confidential communication? ”

“ Yes, I recollect. But wherefore did you ask me just now those questions concerning my mother?” and again did Juliana gaze penetratingly though furtively upon the squire’s countenance.

“ I was only thinking that since I have received your assent to the proposal which I was venturous enough to make you, my dear Juliana, I might next solicit you to fix the day which is to render me so happy — oh, so happy — I cannot find words to express my feelings! But in proffering such a request, it occurred to me that much might depend on Lady Saxondale’s own arrangements. Probably it would be suitable for the two marriages to take place at the same time, unless her ladyship be desirous that her own nuptials should be celebrated first. Tell me, Juliana, am I too bold, am I too presumptuous, in expressing a hope that you will not long delay the period which is to render me so happy? ”

“ I will speak to my mother to-day,” answered Juliana, affecting to bend down her eyes in confusion, but at the

moment the thought which was uppermost in her mind was the necessity of communing seriously with herself, in order to arrive at a positive decision how she intended to act.

"Do, I beseech you, speak to her ladyship to-day," urged Mr. Hawkshaw.

"But our engagement has been so short," murmured Juliana. "It is but three days since you honoured me with the offer of your hand."

"True, dearest Juliana, but are we not old acquaintances? Have we not known each other for years? Pardon me for being thus urgent. The world need not know how long or how short our engagement may have been. Come, Juliana, let me not hear any scruples from those sweet lips of yours. Recall not your promise that you will speak to your mother this afternoon. Wherefore should the happy day be unnecessarily postponed? Convinced as I am of the sincerity of your affection for me, and judging the extent of it by my own — But am I in error, Juliana, to speak thus trustfully — thus hopefully?"

"Oh, how can you question me thus? Do you doubt my love?" and the artful young lady gazed up with every appearance of earnest tenderness into the squire's countenance.

"No, no, Juliana; not for a moment do I doubt your love, and therefore you will not unnecessarily postpone the day of our nuptials. This is the hour when your mother is least likely to be engaged. Go and seek her at once. I have business that calls me to Gainsborough, and therefore I shall take my departure. To-morrow, when I call, may I hope, Juliana, that I shall receive from your lips —"

"I understand you, my dearest George," responded Juliana, murmuringly. "Since you wish it, the day shall be fixed."

"Then farewell for the present, farewell, dearest Juliana!"

Having embraced the young lady, the squire sped to the stables, where his horse had been put up without the saddle or bridle being taken off, and mounting the splendid animal, he rode away from Saxondale Castle.

Juliana, instead of hastening to seek her mother, continued to walk in the garden. She not only felt the necessity, as

already stated, of pondering seriously upon the course which she ought to pursue, but she thought it still just possible that Frank might have remained in Lincolnshire. Perhaps she might see him presently. Perhaps it was, after all, only a stratagem on his part to escape from Hawkshaw Hall. And perhaps he had accepted the squire's offer to use the carriage as far as Lincoln in order to lull that gentleman into the belief that he was really serious in speeding back to London. But if Frank should not come, what was Juliana to do? Oh, if he had deserted her, if he had abandoned her, should she endeavour to hate him as much as now she loved him? And should she marry Mr. Hawkshaw with the least possible delay?

Hour after hour passed, and still was Miss Farefield walking in the garden. Frank made not his appearance; the faint hope which had still lingered in her heart waned away, and at length it died within her. It was now close upon five o'clock, and if he had stayed in Lincolnshire, he would have seen her by this time. Her pride was hurt; her feelings were wounded in their utmost sensitiveness. Nevertheless, she did not hate the youth. It was easier to think of hating him than to bring her mind to that point. The passion she had experienced for him was still too absorbing, too engrossing, to permit such a sudden change of sentiment. But what step could she take to communicate with him? She knew not where he dwelt in London; she knew not who his recently discovered parents were. Besides, even if she were well acquainted on these heads, there was no time, for Mr. Hawkshaw was now pressing that the nuptial day should be named.

Suddenly an idea struck Juliana. She might name the day to accompany Mr. Hawkshaw to the altar, she might postpone it for a month, and in the meantime she could adopt some course in order to communicate with Frank. She herself could not proceed to London on any pretence, because Lady Saxondale would not accompany her, and it would be exposing her mother to scandalous surmises — indeed, to the downright loss of reputation — to leave her alone at the castle with Lord Harold Staunton. Therefore Juliana must make up her mind to remain likewise at the castle, and whatever course she adopted in respect to Frank must be pursued by means of correspondence. But how

to discover his address? That was the question. Perhaps he would write. Perhaps he had been recalled to London by a sudden communication from his father. Perhaps he himself was at that very moment suffering much affliction on her account. For she could scarcely conceive that after what had taken place between them in the conservatory, he had suddenly surrendered her altogether. Was he not about to yield to her arguments and her entreaties at the moment when Mr. Hawkshaw made his appearance in the conservatory? Were not his lips about to breathe the word which was to crown her triumph? Surely, then, he had not the power to shake off the influence of her spells within so brief an interval, and in so abrupt a manner? Juliana still loved him, still longed for him, still craved to have that beautiful youth entirely to herself, and she was not the woman likely to abandon a hope that was cherished or a project that was formed.

In the course of the evening she spoke to her mother upon the subject which Mr. Hawkshaw had named to her. Lady Saxondale reflected for some minutes, and then answered in the following manner:

“It is quite certain, Juliana, that your marriage with Mr. Hawkshaw cannot take place first, because it would be impossible for you to leave me alone at the castle with Lord Harold. Already perhaps there is some little indiscretion in his remaining here after the departure of his aunt and sister, but still it would be overscrupulous and punctilious for any one to affirm that a lady with a grown-up daughter and a host of domestics at her residence may not have a male guest staying with her, especially when he is about to become her husband. Thus far, therefore, we may conclude that no harm is done. But it would be monstrously indiscreet for me to remain with him here alone. Therefore your marriage cannot take place first. Nor can ours, because, as we must proceed somewhere to pass the honeymoon,” and Lady Saxondale could not help smiling bitterly as she thus spoke, “you on your side would have to remain here alone at the castle. That also would be imprudent, with a suitor visiting you. Therefore, all things considered, the two marriages had better take place at the same time. One fortnight hence do I purpose to bestow my hand on Lord Harold Staunton.”



“One fortnight?” ejaculated Juliana. “The time is brief, mother.”

“I do not choose to prolong it,” was Lady Saxondale’s answer.

“Ah, I understand!” said the daughter, maliciously. “You are in a hurry to obtain the name of a wife with the least possible delay, so that, in case of an accident, you may not have that of a mother again too soon?”

Lady Saxondale became scarlet, and sprang to her feet from the chair on which she was sitting. Then, with a withering look, she said, in a tone hoarse with rage, “Take care, Juliana, that you don’t become a parent too soon to be agreeable to Mr. Hawkshaw.”

With these words her ladyship quitted the room, and proceeding to another, threw herself on a chair and wept in very spite and rage. Yes, the proud and haughty Lady Saxondale — the strong-minded woman — gave vent to her wrath in tears, — tears which she could not possibly restrain. How she hated Juliana at that moment! Hated her far more intensely than during the time of those scenes which were wont to take place between them at Saxondale House previous to the visit to Lincolnshire; hated her indeed with a malignity that seemed to crave for a bitter vengeance. For some time past there had been no angry words nor expression of ill-feeling between the mother and daughter, but now that ill-feeling was all revived again, and Lady Saxondale wept because her rage was so impotent.

She leaned forward, and, resting her elbows upon a table, buried her face in her hands, actually groaning in spirit. Oh, if she could but fly to some far-off clime, away from the theatre of her machinations and intrigues, away also from a land where there were those pitfalls which she herself had digged with her own hands, and into any one of which a single false step would precipitate her. But no, it was impossible. She must remain in England to carry out her views, to accomplish her destiny. The door opened, and Lord Harold Staunton entered the room. Lady Saxondale did not immediately perceive him; he advanced straight up to the chair in which she was seated, and, with a kind of angry impatience, said, “Well, what is the meaning of these tears?”

Still Lady Saxondale continued unaware of his presence.

She was so profoundly absorbed in her own distressing thoughts that, though he had spoken loud enough, she actually did not hear him.

"What is it, I say? What is the matter with you now?" he demanded. "A pretty prospect for our married life!" he added, bitterly, and then Lady Saxondale looked around.

Quickly wiping away her tears, and composing her features with a remarkable suddenness, she said, in a cold tone, "How long have you been standing there?"

"But a few moments. Perhaps you were talking aloud ere I entered the room, and were saying things that you would rather should not meet my ears?"

"No, I am not aware that I was musing aloud. But surely, Harold," she continued, with accents of cold irony, "you do not expect our marriage state to be characterized by happiness?"

"Happiness, no!" exclaimed the young nobleman, bitterly, and a ghastly expression of anguish swept over his countenance. "Happiness indeed! What happiness can there be for either of us again in this life? Would to God that I had never known you! Would to Heaven that I could recall the past! I was a rake, a spendthrift, a good-for-nothing extravagant fellow, a short time back, and yet I was happy. But from that fatal moment when you cast your spells around me, my peace of mind has been destroyed, never to be given back again."

"And pray, my lord," inquired Lady Saxondale, fixing upon him a cold, reptile-like look, "in what strange mood is it that you have sought me now for the purpose of telling me all these things? It is literally childish to pretend for a moment that I had the power to persuade you to do certain deeds, unless the readiness and the inclination were already in you."

"Silence, woman!" ejaculated Staunton; "you are a fiend in the most glorious guise. I have been enamoured of your beauty. It still dazzles me, and there are even moments when it enchants me, but nevertheless I loathe and abominate your character. What have I become? Dare I look inward? No, no! Dare I even look the world in the face? Scarcely! for in every one I meet, methinks I behold an accuser."

"Harold, for Heaven's sake hush these wild words!"

said her ladyship, now becoming really frightened. "You know not who may overhear them. The walls have ears —"

"But tell me, tell me, Harriet, I command and conjure you," interrupted the young man, speaking like one distracted: "is the secret positively safe? Does not Juliana suspect it? Why does she look at me so singularly at times, and with a certain malice in her regards? Ah! methinks that there are moments when she also has that wicked look which I have sometimes caught upon your countenance, — not the wicked look of sensuality, but a look that seems to be the reflection of a soul capable of any mischief, — a look as if a devil were gazing out of your eyes."

"You are mad, Harold, to talk in this strain," interjected the lady, vehemently. "The reason why Juliana sometimes regards you in a strange manner is because she has fathomed our intimacy. Perhaps she may have watched when you have sought my chamber at night — But it is of no consequence how she has made the discovery; suffice it for me to inform you that it is made, and if when you entered the room ere now, you beheld me weeping, it was with rage and fury because Juliana had given me to understand a few minutes before that our amour was known to her."

"Then you assure me that the other secret is safe?" said Harold, experiencing some slight feeling of relief. "But you do not know," he continued, in a vacant and abstracted manner, "why I could not accompany you to the ball at the Denisons' the night before last. It was because I liked not to meet that man Hawkshaw."

"Indeed!" ejaculated Lady Saxondale, with a look of unfeigned surprise. "And wherefore should you have liked not to meet him? How has he offended you? Methought you were excellent friends."

"Friends! Yes, good friends enough. There is no reason we should be otherwise. And yet," proceeded Harold, still in a nervous and abstracted manner, "I have been haunted by a strange presentiment with regard to that man. The other day — it was the one before that on which the ball took place — he paid but a hurried visit to the castle, if you remember. In short, it was the day he proposed to Juliana, as you told me. Well, he came up to my room to bid me good-bye. He saw my pistol-case —"

"Enough, Harold, enough!" interrupted Lady Saxondale,

flinging around her frightened glance. Then, approaching her countenance close to that of the young nobleman, she said, in a low, hoarse voice, "Fool that you are to continue talking in this strain! If ruin overtakes you — us — it will be your fault."

"Heaven forbid!" groaned the wretched Harold, and he shuddered visibly from head to foot. "But I must tell you about Hawkshaw's visit to my room. Why has he kept away so much for the last two or three days, — indeed, ever since that day?" demanded Staunton, abruptly. "There is something ominous in it."

"Nothing of the kind," answered Lady Saxondale. Then, with a tone and look which savoured somewhat of contempt, she said, "Are you a man thus to conjure up images of terror to haunt yourself withal? Hawkshaw has been here to-day, he is the same as ever, he has pressed Juliana to name a time for their nuptials. They will take place the same day as our own, — a fortnight hence. Mr. Hawkshaw did not call for two days because he had a friend staying with him. And now, Harold, you must exert more courage."

"Courage!" he ejaculated. "It is an almost superhuman courage that I am constantly exerting to put on the outward appearance of composure. But it does not always serve me. The other day — when Hawkshaw spoke of the missing pistol — I felt that I grew white as a sheet, that all the blood had suddenly stagnated in my veins. Ah! it was a hideous, a horrible, feeling that seized upon me at that moment. Harriet, but a short time back, when I was a gay rollicking fellow about town, I laughed at the idea of conscience; I believed not that there was one within me. But now I know that there is, and a conscience, too, capable of inflicting the stripes of a scorpion scourge. Oh, there are moments when I feel as if I should go mad! I have become a being of strange contradictions, tossing hither and thither upon the wildest and most tumultuous sea. Sometimes I adore your beauty — I feel that no sacrifice was too great to possess you; at other times I hate and abhor you with the strongest loathing —"

"At all events you do not disguise the truth," observed her ladyship, with some degree of bitterness. "But listen, Harold. Is it I who are forcing you to become my husband?"

Is it not you that are forcing yourself as a husband upon me?"

"Yes," he ejaculated, suddenly grasping her robust but splendidly modelled arm with such violence that his fingers closed around it as if they were an iron vise, "I do force myself upon you as a husband, and beware how you attempt to deceive me. Beware how you endeavour to thwart me! What? all these crimes to go unrewarded. No, by heaven! if I have waded through the Red Sea, — a sea of blood, — it was for the purpose of gaining the land of promise. I longed to possess you; I succeeded. I longed for an established social position, and I must obtain it. Now do you understand me?"

"I have understood you all along," answered Lady Saxondale, "and I tell you, Harold, that if you will only exercise proper caution, if you will summon all your courage to your aid, so as to meet valiantly and even defiantly these regrets and remorse which have crept upon you, and if in future you will avoid giving utterance to your feelings, even when you believe yourself to be unheard and unseen, I will do my best to soothe you. You tell me that I am handsome; I will use all my blandishments to make you happy. Only you must exercise caution, for an unguarded look — a single word let drop — may bring the thunderbolt of ruin upon the heads of us both."

"Yes, there is reason in your words," said Harold, slowly and thoughtfully, "and I must endeavour to exercise a greater mastery over myself," but as he thus spoke, an expression of bitter anguish again swept across his countenance.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### THE TWENTY - FIRST OF AUGUST

It was the 21st of August, and the clock in Solomon Patch's boozing-ken was striking seven, as Madge Somers entered the place. The very instant she crossed the threshold it struck her that the old man and his wife suddenly exchanged singular and even sinister looks as they caught sight of her, but as they both alike addressed her the next moment with their accustomed friendliness of manner, she fancied that she must have been mistaken. Passing around into the bar-parlour, she beckoned Solomon to follow her, and when they were alone together, she said, looking very hard at him, "Is anything wrong?"

"Wrong? no! What made you think so?" he at once exclaimed.

"Only because it occurred to me that you and your wife exchanged rapid looks of meaning as I entered the place."

"Ah! it was because we'd been a-wondering whether you would come or not, and whether you was really serious in expecting to get that information as you wanted."

"Serious?" observed Madge, "and how could you think I was otherwise? Did I not leave fifty pounds in your hands? And did not that prove that I was serious enough?"

"To be sure, to be sure!" responded the old man. "The fifty pounds is all right, and is forthcoming."

"If I had not been able to put confidence in you," rejoined Madge, "I should not have trusted you with the money. And now tell me, have you heard any one talking about the business? And do you think that there will be a claimant for the fifty pounds?"

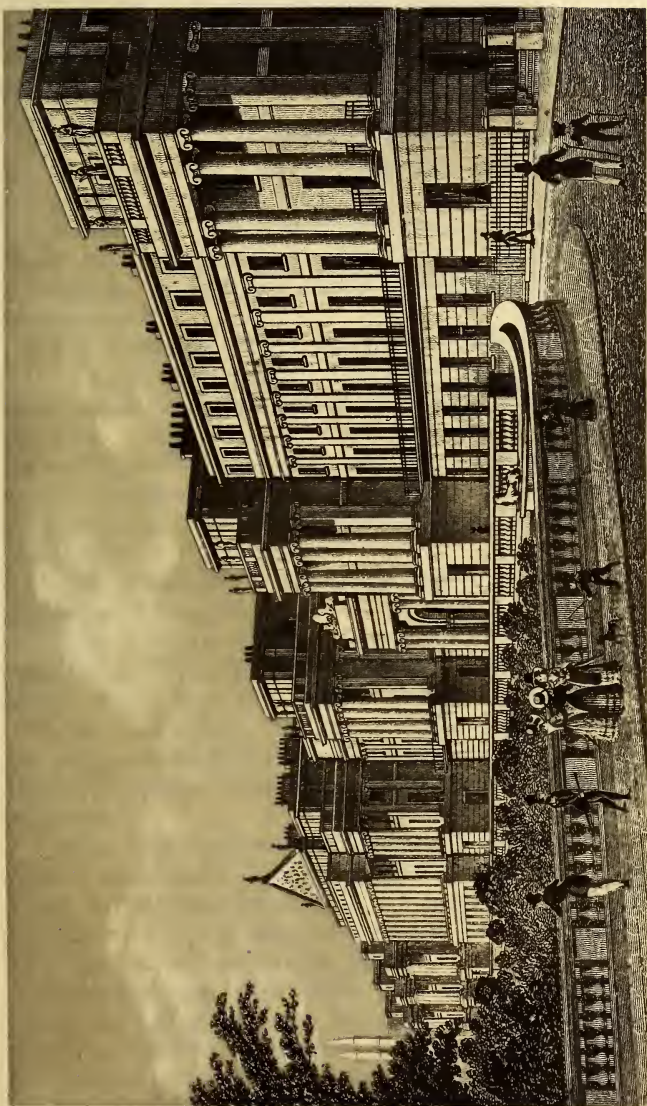
"I ain't heerd say nothing partickler about it," answered Solomon; "on'y I know that Tony Wilkins and some others

REGENT PARK  
LONDON N.W.1

REGENTS PARK

*Photogravure from an old engraving*







has been on the lookout, but whether they've learned anything or no, I hav'n't heerd tell. Howsumever, they hav'n't forgot that this is the evening you was to be here, and me and my wife had just been saying we wondered as how whether you would come, when the door opened and you made your appearance. That's why we looked at each other as you saw us do."

"Well, and about another matter," observed Madge. "I have not been able to come here since that night, — you know what night I mean."

"To be sure — the Cannibal's affair," and old Solomon placed his finger in a sly manner against the side of his nose. "I rayther thought you might be keeping out of the way on purpose."

"Not I indeed! What was there to keep out of the way for? I have been engaged I may say day and night in this same search on which I have set others, and all in vain on my part. But have you had the curiosity to peep down the well again? Or have you been prudent enough to have the stones cemented over, and the trap-door above nailed up? In short, have you had carpenters and bricklayers to put your house to rights again?"

"Yes, completely," responded Patch. "It's pretty well the same as it was afore."

"And have there been many inquiries after Chiffin?" was Madge Somers's next question. "But no doubt there have. What have you said in answer to them?"

"Oh! not much. He hasn't been missing long enough for people to begin to wonder. It is but a week since the thing took place. But what will you have, — brandy, beer, or wine?"

"Some beer and some cold meat, nothing else. I shall remain till eight o'clock, and then I must be off, whether I get the information or not. I have an appointment to keep at nine on the other side of the Regent's Park, and it will take me an hour to get there."

Solomon Patch went forth into the bar to draw some porter for Madge's behoof, while his wife, to whom he mentioned her wishes, proceeded to serve her with the supper she had ordered, and again did the two old people exchange significant looks. But this time Madge, who was in the parlour behind the bar, observed them not.

She ate and drank, and by the time her repast was over, it was half-past seven o'clock. She looked very much annoyed, and gave utterance to several ejaculations of impatience, for she began to fear that the reward she had offered would find no claimant on the part of any one giving her the information she required. Ten minutes more passed away, — it was now twenty minutes to eight, and she was just thinking to herself that her hope was certain to be disappointed, when Solomon Patch suddenly entered from the bar, where he had been serving liquor, and the woman at once saw by his look that he had something to communicate.

"Here's a cove as wants you, Madge," he said, "and though he hasn't told me, I think it must be for the business you're come about. And he's got some one with him."

"Who is it?" demanded Madge, impatiently.

"Here's the genelman to speak for hisself," answered the landlord, and the next moment Bob Shakerly entered the bar-parlour.

He was followed by a man of even a greater age than his own, and who was well clad, having altogether a most respectable appearance. Madge started up from her seat, and gazing upon this person in a scrutinizing manner, seemed to be considering whether his features were at all familiar to her. But they were not.

"Sit down, my friend," said old Bob Shakerly to the individual whom he had thus brought with him, "and don't speak a word till I tell you. Now, Madge," he continued, addressing himself to the woman, "is it all right about the blunt?"

"Are you prepared to claim it?" she inquired, again looking at the stranger, as if more than half-suspecting who he would prove to be.

"I am," rejoined Shakerly. "Come, Solomon, produce the bank-notes, and then I'll out with what I have to say."

"Is it to be so?" asked the landlord, appealing to Madge.

"Shakerly," she at once said, "I have no time to lose. Is this Mr. Thompson that you have brought with you?"

"It is," was the answer given by the old knacker.

"One word, and only one word," said Madge, "so that I may assure myself that this is no trick on your part, Shakerly, to get possession of the money."

"Rest assured, my good woman, whoever you are," said Mr. Thompson, now breaking the silence which he had hitherto maintained, "that I would not become a party to any fraud or dishonesty. I do not even know what all this means."

"Just one word in your ear, Mr. Thompson," exclaimed Madge, "and then I shall know at once that it is all right."

"Well, only one word," interposed Bob Shakerly, "for you can't have your information, whatever it is you want, before the blunt is safe in my pocket."

"Your friend Solomon Patch has got it," rejoined the woman, "and therefore you can have no fear of receiving it. Mr. Thompson, a single word in your ear," and bending down so that her repulsive countenance well-nigh came in complete contact with his venerable though care-worn one, she said, in a low, whispering tone, "If you were once the manager of a company of players, can you recollect the name of a man and his wife, having two children, who were in your troop, and concerning whom you are acquainted with some particular secret?"

"Ah! I know whom you mean. It strikes me at once," answered Thompson, speaking louder than Madge herself had done.

"Hush!" she immediately interjected. "Whisper the name in my ear."

"Deveril," he replied, uttering the word in a subdued voice according to the intimation he had just received.

"Enough," said Madge, with an air of satisfaction. Then turning to Solomon Patch, she added, "You can pay your friend Shakerly the money. Now go out into the bar together, and drink a bottle of wine at my expense. I must have ten minutes' conversation with Mr. Thompson here."

The old landlord and Bob Shakerly accordingly went forth from the bar-parlour, closing the door behind them. The former speedily produced the bottle wherewith the woman had bade them regale themselves, and he invited Shakerly to follow him into the tap-room, where they could drink it together at their ease, and in the companionship of a pipe. But old Solomon Patch did not instantaneously light his pipe, nor begin drinking his share of the wine. He took out a letter from his waistcoat-pocket, tore off the blank half of the sheet, and hastily wrote the following lines thereon:

“maj be hear. shee comed punktal 2 the time. she should say as how she have gott a pointmint at nine t’other side of regency park. i rayther wonderd u didn’t as how cum but spose you thort itt best to kepe out of the way til u heerd what dodge she was up 2. so as i prommessed i’ve sent thes fu lines to lett u no.”

Having completed this precious scrawl, Solomon Patch folded it up in such a manner that its contents might not be read by the messenger to whom he purposed to entrust it, and then he carefully sealed it, stamping the wax with a farthing which he took from his pocket. This being done, he glanced around the room, where about a dozen persons were assembled, and singling out Tony Wilkins, beckoned this individual into a corner.

“So you hav’n’t got the fifty-pound prize, young chap?” he said, in a whisper.

“I’ve tried hard for it, though,” was the response, “but you might as well look for a needle in a bottle of hay, as arter that feller Thompson with such a precious little information as Madge could give about him. I suppose she’s here, bain’t she?”

“Yes, but no matter. If you haven’t got the fifty pounds, I’ll give you half a guinea to make you some amends. But you must cut off at once with this here note, and mind and don’t show it to nobody. You can guess who it’s meant for, cos there’s no address on the kiver.”

“Enough — I understand,” responded Wilkins, and taking the note he put it into his waistcoat-pocket; then, having received the promised reward, he sped away to execute the commission entrusted to him.

Solomon Patch, having thus sent off his emissary, seated himself next to old Bob Shakerly, and while helping himself to wine, — and a precious compound Solomon’s wine was too, — he said to his companion, “How come you to be so fortunate as to light upon this chap Thompson and get the fifty pounds?”

“It was all a accident,” responded the knacker; “and when I got up this morning, I no more thought of the bit of luck that was going to tumble in my way than that you was a likely chap to make me a present of a hundred pound yourself.”

“Well, I don’t think I be very likely to do that,” observed

Solomon, with a humourous grin. "But how came this luck to happen?"

"In the first place, old friend," answered Shakerly, "you must remember that I was up here at the Goat, smoking my bakker, ten days or so back, when Madge Somers come in and told all the folks what she wanted done, and put the fifty pounds into your hand. Well, I went away, thinking little of it, for I wasn't going to waste my time in looking arter chaps of the name of Thompson. It was more to my account to chop up horse-flesh to supply them nice sassagees which the pastry-cooks puts in their rolls. But to come to the pint. Last night a pal of mine told me as how he and another chap was going to do a bit of resurrection business, and wanted to know whether I would dispose of the stiff 'un for them among my connection. Well, you're aweer, Sol, I don't do much in that there line now, but when a job does tumble in my way, I don't mind turning a honest penny or so by undertaking it. Well, I promised I would make the inquiry. So this evening — a little arter five o'clock — I dresses myself up in my best clothes, as you sees me now, and I toddles up to the West End of the town, to call on a certain Doctor Ferney, a genelman which patronizes the harts and sciences, — more partickly the noble hart of body-snatching, which was the way I first come to know him. Lord bless you! I've knowed Doctor Ferney a long while —"

"No doubt, Bob. But don't spin your story out so," interrupted Solomon. "Well, you goes up to this Doctor Ferney, eh?"

"I does. He hangs out in Conduit Street, 'Anover Square," continued the old resurrectionist. "Of course I goes around to the back entrance, and I'm showed into a back parlour on the ground floor, where a respectable old genelman was reading a book. The doctor wasn't there at the time, and it was the fault of the servant that I was showed into that room. Well, presently in comes the doctor hissself, and the moment he sees me, he knows my business is partickler, so he says to this venerable-looking old file, 'Mr. Thompson,' says he, 'just have the kindness to leave us alone together for a few minutes.' Thompson indeed! At that there name I all in a moment recollects what Madge Somers had said; but then the thought struck me that there was a many Thompsons in the world, and I'd no call to be

sapparised at meeting with one on 'em now and then. Still I don't know what it was — curiosity perhaps, but at all events, summut — that made me say to that old genelman, ' Beg pardon, sir, for the impertinence, but you don't happen once to have been the manager to a troop of players?' Mr. Thompson, who was just going to leave the room, turned around short, looked at me uncommon hard, and then said, ' I don't know who you are, but you evidently appear to know me. I was once — and indeed for a very long time — in the position you have mentioned.' Now, Sol, my limbs isn't wery active; on the contrary, they're rayther shaky, but I cut a double caper on hearing them words, for I felt that Madge's fifty pounds was as good as in my pocket. So I begged Mr. Thompson not to leave the room for a minute or two, and then I told him there was a woman who was uncommon anxious to see him, and who was looking for him all over the world. He of course axed me what the woman wanted, and all about it, but I couldn't tell him nothing, for I didn't know nothing myself, but I said it was wery important, and I thought was summut to his own advantage. I'd often seen that bit of gammon stuck in newspaper advertisements, and I thought it would make him all the more ready to come along with me. Well, I raised his curiosity, and, after a consultation with Doctor Ferney Mr. Thompson agreed to accompany me. So while he went up-stairs to put on his shoes and coat — for it seems that he is living in the house, and had on slippers and a dressing-gown at the time — I axed the doctor if he would like to have the stiff 'un; but the doctor rayther declined, as he didn't much like summut that happened about the last one he had of me. That was a woman named Mabel Stewart — "

" Well, never mind who it was, Bob," interrupted Solomon. " Mr. Thompson agreed to accompany you, you was a-saying."

" Yes, but when I brought him up into this part of the town, he didn't wery much like it. Howsumever, I got him into the place, and what's more, I have sacked the reward. Now, I mean to say there's many a chap which writes romances that haven't never hit on a more singular coincidence" — with a strong emphasis on the *i* — " than this here."

" Very true, Bob," rejoined the landlord, refilling the



glasses. "But I say, haven't you an idea of what it is that Madge wants with this Mr. Thompson? I wouldn't mind giving summut to know, for depend upon it there's money to be turned by it, or else Madge Somers wouldn't be giving herself all this trouble and shelling out her blunt into the bargain. I s'pose Thompson hisself had some suspicion of what was wanted of him, and of course you pumped him as you come along together?"

"There was nothing to pump," answered old Shakerly. "Thompson had no more idea what Madge Somers wanted with him than the man in the moon. Quite t'otherwise; he seemed to think that I must know summut of the business, and that it was rayther odd I wouldn't tell him, but he talked the best part of the time in praise of Doctor Ferney, who, it seems, has been an uncommon good friend to him. In fact, Thompson said that if it hadn't been for the doctor he should have perished. What he meant, I don't exactly know — But I say, if you are so anxious to find out what Madge wants with him, why don't you go and listen a bit?"

"It's too late now," answered Solomon. "Depend upon it their conversation is precious near over, for Madge has got an appointment to keep at nine t'other side of Regency Park. It's now past eight, and she'll be going in a few minutes."

At this moment the pot-boy entered the room, and said, in a low voice to Solomon Patch, "Madge Somers is gone, and that there gentleman which is in the bar wants me to show him the way to the nearest cab-stand, for he's quite a stranger in these parts."

"I'll go and speak to him," answered Solomon, and leaving old Bob Shakerly to finish the wine, he issued from the public-room.

Mr. Thompson had in the meanwhile emerged from the bar-parlour, and was now standing near the door of the boozing-ken, waiting for the pot-boy to conduct him out of the maze of Agar Town. Solomon — putting on his hat — volunteered, with his wonted hypocritical civility, to serve as the old gentleman's guide to the cab-stand at King's Cross. As they proceeded thither, Solomon did his best to extract from his companion the nature of the business for which Madge Somers had so anxiously sought him;

but Thompson, plainly discerning the landlord's object, dexterously evaded the questions thus put, and Mr. Patch returned to his establishment no wiser in that respect than when he had issued forth.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### THE VILLA

It was not forgotten at William Deveril's abode that this was the evening on which that strange woman whom he had rescued from the Trent, and who in her turn had saved his life and that of the marquis at the boozing-ken, was to pay him a visit. Lord Eagledean dined with William and Angela on this occasion, and as the young maiden was no stranger to her brother's affairs, she speculated with as much anxiety and interest as William and the marquis themselves, as to the result of the interview that was expected.

They were all three seated in that same front parlour on the ground floor which has been alluded to in a previous chapter. The evening was exceedingly sultry, and the casement, which reached down to the floor, stood partially open; but the curtains were drawn over it inside, and the lamp was burning upon the table.

"We have been speaking," said the marquis, after a brief pause in the conversation, "altogether of the expected visit, to the exclusion of other topics, but two or three times I was on the point of observing that with regard to our adventure of the other night —"

"Ah, that dreadful night," murmured Angela, with a shudder; "what a providential escape! I had a presentiment of evil. I dreaded lest some treachery should be intended."

"And yet who could have foreseen it?" said the marquis. "But I was about to observe that the longer and the oftener I reflect upon the incident of that night, the more I am convinced that the wretched woman who had already sought to work you so serious an injury, William, was the instigatrix of that stupendous treachery."

"Lady Saxondale!" said our young hero. "Yes, my lord, circumstances do indeed too plainly point to her as the employer of that dreadful man who so righteously met his doom, fearful though it were."

"It could have been none other than Lady Saxondale," observed the marquis. "Who else could be interested in getting rid of both of us at the same moment? And then, too, we had previously received proofs that she was in correspondence with that man. Moreover, his employer must have been some one whose proffered bribe far outweighed whatsoever amount of money the miscreant might have hoped to get from us. Yes, Lady Saxondale — and Lady Saxondale alone — was the instigatrix of that diabolic crime."

"And has not your lordship as yet taken measures," inquired William, "to wean away Lord Harold Staunton from the dreadful companionship of Lady Saxondale?"

"Not yet — not yet," replied the marquis. "What measures could I take? Did we not expect some startling revelations from Chiffin? And was it not all a snare to plunge us into destruction? In respect to the complicity of Lady Saxondale therein, we ourselves may be convinced of it, but we could not establish the charge against her. We have no evidence of its truth. If we were to accuse her of hiring or engaging a detestable bravo to take our lives, she would boldly and indignantly deny it. But the time cannot be far distant when her character must be fully exposed; it is impossible that deeds so foul as hers can long be enacted without involving her in ruin. This woman who is coming to-night will perhaps have revelations to make in connection with the fearful incident in Agar Town. If she could but furnish us with positive proofs that the villain Chiffin was employed by Lady Saxondale, it would be all we should require to serve the twofold purpose in view: namely, to rescue my nephew from the power of that evil genius who has cast her spells around him, and to compel her to give the most signal contradiction to the calumny which she has so basely propagated, William, relative to yourself. But, ah! methought I heard the garden gate open."

"Doubtless it is the woman," observed Angela, glancing toward a timepiece on the mantel, "for it only wants two minutes to nine o'clock."

Silence now prevailed in the parlour, the three occupants of which were plunged in a state of considerable suspense. A single knock — but given somewhat imperiously — was heard at the front door. The female servant hastened to answer the summons, and just as the timepiece began ringing forth, with its silver notes, the hour of nine, Madge Somers made her appearance.

“ I am punctual,” she said, in her terse, abrupt manner, and without ceremony she took a chair.

When thus seated, — with her face toward the Marquis of Eagledean, Angela, and Deveril, — her back was toward the half-open casement which the curtains covered.

“ Yes, you are punctual,” said Lord Eagledean, “ and as you may suppose, we are all three profoundly anxious to learn what you have to communicate. This young lady,” he added, glancing toward Angela, “ is Mr. Deveril’s sister.”

“ Ah! his sister, eh?” observed Madge, with a singular expression of countenance; but as it immediately passed away, and her looks resumed their usual harsh and rigid aspect, she said, “ I told you, William Deveril, that I would meet you here at the expiration of a month — day for day and hour for hour — from the time when the appointment was given in Lincolnshire. I have kept my word. But of what avail would it be for me to boast this punctuality, unless in the meantime I had discovered him whom I vowed to seek for?”

“ Thompson?” ejaculated our hero, with a sudden start that denoted the feverish anxiety which galvanized him at the moment. “ And have you found him? Have you been successful?”

“ Assuredly,” answered Madge, “ or else wherefore am I here? Did I not assure you that if he were still in the land of the living, I would find him out, and that if he were dead I would obtain proof of his decease? But he is alive — I have discovered him. Scarcely an hour has elapsed since I parted from that man whom I have thus so unweariedly sought.”

“ Then the secret which I imagined to have died with my poor father, is now known to you?” said Deveril, with increasing anxiety and suspense, — a feeling that was fully shared by his sister and the Marquis.

“ This secret was known to me all along,” replied the

woman curtly. "I merely sought a corroboration from the lips of him who, after all you told me in Lincolnshire, I felt assured could furnish it."

"And this secret — my poor father's secret?" exclaimed our hero. "Oh, keep me not in suspense —"

"Do not excite yourself, young man," interrupted Madge. "I am not going to run away in a moment, nor perhaps for an hour. Indeed, we have much to talk about. But you speak of your father, of him who died in Italy —"

"And who was so kind and excellent a father to us!" ejaculated William, taking Angela's hand and gazing affectionately upon her countenance, as he thus referred to the tender care which she as well as himself had received from the late Mr. Deveril.

"Your father, humph!" observed Madge, in so singular a manner that the eyes of all three were concentrated upon her in a moment. "Now, William Deveril," she continued, "if I have not at once entered upon the object of my visit, if I have not rushed eagerly into those explanations which you are naturally so anxious to receive, and if I still feel it necessary to indulge in a few prefatory words, it is because the secret I have to make known is one of such importance —"

At this instant the curtain which covered the casement suddenly flew aside and a man rushed in. A shriek thrilled from Angela's lips, while cries of horror burst from those of the marquis and our hero, for the bright blade of a dagger or clasp-knife which the intruder held gleamed above the head of Madge Somers. She half-started from her seat, as that sudden rush from behind and the cries of alarm from those in front simultaneously smote her ears; but ere a single syllable issued from her lips, the weapon was driven deep down into her shoulder, and she fell like a weight of lead upon the floor. The next instant the assassin was gone.

All this was the work of a moment, — a single moment. The man had no sooner made his appearance than the blow was stricken, and he vanished like a spectre. Had his person been previously unknown to Deveril and the marquis, they would have been utterly unable to give the slightest description of it, but the impression which seized upon them both at the instant was that he was none other than Chiffin the Cannibal.

Angela flew to raise up the unfortunate woman, the marquis rushed to her assistance, and the next moment William Deveril, without his hat, without a weapon of any kind, dashed through the open casement and sped in pursuit of the murderer.

“ She breathes! She is not dead! ” cried Angela, who with her own hand had extracted the knife from the wound, and with her kerchief was endeavouring to stanch the blood which welled forth in a torrent the instant the weapon was withdrawn.

The servants, who had been alarmed by the cries which had reached their ears from the parlour, now made their hurried and frightened appearance, and they were stricken with dismay on beholding the terrific spectacle. But Angela, who in this awful crisis preserved all her presence of mind, bade them assist her in laying the woman upon the sofa, while the marquis, hurriedly inquiring where the nearest surgeon dwelt, sped away to procure his assistance. During his absence everything was done that could be thought of to arrest the flow of the vital current, and when the medical man arrived in company with Lord Eagledean, he at once approved of the measures thus adopted.

The woman lived but she was entirely unconscious of what was going on. The surgeon examined the wound, and expressed his belief that it was not mortal, but that little short of a miracle could prevent it from proving fatal. Angela at once decided that Madge Somers should be taken care of at the house, and not removed elsewhere, for whither could she be removed, save to a hospital or a workhouse? Those who surrounded her being utterly ignorant of the place of her abode. But not for an instant did the generous-hearted Angela entertain any other idea than that the unfortunate woman should be cared for beneath that roof, and she assisted her servants to convey her as gently as possible to a bedroom up-stairs. The medical man did all that was requisite on his side, and took his departure, with a promise to call again at an early hour in the morning.

It must not be thought that either Angela or the marquis had omitted to notice the abrupt pursuit which William Deveril undertook after the assassin; and while an almost frantic terror had for an instant seized upon the young lady, the direst apprehensions took possession of Lord Eagledean,

at the thought that William might meet his death, unarmed as he was, at the hands of the desperate Cannibal. But, as we have seen, their own goading alarms did not prevent either the magnanimous young lady or the generous nobleman from doing all in their power on behalf of Madge Somers, and it was not until the surgeon had taken his departure that they had a moment's leisure to express to each other the sore misgivings they felt with regard to our hero. He had now been absent nearly an hour, and Angela's terrors became torturingly poignant. The presence of mind which she had preserved as long as it was needed to enable her to minister to the wounded woman totally gave way, and, half-frantic, she was rushing forth without bonnet or shawl to look for William. But the marquis, holding her back, conjured her to compose herself, vowing that he would undertake the search. At the very instant, however, that the nobleman was on the point of issuing from the villa, our young hero made his appearance, breathless and exhausted, his dress in disorder, his hat battered, his garments dusty, and with every indication of having gone through some desperate struggle.

But Angela beheld not at the moment these evidences of a conflict. Wild with joy at William's safe return, she flew into his arms and covered him with kisses; then the Marquis of Eagledean proffered him his congratulation in his turn, and as William asked hurriedly concerning the wounded woman, Angela and Lord Eagledean now noticed the plight he was in. The young lady was once more seized with terror lest he should have sustained some injury, but he speedily reassured her on this point, and then in reply to his own queries, she made him aware of all that had been done in respect to Madge Somers.

"Not merely because she is a fellow creature," said William Deveril, "nor merely because she saved his lordship and me from the pitfall prepared for us, must she be ministered unto and surrounded with the most assiduous attentions, but likewise because her life is indeed a most precious one so far as I am concerned. For it is but too evident that she is acquainted with some secret of the utmost importance nearly and closely concerning me."

"Rest assured, dear brother," said Angela, "that she shall receive all possible care."



“ I know it — I know it,” exclaimed William quickly; “ do not think, sweet Angela, it was a hint I conveyed; it was merely a remark which circumstances called forth.”

“ You are right, William,” observed the marquis, thoughtfully and even solemnly. “ That woman is indeed acquainted with some secret of vital import to your interests; otherwise she would not have so carefully prepared you as it were for the revelation she was about to make. But what it could be defies the possibility of conjecture.”

“ But you, my dear brother, you are sinking with exhaustion,” exclaimed Angela. “ You are overwhelmed with fatigue. Recline yourself upon the sofa, and let me give you some refreshment.”

The amiable girl proceeded to mix some wine and water, which she presented to William, and he drank the beverage with avidity. He then proceeded to relate all that had occurred during his hour's absence from the villa.

“ You saw how I precipitated myself after that murderous villain; but on reaching the gate I paused for a few moments to ascertain if I could catch the sounds of retreating footsteps in any direction. I could hear nothing. The thought occurred to me that the assassin would scarcely proceed in the direction of London, but would rather make for the open country. With this impression I bounded away along the last-mentioned route, and the excited state of my feelings lent wings to my feet. I found myself almost flying; I was astonished at my own speed. In a few minutes my ear caught the sound of footsteps ahead. Swifter and swifter became my pace, and the ruffian, — for it was he, — finding himself pursued, suddenly stopped short. The next moment we were face to face. It was in a lonely part where we thus met. With one glance the fellow appeared to assure himself that I was unarmed; he drew a pistol from his pocket, but quick as lightning, I sprang aside and the bullet whizzed past my ear. Then I seized upon him, but he broke away from me with the power of a giant, indeed with such force that I was whirled around and thrown against a fence. He rushed away with a savage yell resembling that of a wild beast, and in a few moments his footsteps were lost in the distance. Again I sped onward, for never in all my life had I experienced such a boiling rage.

“ For at least a quarter of an hour I hurried along without

knowing whether I was on the miscreant's track, and without reflecting that even if I overtook him, the conflict between us would be most unequal, not merely because he had probably other weapons about him, but likewise on account of his infinitely superior physical strength. No, in the hurry of my thoughts and the excitement of my feelings, I was unconscious of danger, or indifferent to it, and on I went. But at the expiration of the quarter of an hour that I have named, and on reaching a still more lonely part than that where I had first overtaken him, I came up with the villain again. He was now crouched up under the shade of a tree, and evidently waiting to spring upon me as I passed; but fortunately the gloom of that place was not so deep but that I caught sight of the assassin's form, and he did not therefore take me at a disadvantage. It is certain that he had not another loaded pistol, or he would have fired it, but with the butt end of the one he held in his hand, he levelled a terrific blow at my head. I caught his arm as he thus sprang toward me, and he fell backwards. I threw myself upon him, and it must have been an almost preterhuman power that possessed me at the moment, for I wrenched the pistol from his grasp, and holding it above his head, threatened to strike him with it unless he remained quiet. Then I cried for assistance, but none came. A desperate struggle ensued; the villain in his turn tore the pistol from my hand, but instantaneously recovering it, I thus prevented him from dealing me a blow that would probably have been fatal. He tried to wrench it again from me, and I flung it to a distance. Assassin as he is, I did not like even in my rage to strike him with that weapon. It now appeared to be a struggle of life and death between us, or, rather, I should say on my part, for if he had mastered me, never should I have left that place alive. Loudly did I continue to call for succour, and still none came. For several minutes did this frightful struggle last, but fortunately the whole time I remained uppermost, with the villain lying under me.

“ At last I felt my strength going; it was impossible for me to keep in that position any longer; and if the conflict were continued, I should have become his victim, instead of having the satisfaction (as I at first hoped) of securing him as a prisoner. With one tremendous effort he succeeded

in disengaging his arms from the grasp which I had maintained upon them during all the latter portion of the struggle, and then, to prevent myself from being thrown underneath, I sprang up to my feet. Quick as lightning he did the same, and taking another pistol from his pocket, he held it by the barrel as he sprang toward me with the fury of a tiger. My hat had fallen off in the conflict, and if the butt end of that weapon had dealt the blow which the miscreant levelled at me, it would doubtless have killed me on the spot. The sudden sense of this new danger resuscitated all my energies in a moment. I closed with him again, — again, too, did I succeed in wrenching the pistol from his grasp, but at the same moment it fell from my hand. He broke away from me, stooped down, snatched up the weapon, and in the madness of his rage hurled it at me with all his force. Fortunately I escaped this last attack, and the pistol fell into a hedge. The ruffian now took to his heels and fled precipitately. I still pursued him, continuing to cry for assistance, but I overtook him not again. Wearied and exhausted, I sat down to rest for a few minutes, and then made the best of my way homeward.”

Angela shuddered as she thus learned the dangers from which Deveril had escaped, and the magnitude of which he had by no means exaggerated.

The Marquis of Eagledean now took his leave, promising to return on the morrow and see how the wounded woman got on. In the meanwhile a nurse, whom the medical man had undertaken to send, arrived at the villa, and to her special care was Madge Somers consigned. She passed a somewhat more tranquil night than could have been expected under the circumstances, and when the surgeon called in the morning, he was enabled to pronounce a still more favourable opinion than he had delivered on the previous evening. That is to say, he entertained a strong hope of the woman's ultimate recovery. But she continued speechless, as well as unconscious of where she was, of what had happened, and indeed of all that was passing around her; and the medical man in reply to Deveril's anxious questions stated that many days must elapse — perhaps even weeks — before she would recover the power of utterance.

Soon after breakfast, the Marquis of Eagledean made his appearance, accompanied by Frank. He and Deveril then

consulted together as to the necessity of giving information to the police authorities of the murderous outrage which had been perpetrated. It did not suit their purposes to enter into particulars relative to their previous acquaintance with the villain Chiffin, and yet, on the other hand, it was clearly impossible to keep justice in ignorance of the crime that had been committed. It was accordingly agreed that Deveril should repair to the station-house, and give information of the circumstances of the assault, together with the fullest description of its perpetrator. The inspector of police, to whom this communication was made, instantaneously recognized Chiffin the Cannibal from the portraiture that was drawn of him, and he promised Mr. Deveril that no time should be lost in setting the officers of justice upon the search.

Having transacted his business at the station-house, our young hero returned to the villa. The Marquis of Eagledean took an opportunity of speaking to him alone, and he now for the first time communicated the object of Frank Paton's recent journey into Lincolnshire. William Deveril was astonished to hear of the youth's unfortunate attachment for Juliana Farefield, but he congratulated the marquis on the escape which his son had experienced from being entangled in the wiles of a young woman whose morals were evidently so loose and whose character was so unprincipled.

"Although Frank," said Lord Eagledean, "yielded to the advice of a very conscientious friend — I mean Mr. Denison — and renounced for ever all idea of accompanying Miss Farefield to the altar, yet it has not been without a pang that he has resigned himself to this decision. His own good sense convinces him of the propriety of the step, but his young heart, naturally affectionate, cannot put away from it in a moment an image which had made so deep an impression upon it. He is therefore in a somewhat desponding state of mind, and methought that a little change of scene, and the companionship of kind friends, would tend to cheer his spirits. I therefore proposed that he should pass the day with you. It is not necessary that your sister should be acquainted with all the past in respect to my son's unfortunate love for Juliana Farefield, but I am sure that you will both do your best to cheer him as much as possible."

"If he would stay with us a week or a month, instead of

a single day," replied Deveril, "he would be most welcome."

"I know it — I know it, my young friend," responded the marquis. "We shall see. Frank can do as he likes in the matter. And now I must bid you farewell for the present, for I intend to go and consult my solicitor anew in respect to the course which ought to be adopted on your behalf in respect to Lady Saxondale."

Lord Eagledean took his departure, and Frank remained at the villa. In the middle of the day William Deveril repaired to Cavendish Square to pay his usual visit to his beloved Florina, and Frank was left alone with Angela. The amiable young lady saw that the lad was not altogether in the best possible spirits, and though she knew not the cause, nor thought fit to inquire, she exerted herself with the most ingenuous affability to amuse and cheer him. She showed him her drawings, she likewise opened William Deveril's well stored portfolio, she played several pieces on the piano, and she walked with him in the garden. The youth could not possibly help contrasting the elegant simplicity and natural good-temper of Angela's disposition with the artificial and deceptive character of Juliana Farefield, so that he soon began to take pleasure in the society of his fair companion. By the time Deveril returned from Cavendish Square, — and his visit thither on this occasion was short, as he did not think it kind to absent himself too long from home on account of his guest, — the latter had recovered much of his wonted cheerfulness, and the evening was passed most agreeably. It having been left to Frank's option how long he would stay at the villa, he made but little difficulty in yielding to William Deveril's invitation to pass a few days there, for our hero felt himself to be under such signal and manifold obligations to the marquis, that it rejoiced him to be enabled to show any attention to his son. Frank did therefore remain, and during the week which he thus spent at Deveril's abode, his walks with Angela were not confined to the garden, — they were extended to the Regent's Park. The more he saw of this young lady, the less regretfully did he look back upon the loss of Juliana. Not that he could immediately banish the latter from his memory, or that he all in an instant fell head over ears in love with Angela Deveril; but it was impossible that the

companionship of so sweet, so amiable, and so charming a creature could do otherwise than exercise a gently soothing influence over his wounded spirit. And then, too, on the score of beauty, Angela was incomparably superior to Juliana Farefield. The latter was voluptuously splendid and sensuously dazzling, but the former was of a pure, ethereal loveliness which appealed only to the sentiment, and refined instead of provoking the grosser feelings of the heart.

At the expiration of the week Francis Paton returned to Stamford Manor, and his parents, as well as his sister, were rejoiced to perceive a marked change had taken place in his spirits. In the course of the day on which he thus came back to the paternal abode, he and Elizabeth walked out alone together in the grounds; and after some conversation on indifferent topics, the lady observed, with a sly and furtive look at her brother, "Perhaps, my dear Frank, you will yet find that there are women in the world as handsome and as captivating as Juliana Farefield, and certainly more virtuous."

"What do you mean, Elizabeth?" asked the youth quickly, for as he glanced toward his sister, he caught upon her handsome countenance the half-vanishing expression of archness which had been conjured up thereon by the thought that was uppermost in her mind at the moment.

"Nothing particular, dear Frank," she responded; "only that I suppose you do not purpose to devote your life to cynical regrets for the loss of Juliana? Depend upon it," she added, more seriously, "it is no loss, but a very fortunate escape for you. A young woman who could have proposed that when she was married to another, you should remain as her pensioned lover —"

"Enough, Elizabeth! do not speak of it!" interrupted Frank. "There is something dreadful in the mere contemplation of such depravity. Besides," he went on to observe, without exactly knowing that he was giving audible utterance to his musings, "after having passed a week in the companionship of the pure-minded and virtuous Angela Deveril, it is impossible not to be struck with the contrast which she presents to Juliana Farefield."

"Ah! then you think that Angela is infinitely Juliana's

superior?" said Elizabeth Paton, without looking at her brother as she spoke.

"It is impossible to think otherwise," he exclaimed, with a degree of fervour that conjured up a smile to his sister's moist red lips, but she did not suffer Frank to perceive that his observation had made any particular impression on her.

"And the beauty of Angela?" she remarked, as if quite casually and in a purely gossiping strain. "Do you think she is equal to Miss Farefield?"

"She is superior — incomparably superior!" rejoined Frank, still with an unconscious fervour in his accents. "But why do you question me thus, Elizabeth?" he suddenly asked, as a suspicion of her motive flashed to his mind.

"Because, my dear brother," she answered, gaily, as she turned her beaming countenance upon him, "you are already as much in love with Angela Deveril as ever you were with Juliana Farefield; and therefore your case is not very hopeless, and I do not think you will die of disappointment, or forsake the world and turn hermit, on account of your disappointment in Lincolnshire. But, ah, there is Diego!"

With these last words Elizabeth Paton flitted away from her brother, and sped to join the handsome Spanish nobleman, who had at that moment entered the grounds.

Francis thus remained alone at some distance from the mansion, and in the vicinage of that shady avenue of trees where we once before saw him walking on the occasion that he waited for his sister to bring him the decision of their parents in respect to his suit with Juliana Farefield. He stood still for some minutes, struck with the last speech which Elizabeth had made ere quitting him. Her words were to him a revelation of the changing condition of his own mind, and at length he said to himself, "Is it possible that in one short week Angela Deveril could have made this impression on me?"

He wished to analyze his feelings, to dissect his thoughts, to commune with himself. He advanced farther along the avenue, he reached a gate in the palings at the extremity, he issued forth, and continued his ramble along a shady lane. So absorbed in reflection was he, that he did not perceive himself to be the object of attention on the part of a man who was loitering near. Yet such was the case. This

individual was a respectable-looking and decently dressed person, of middle age, but with a sharp, cunning countenance. As already stated, he surveyed Francis Paton with attention, and at length muttered to himself, " Yet, this must be him."

At this moment the youth caught sight of him, and observing how the man regarded him with interest, Frank looked at him in a way calculated to encourage him to speak, if such indeed were his object.

" You are Mr. Paton, I presume?" said the stranger, and on receiving an affirmative response, he at once produced a letter, which the youth took.

" Miss Farefield's writing," ejaculated Frank, and his first impulse was to give it back to the hand from which he had just received it.

" No, sir, I cannot take it again," said this individual. " I beg that you will read it. I have come all the way from Lincolnshire to look for you. Indeed, I have been searching after you for some days past, and now that I have succeeded in finding you — "

" Did Miss Farefield send you? And how did you find me out?" demanded Frank, suddenly interrupting the stranger. " Tell me also who you are? "

" Softly, sir, I cannot answer too many questions at once. First of all, I must inform you that I am the brother of Lady Saxondale's steward on the Lincolnshire estate, and my name is Woodman. Miss Farefield, knowing I am trustworthy, sent me on this little errand, and she told me I was to be particular in seeing you alone, and only to give this letter into your hand."

" Well, but how did you find me out? "

" I will deal frankly and candidly with you, sir," responded Woodman. " Miss Farefield knew that you had a sister who passed by the name of Mrs. Chandos, — or at least used to do, — and who had a cottage somewhere in the neighbourhood of Tottenham. So I went to that cottage, but the woman there did not like to tell me anything about you. It was only this morning, on paying her a second visit, that I succeeded on some pretext in getting any information at all. Then she told me that I might perhaps hear of you at Stamford Manor — "

" And do you know to whom Stamford Manor belongs? " demanded Frank quickly, for it now struck him that probably



his father's *incognito*, which he still preserved, might not have been so well sustained as his lordship thought.

"I have heard it belongs to a Mr. Gunthorpe," answered Woodman, and there was nothing in his look or his manner to make Frank suspect that he was acquainted with anything more.

"But about this letter," said the youth; "I cannot take it, — I cannot read it. No, I must not." And yet he could not help feeling somewhat anxious to know what Juliana had to communicate. It was that feeling of curiosity which naturally resulted from all the love he had borne her and all that had passed between them.

"Mr. Paton," said Woodman, assuming a solemn demeanour, "it is of the highest possible consequence that you read that letter. Miss Farefield, expecting that perhaps you would hesitate, enjoined me to tell you that it may be the last she will ever have to write to you, and, in short, there is something to be submitted for your decision —"

"Then, in that case," interrupted Frank, "I will read the letter," and he said to himself, "There will be no harm, for whatever she may say will not alter the decision to which on my part I have already come."

He accordingly broke the seal, stepped aside, and read the letter, the contents of which ran as follows:

"I know not in what terms I ought to address you. You fled precipitately from Lincolnshire, notwithstanding the appointment I gave you, and you have not written to me a single word of explanation. This is not well done on your part. Remember that when you were but a humble and obscure youth — and that is but a few weeks ago — I treated you as my equal; I gave you my love, I encouraged you to believe that you were not destined to be what I found you, and you thanked me in enthusiastic terms for those words that were a solace to your soul. You recently put me to what you considered to be a test, and if I had agreed at once to wed you, you would have joyously assented. What, then, is my fault? That having no fortune of my own, I could not bring my mind to take a step that should drag you down into the depths of poverty; and that in the ardour — or I may call it in the frenzy — of my love, I suggested a course which, though unjustifiable upon a

moral ground, was nevertheless the alternative to which hope alone could fly. And it is for this I am abandoned! for this that I am discarded! The immensity of my affection is made a source of woe and sorrow and bitterness to myself.

“But there is another subject to which I must direct your attention. Did I follow my mother’s example in scorning you on account of your sister’s criminality? No, far from it. When I discovered the ground upon which Lady Saxondale sent you forth from the mansion in Park Lane, I upbraided her bitterly for her conduct; and when you appeared before me the other day in the castle gardens, I received you with open arms. I thought not the worse of you on your sister’s account. In this therefore, as in all other respects, Frank, have I given you signal proofs of my fervid and devoted love. Cannot you, therefore, forget and forgive one little error on my part? Can you not attribute to the strength of my attachment that proposition which appears to have shocked you so much, but which was made in the moment of my heart’s profound despair?

“And now, Frank, after having thus appealed to you for the last time, I require your decision. Is everything to be at an end between us? Or shall the past, in so far as I have offended, be forgotten and forgiven? Your prompt reply is necessary. Delay not; or, if after a little while you should repent your decision and wish to seek me again, it will be too late.

“One word more, Frank. I have no doubt you are acting under the guidance of your newly found parents, whoever they may be; but parents are not always the best counsellors, or at least their advice is not always compatible with the promptings of their children’s hearts. Think you that my mother, for instance, would have looked kindly upon my love for you at the time that it commenced? Would she even now (no matter how altered your circumstances may be), after what you have been, and considering what she knows of your sister? And yet I have been all along prepared to sacrifice everything to my love for you. Can you sacrifice nothing for me? Go to your parents, throw yourself at their feet, tell them that your happiness is bound up in me, and they will yet consent to our marriage. They must be kind-hearted, or they would not even have consented that you should put me to the test for which purpose you came into

Lincolnshire. At all events send me your prompt decision, whether everything is at an end between us, or not. The bearer of this missive is trustworthy, and immediately upon receiving your answer, he will set off on his return into Lincolnshire. Frank, I conjure you not to achieve the unhappiness of one who loves you tenderly and well.

“Your affectionate

“J. F.”

To say that Frank Paton was not moved by this epistle would be to speak incorrectly. He was at first much moved, and he even thought within himself that his conduct had been too harsh and severe, his judgment relative to Juliana too stern and implacable. He could not help feeling that there was much truth in many passages of her letter, and when he had finished reading it, he remained standing on the spot to which he had stepped aside, reflecting profoundly. But gradually the conviction that this was only a well-studied piece of sophistry — the craftily worded appeal of a designing woman — stole into his mind; and then, too, as gradually and as slowly, arose up before him the image of Angela Deveril, like a good genius with outstretched hand to draw him away from the brink of destruction. His resolve was taken, and rending the letter into the minutest fragments, he tossed them away.

“What answer am I to bear back, sir?” inquired Woodman, now accosting the youth. “Doubtless you purpose to write your reply, and I will remain here until you bring it to me.”

“No,” returned Frank, “it is unnecessary. Tell Miss Farefield that I abide by the result of the test, and she will understand you. More I need not say.”

With these words Francis Paton turned abruptly around, hurried up the lane, and was speedily lost to the view of the emissary from Lincolnshire.

But as the youth retraced his way toward the manor, one circumstance almost more than any other engrossed his thoughts and filled him with perplexity and bewilderment. That letter which he had written at Mr. Denison’s, and under this gentleman’s dictation, had not Juliana received it? He could scarcely think so, for it was worded in a strain so cutting, so humiliating, that it was impossible to suppose

that after the perusal of it she could ever again have regarded him with any other feeling than that of a vindictive hate. In her letter there was not the slightest allusion to that one which he had penned. Indeed, the very opening lines of Juliana's epistle reproached him for not writing to her, and indicated an uncertainty on her part as to the resolve to which he might have come when leaving Lincolnshire. No, it was evident enough that Juliana had not received the letter which he had written at Mr. Denison's dictation. But wherefore had she not received it? Had Mr. Denison himself, on second thoughts, suppressed it? Or had it been sent and miscarried? Frank was bewildered; he knew not what to think, and in this mood he walked on toward the mansion.

Near the principal entrance he encountered the Marquis of Eagledean, and feeling that his countenance would betray that something had occurred, even if he himself should hesitate to reveal it, — feeling likewise that he ought not to keep anything secret from that kind and generous-hearted parent, — he at once told the marquis all that had just taken place. Though he had destroyed the letter, he nevertheless remembered the precise tenor of its contents, and these he repeated, omitting however, with a natural delicacy, all mention of those passages which alluded to his sister.

“My dear Frank,” said the marquis, in the kindest tone, “you have done wisely to avoid the snare which this siren has set to entrap you. I rejoice also in the candour with which you have just communicated the incident; depend upon it, my son, such frankness will find its reward.”

“Since we are again speaking upon this subject, my dear father,” observed the youth, “I am reminded that I have not as yet written to Mr. Hawkshaw according to my promise. Surely toward that gentleman there can be no need for you to preserve an *incognito*, as he himself would be the last in the world to frustrate any purposes you may have in view. Besides, Mr. Denison knows that you are in England, and wherefore not Mr. Hawkshaw, who behaved so kindly toward me?”

“My dear Frank,” responded the marquis, “have a little patience, and in a few days there will no longer be any necessity for me to keep the *incognito* toward any one.”

## CHAPTER XXXV

### THE MESSENGER'S RETURN — THE WEDDING - DAY

THE fortnight which was to elapse ere the double marriage of Lady Saxondale and Juliana took place was drawing to a close; the day for the nuptials was near at hand, and all the arrangements were made for the solemnization of the ceremonies. It was settled that the weddings should take place by special license at Saxondale Castle, and at the hour of noon, so that immediately after the nuptials Lady Saxondale and her husband would take their departure for London on the one hand, while on the other Mr. Hawkshaw would bear away his bride to the Hall. The ceremony was to be conducted with as much privacy as could be observed in such matters, only those whose assistance was absolutely necessary being invited. Such were the arrangements, and, as above stated, the day was now close at hand.

It was evening, and Juliana was seated alone in the drawing-room, her mother being in the library, writing letters, and Lord Harold rambling by himself in the garden. Miss Farefield felt particularly restless and uneasy; she was anxiously expecting the return of her messenger, for on the response he brought back depended the course she had to pursue. Earnestly did she hope that Francis Paton would send a reply favourable to her wishes, for she more than dreaded — she had the almost absolute certainty — that her amour with him, which had commenced two months back, would not be without its consequences. In short, she felt assured that she was in a way to become a mother. But if Frank were to refuse, should she still marry Mr. Hawkshaw? Yes, she saw no alternative. He was so fond, so confiding. He evidently put such implicit faith in her that she might deceive him as to the paternity of the child which would

thus be born seven months after their union. At all events, her position was desperate. She must marry some one, and if not Francis, why, then it must be Hawkshaw. Her mind was thus made up, and though her resolve was in one of its alternatives so treacherous and so criminal, she nevertheless swerved not from it. But at the same time she could not help feeling restless and uneasy as to the result of the letter she had sent to London, a result upon which so much depended, — a result, in short, which must decide whether she was to marry the one lover or the other.

In the midst of this unsettled mood of hers, on the particular evening of which we are writing, a domestic entered the apartment to announce that Mr. Woodman, the steward's brother, desired an audience of Miss Farefield. She at once ordered the man to be shown up, and during the few moments that elapsed ere her emissary made his appearance, the suspense she endured was of the most painful description. She felt the colour coming and going with the most rapid transitions upon her cheeks, and the palpitations of her heart were plainly audible. For, oh, she ardently longed that Frank might be restored to her, and perhaps the sensuous fervour of that passion which she had felt for him was mingling with a more tender and even a purer feeling, since she had been led to suspect that she should become a mother, and he the father of the babe thus to be born!

When Woodman entered the drawing-room, Juliana could not immediately put to him the question to which she so ardently longed for an answer. Nor did she instantaneously perceive in his look or manner anything sufficiently significant to relieve her from suspense.

“ You have seen him? You have been successful? ” she at length said, perceiving that he did not at once speak of his own accord.

“ After considerable trouble, miss, I found Mr. Paton — ”

“ And you gave him the letter? And he read it? And — and — he has not sent me a reply? ”

“ Only a verbal one, ” responded the emissary.

“ Ah! a verbal one? ” echoed Juliana, perceiving at once that all hope was dead in that quarter, and making a merit of necessity, she concealed her vexation — her grief, too — beneath a look of suddenly assumed haughty scorn. “ And what was this verbal answer? ”

"Mr Paton said, miss," rejoined Woodman, "that he would abide by the result of the test, and that you would understand his meaning."

"Yes, I understand it — Oh, to be sure, I understand it!" and then Juliana bit her lips with vexation, and it was only with a powerful effort she could keep back the tears of mingled spite and rage, disappointment and affliction, ay, and mortification likewise. "Thank you, thank you, Woodman, for the fidelity with which you have accomplished this mission. Here is the reward I promised you," and drawing forth her purse, she produced bank-notes and gold, from which she selected the sum of twenty pounds, but her hands trembled, and her fingers could scarcely hold the notes or count out the pieces.

"I am very much obliged to you, miss," said Woodman, as he gathered up the money.

"I need scarcely repeat," murmured Juliana, "what I have already said, that this is in the strictest confidence."

"You know, miss, that you can rely upon me — And besides, you promised —"

"Yes, that I would provide for you well in some way or another. Fear nothing, I shall not forget my pledge; you shall have a good situation found you. But one word more. Where does this Mr. Paton live? And who are his parents?"

"He lives, miss, at a very splendid seat near London. It is called Stamford Manor, being on a hill of that name."

"But his parents, who are they?" demanded the young lady, somewhat impatiently.

"I could not exactly discover whether his parents lived there or not. I had so little time to make inquiries when once I had found Mr. Paton out, for your injunctions were so positive for me to lose no time in returning immediately after I had seen him."

"Well, but who lives at the house, then?" demanded Juliana.

"A gentleman by the name of Gunthorpe," was the response.

"Gunthorpe?" echoed Juliana. "No wonder, then, that everything has failed," she murmured to herself, "for that man seems to be the evil genius of our family." Then she added, aloud, "No, Mr. Gunthorpe cannot be his father.

Probably Mr. Paton is on a visit to him. That is sufficient, Woodman; you can retire."

The man accordingly bowed and took his departure from the room, leaving Juliana to ponder upon the information he had brought her. She did not, however, remain long thus ruminating, but proceeding to the library, advanced straight up to the table where Lady Saxondale was seated, and said, "Mother, have you heard anything lately relative to your friend Mr. Gunthorpe?"

"My friend, Juliana?" at once exclaimed Lady Saxondale, laying down her pen. "What means this ill-timed jest?"

"It is no jest, mother," responded the daughter. "I merely put a simple question, to which you might, had you chosen, have returned an equally plain answer."

"But why the question at all?"

"Simply because I have learned that Francis Paton is very intimate with Mr. Gunthorpe, — that, indeed, this youth is at present on a visit to that gentleman."

"Gentleman!" said Lady Saxondale, contemptuously. "Do you call a vulgar, money-grubbing banker a gentleman?"

"No, certainly, I was wrong. That person, then," said Juliana.

"But what has it all got to do with us? Everything that regards Francis Paton," added Lady Saxondale, maliciously, "is of interest to you, and not to me."

"Perhaps. And yet methought you would like to know that Francis is thus intimate with Mr. Gunthorpe. Considering how Mr. Gunthorpe took it upon himself to interfere in your affairs, in respect, you know, mother, to a certain William Deveril," continued Juliana, now speaking maliciously in her turn, "it struck me as being somewhat ominous and suspicious that Mr. Gunthorpe should have as his guest this youth who was once in your service."

"I can see in it nothing but a coincidence," observed Lady Saxondale, and she took up her pen to resume her writing.

"You have not forgotten, mother," said Juliana, after a pause, "that this Mr. Gunthorpe came to England recommended as the very intimate friend of the Marquis of Eagledean; and as the marquis is Lord Harold Staunton's uncle,



I did not know whether it were at all possible for Mr. Gunthorpe to take any step in respect to your contemplated marriage."

"What step can he take?" inquired Lady Saxondale, coldly. "For my part, I am no love-sick girl, and if the marriage were prevented, it would not break my heart. But it cannot be; Lord Harold Staunton is of age and his own master. Besides, the Marquis of Eagledean, who is no doubt still in Italy, cannot have given Mr. Gunthorpe *carte blanche* to interfere as he chooses with Lord Harold Staunton's affairs, even if he should have heard of our intended marriage at all."

"Most likely he has," observed Juliana, "for Francis Paton, who is now staying with him, having been in Lincolnshire a fortnight back —"

"When nothing was known of this intended marriage of mine," interjected her ladyship.

"Not positively known, but more than half-suspected," continued Juliana. "To tell you the truth, for my part I like as little as may be the idea of this meddling Mr. Gunthorpe knowing anything at all about the affairs of our family. I will tell you something which has struck me as being singular. You remember that Mr. Gunthorpe and Deveril —"

"Well, well, Juliana," said her ladyship, somewhat impatiently.

"You remember, I say," continued the daughter, "that they were down here in Lincolnshire about five or six weeks back, just at the very time when the murder of those women took place —"

"Well, well, Juliana," said Lady Saxondale, still more impatiently than before, and indeed she appeared very impatient at the prolongation of the discourse, or else at the turn it was taking.

"And very soon afterward," added Miss Farefield, "Lady Macdonald and Florina left us so abruptly, indeed with an abruptness, and with a singularity of manner too, that savoured of actual rudeness. Do you not think that Mr. Gunthorpe's visit with Deveril to Lincolnshire on that occasion was somehow or another connected with the precipitate departure of Florina and her aunt a few days afterward?"

"Yes," observed Lady Saxondale, "it is not the first time that the idea has struck me."

"And then, too," continued Juliana, "you remember that when Edmund wrote to me, saying that his match was broken off, and he knew it was all through that meddling old scamp Gunthorpe, — those were his very words —"

"Well, Juliana," interposed Lady Saxondale, "there can be no doubt that this Mr. Gunthorpe has been endeavouring to do me and mine all the mischief he could; but we must not exalt him into such importance as to believe that he is an ogre, or an enchanter, or a magician, constantly lying in wait to devour us or work us an injury, and possessing the power to do either. But you seem superstitious, Juliana, upon the point?"

"I candidly confess, mother," replied the young lady, "that I do not like the idea of Mr. Gunthorpe acquiring any further insight into our affairs or our plans through the medium of young Paton."

"Did Francis Paton know that you were engaged to Mr. Hawkshaw?" inquired Lady Saxondale.

"I think not," was Juliana's response, "but who can tell?"

"If he did," observed the mother, "you are doubtless afraid that he has by this time informed Mr. Gunthorpe, and that Mr. Gunthorpe will act as a marplot?"

"I scarcely know what to think, or what I apprehend," answered Juliana. "All I know is that I could wish Frank had not formed an intimacy with that meddling old fellow."

With these words the young lady quitted the library, and hastening back to the drawing-room, she rang the bell. Of the footman who answered the summons, she inquired if Woodman was still within the castle walls, and being informed that he was partaking of refreshments in the servants' hall, Juliana ordered him to be sent up. In a few minutes Woodman reappeared in her presence.

"I forgot to ask you one or two questions," she said. "You did not mention to Mr. Paton anything relative to my engagement — I mean my rumoured marriage — I mean about Mr. Hawkshaw —"

"Nothing, miss, I can assure you," responded the man. "You bade me be cautious."

"Yes, yes. But Mr. Paton himself —"

“ He said nothing on the subject.”

“ It is well,” murmured Juliana, with a feeling of relief. “ By the bye, you forgot to tell me how Mr. Paton received my letter, how he looked as he read it, — in short, what impression it seemed to make upon him? ”

“ At first he looked melancholy and serious,” answered Woodman. “ Indeed, I almost thought he would weep, and when he had finished reading it, he meditated so long and with such deepening melancholy — ”

“ Ah! then the response he sent back was not instantaneously given?” said Juliana. “ It was not abrupt, nor rude, nor impetuous — ”

“ No, nothing of the sort,” rejoined Woodman. “ And yet, miss, to tell you the truth, it looked like a determination adopted with sorrow, but nevertheless irrevocably taken.”

“ Thank you, Woodman. That will do; you can retire,” and when the man had once more quitted the room, Juliana said to herself, “ After all, I do not think that Frank would say anything to do me an injury, and, as my mother has expressed it, his being with Mr. Gunthorpe is but a coincidence, — a mere coincidence, which need not trouble me.”

But still Juliana did feel uneasy. Vague misgivings continued to float in her mind, and presentiments of coming evil diffused their cold fears throughout her entire being. The more she pondered, too, on the colossal magnitude of that cheat she was about to impose upon Mr. Hawkshaw, the less confident did she feel of being enabled to carry it out successfully. And now, likewise, she began to reflect that during the last fortnight there had been something occasionally strange in the squire's manner, — that his endearments had been forced, that he had at times fixed upon her a peculiar look, that more than once he had seemed abstracted, not immediately answering the observations she was making at the moment, and that on other occasions, when they were walking in the garden or the grounds, he had turned toward her with such an abruptness that, had he been a stranger, she would have thought his intention was to deal her a sudden blow. None of these little circumstances had dwelt particularly in her memory at the time, and as they had been invariably succeeded by a renewal of endearments on Hawkshaw's part, they were soon forgotten altogether. But now that the wedding-day was so close at hand, that vague fears

and misgivings were floating in her mind, and that she stood upon the threshold of perpetrating one of the most iniquitous and abominable cheats of which a woman could be guilty, — all those little circumstances which we have hastily glanced at came back to her memory and added to her apprehensions. Her sleep that night was therefore troubled and uneasy, but when she awoke in the morning, and the sunbeams were shining in at her window, and the birds were carolling merrily in the garden-trees, and all seemed joyous and happy without, the young lady's spirits rose; and aided by her natural strength of mind, she succeeded in putting away the gloom from her soul as easily as she put back the cloud of raven hair from the bright beauty of her face. Again was she endowed with all her fortitude for a resolute perseverance in wrong-doing. She chided herself for having given way to those misgivings and presentiments of the previous evening, and she attributed to her fancy all those little peculiarities in Hawkshaw's manner which had swept like a cloud of ominous birds through the gloom of her mind.

"To-morrow is the wedding-day," she said to herself, as she looked forth from the window. "To-morrow I quit this sombre old castle to become the mistress of Hawkshaw Hall. To-day I look around, and there is not a blade of grass, a handful of earth, or a leaf upon a tree, which I can call my own; to-morrow I shall look around from another casement, and far as the eye can reach, all the broad acres I shall survey, all the fields from which the rich harvest has so lately been garnered in, and all the stately trees that embellish the wide expanse of landscape, all, all will be mine, — mine as the wife of Squire Hawkshaw of the Hall."

Thus mused Juliana to herself, and throughout the remainder of that day no more unpleasant thoughts troubled her soul. Night came. "The last night," she said to herself, "that she was to pass beneath the roof of Saxondale Castle," and if she did not close her eyes speedily in slumber, it was not because her mind was again agitated and restless; it was because she lay pondering upon the many things she should do in the new phase of existence upon which she was about to enter. When she did sleep, her dreams partook of the roseate tinge of the waking thoughts which had preceded them, and as the morning sunbeams poured

their effulgence into her chamber, she awoke with happiness still in her heart. Even Frank was scarcely regretted on this morning, — the morning of the wedding-day.

Having dressed herself, with the assistance of her maid, in an elegant *deshabillé*, Juliana descended to the breakfast-parlour, where Lady Saxondale and Lord Harold were already seated at table. Her ladyship looked pale, and though her demeanour was calm and composed as usual, yet the quick eye of Juliana could discern that her mother's countenance was not a faithful reflex of the condition of her mind. Had Lady Saxondale any misgiving floating there? Or was she secretly chagrined at losing the independence of her widowed life by the contemplated marriage into which she was more or less forced? Or was it, after all, the natural excitement only, which every woman must feel on the morning of a wedding-day? No doubt all of these had something to do with the inward fluttering which her ladyship in reality experienced, although perhaps the last-mentioned cause was the least potent or active of the three.

And what of Lord Harold Staunton? His demeanour had suddenly changed. Instead of being pale, absent, thoughtful, and abstracted, as he had for some time past appeared, he had a colour upon his cheeks, and there was a strange, almost a wild exuberance of spirits marking his speech and his looks. He laughed, he told witty anecdotes, he uttered lively jests, he rubbed his hands gleefully, and as he partook of the morning meal, he declared a dozen times that he never felt better in health or had a keener appetite in all his life. But here also the penetrating looks of Juliana discerned all that was unnatural and hollow in this mirth and in these boisterous spirits on the part of the young nobleman; and it was indeed to her a matter of mystery and wonder wherefore he should in reality be depressed, and why he should deem it necessary to assume a happiness which he felt not. Surely he need not marry Lady Saxondale unless he chose? At least so thought Juliana, and thus far she was right enough. But though she knew many things concerning her mother, she nevertheless entertained not the slightest suspicion of the existence of a certain terrible tie which bound as it were the destinies of that mother and of that young nobleman the one to the other.

The breakfast was over. It was an early one, for was there not a second, even the marriage-feast itself, to be partaken of after the nuptial ceremonies? It was now only half-past nine o'clock, and at least two hours would elapse ere the arrival of the other bridegroom, the clergyman, and the few guests who had been invited. But then there were the wedding-garments to be put on; and while Juliana retired on the one hand to her own chamber, Lady Saxondale on the other withdrew to hers, while Lord Harold went out to stroll for an hour ere he began the process of his own toilet. But at half-past eleven they were all three re-assembled in the drawing-room, and all three were apparelled in a befitting manner for the nuptial ceremonies. Doubtless many of our lady readers would like us to enter into a minute description of the wedding-dresses, but we confess our inability. Suffice it to say that they were of the richest, most tasteful, and most elegant kind, and that both mother and daughter looked grandly handsome. But was it not a hideous mockery for Juliana Farefield to appear in that virgin garb? She whose purity had been already sacrificed on the altar of lustful passion.

Soon after Lady Saxondale, Juliana, and Lord Harold Staunton — who, we should observe, was apparelled with exquisite taste, and still continued in that strange, unnatural flow of spirits — were assembled in the drawing-room at half-past eleven, Mr. Denison's carriage arrived at the castle. This gentleman, accompanied by his wife, his eldest son, and his daughter-in-law, alighted from the vehicle. Scarcely had they been escorted up to the drawing-room, when Lord Blackwater and Sir John Knightley also arrived. A third carriage brought four young ladies who were to assist as bridesmaids to Lady Saxondale and Juliana. These were four sisters, and were the cousins of the younger Mrs. Denison. Shortly after their arrival, the clergyman who was to officiate at the twofold ceremony made his appearance, and last of all — though not least of importance — came Mr. Hawkshaw. By a quarter to twelve the whole company were thus assembled in the drawing-room. The demeanour of Mr. Denison toward Juliana was precisely the same as if he were totally unacquainted with anything to her disparagement, but whatever constraint he had thus to put upon his feelings, the violence thereof was much mitigated by

the circumstance that it was only necessary to address a few complimentary words to her on first entering the apartment, as Mr. Hawkshaw soon appeared and became immediately engrossed in the attentions which he had to pay to his intended bride.

Though all were thus assembled a quarter of an hour before noon, the ceremony was not instantaneously proceeded with, inasmuch as the clergyman thought it consistent with propriety and delicacy to wait for the precise moment that had been originally appointed. And even if such had not been his view and feeling in the matter, another reason would have produced the same result, and this was advanced by Mr. Hawkshaw.

Addressing himself to Lady Saxondale as the hostess of the castle, he said, "I have to apologize to your ladyship for a liberty which I have taken —"

"Mr. Hawkshaw," observed Lady Saxondale, with the blindest and most gracious smile, "is incapable of taking a liberty, and whatever he may have done needs not this apologetic preface. I presume, my dear sir, that you have invited some friend to be present on the occasion?"

"Your ladyship has divined the exact truth," answered the squire, bowing his acknowledgments for the urbanity of her speech. "I have indeed taken this liberty. My friend will be here at noon punctually, and it will afford me the utmost gratification to introduce him to your ladyship and the company assembled."

"It will afford us equal pleasure to receive him," rejoined Lady Saxondale.

Again Mr. Hawkshaw bowed, and then retreated to his chair by the side of Juliana's.

"And pray, my dear George," she said, in a tender whisper, accompanied too with a still more tender look, "who is this friend that you expect?"

But before Mr. Hawkshaw could give any answer, the clergyman, — who was a very important personage in his own estimation, — one of those fussy kind of gentlemen who like to see everything done in a regular businesslike fashion, and who are as averse to delays as they are slow to push on the march of events, — accosted the squire, and clutching him by the arm, said, "My dear Hawkshaw, I

hope your friend will not keep us waiting. You know how punctual I am; it now wants five minutes to twelve."

"You can go and put on your robes, my dear sir," responded the squire, "for I will guarantee that as the clock strikes twelve, the friend whom I expect will be here."

"Good and well," said the clergyman, and with a very important air he issued forth from the room.

"In a few minutes, my dear Juliana," whispered the squire, "our hands will be united. Tell me, do you feel as I do upon this happy and solemn occasion?"

"Do the epithets you have used typify your feelings, my dear George?" inquired the young lady, with another tender look. "Yes, I am indeed happy; how can I be otherwise? But you have not told me who —"

"And is your mother happy likewise?" asked Hawkshaw. "But no doubt of it. Who knows but that she is even happier than yourself?"

"Happier than I?" whispered Juliana, thinking the remark singular; but when she saw that the squire's countenance expressed only its wonted frankness of good-humour, she smiled, observing, "What could be the meaning of that remark you have just made?"

"Simply this, my dear girl, that your mother has passed through the same ceremony before."

"Ah! I comprehend," observed Juliana, laughing. "But you have not as yet told me who it is you expect."

"And so you really experience a happiness without alloy?" quickly resumed the squire, who appeared not to notice that renewal of a question which still remained unanswered. "Is it not the most important occasion of one's life?"

"Yes, and hence that certain degree of solemnity," replied Juliana, "which mingles with the happiness of one's thoughts."

"Chastening one's happiness without subduing it," added Hawkshaw.

At this moment the clergyman reëntered the room, dressed in his canonicals, and glancing quickly around, he perceived no addition to the company whom he had left when he went forth a few minutes back. Advancing straight up to the squire, he said, "Your friend is not come yet, Hawkshaw."

"Nor have you told me," said Juliana, "who he is."



But ere the squire had time to utter a syllable of response to either of the remarks thus addressed to him, the clock over the entrance of the castle began to proclaim the hour of noon, the door of the apartment was thrown wide open, and the footman announced, in a loud voice, "The Marquis of Eagledean!"

## CHAPTER XXXVI

### THE RESULT

THE reader may conceive far more easily than we can possibly describe the effect produced upon Lady Saxondale, Juliana and Lord Harold Staunton, when in the nobleman who was thus ushered into their presence, they recognized Mr. Gunthorpe. The mother and daughter felt a vague terror seize upon them, shooting through them indeed like an excruciating pang, but Lord Harold was struck with downright dismay. All the indignities which his uncle had sustained at his hand when he had fancied him to be plain Mr. Gunthorpe rushed to his mind, and he was paralyzed, — rendered motionless as a statue.

Mr. Denison, starting up from his chair, rushed forward to seize the hand of the marquis, and those two old friends exchanged warm but rapid greetings. Mr. Hawkshaw, without throwing a single look upon Juliana, likewise rose from his seat, and Mr. Denison at once introduced him to Lord Eagledean. There were then more claspings of hands, but from the circumstance of this introduction it became clearly apparent to the lookers-on, that if the marquis was really the friend whom Mr. Hawkshaw expected, they were at all events strangers to each other until now.

Mrs. Denison the elder, her son, and her daughter-in-law had been admitted into the secret of all this, and they now exchanged significant looks. But the four bridesmaids, Lord Blackwater, and Sir John Knightley, as well as the clergyman, were almost completely at a loss to understand why the appearance of the marquis could be so very far from agreeable to Lady Saxondale, Juliana, and Lord Harold, as it evidently was. Of course they knew that Lord Harold was that nobleman's nephew, but they could scarcely con-

ceive that such a marriage had been resolved upon without the consent of the marquis. The only explanation they could possibly fall upon in the way of conjecture was that the facts were the reverse, — that the marquis had not been previously informed of the engagement, that he did not approve of it, and that he came to prevent it. But then, why should Hawkshaw, her ladyship's intended son-in-law, have played such a seemingly perfidious part in reference to this expected guest whom he himself confessed to have invited?

Lord Harold Staunton, quickly recovering his presence of mind, and resolving to put a good face upon the matter, now hastened up to his uncle, when the greetings between that nobleman, Denison, and Hawkshaw were over, and he made a movement as if to embrace his relative. But the marquis, bending upon him a stern look, said, "Before I receive you to my arms, Harold, I must know whether it be as a dutiful and obedient nephew that I am to welcome you, or whether you will persevere in your own course, despite whatsoever counsel or commands I may give?"

Lord Harold was taken completely aback by this mode of address; his effrontery suddenly abandoned him, and he stood still, gazing in speechless bewilderment upon the marquis, so that the scene was rapidly deepening in interest to all the lookers-on.

Meanwhile a sudden idea had flashed to the brain of Juliana, — that brain which during the first moments after the appearance of Lord Eagledean was racked with the most excruciating tortures. Gliding from her seat to the spot where Lady Saxondale had stood up from her own when the door was first flung open, she whispered, with nervous excitement in her mother's ear, "I understand it all! The Patons — brother and sister — are the children of this marquis. It is self-evident. If he means mischief, it is for you to strike him dumb."

Lady Saxondale gave her daughter a quick glance of intelligence, and now finding it necessary to take some decisive step, she assumed an air of dignified affability, advanced toward the marquis, and said, "My lord, as the friend of Mr. Denison and of Mr. Hawkshaw, you are welcome at Saxondale Castle."

The Marquis of Eagledean bowed with cold dignity.

Mr. Denison and Hawkshaw had retreated somewhat when they beheld her ladyship approaching, and she, sweeping around her eyes to convince herself that the opportunity was favourable, suddenly bent forward and whispered, in a hurried manner, "The reputation of your daughter Elizabeth is in my hands."

No doubt the Marquis of Eagledean was fully prepared for some such threat as this, because he well knew, too well knew, that Lady Saxondale was aware of Elizabeth Paton's antecedents, and therefore he was not taken aback. He showed no sign of annoyance. Not a muscle of his countenance moved; indeed his demeanour continued so coldly reserved, so chillingly dignified, that Lady Saxondale fancied the arrow had not struck home, and that Juliana's surmise in respect to the Patons being the children of the marquis was an erroneous one. Terror seized upon her; her guilty conscience suddenly raised up all her crimes to pass in rapid array before her mental vision. And what if the Marquis of Eagledean had become acquainted with any of these? What if he knew more than the one circumstance concerning which he had previously threatened her: namely, her affair with William Deveril? In short, Lady Saxondale, perceiving how calmly and unconcernedly the Marquis of Eagledean received the menace which she had thrown out in respect to Elizabeth Paton was seized with the direst apprehension. On no occasion did her fortitude so completely abandon her all in an instant. Throwing a look of earnest appeal upon the marquis, she said, "My lord, perhaps in consideration of the alliance about to take place between your lordship's nephew and my humble self, it would please you to have some private discourse with me — Perhaps your lordship has come for that purpose — In short, it would be better for us to retire to another room for a few minutes."

"No, Lady Saxondale, not immediately," replied the marquis, with the air and in the voice of one who seemed to feel that he had both the power and the right to speak with authority. "Permit me, however, to sit next to your ladyship for a little while, and then, when the time comes, we may have some private conversation together."

With these words the Marquis of Eagledean offered Lady Saxondale his hand, and conducted her to an ottoman at

the farther extremity of the spacious drawing-room; where, placing himself by her side, he hastily whispered in a manner audible to themselves alone, "You would do well, Lady Saxondale, to follow my bidding on the present occasion."

Her ladyship felt a cold tremor sweep through her entire form, as her guilty conscience again marshalled all her crimes in grim array before her mental vision, and she knew not with how many details of that dark and damning catalogue the marquis might be acquainted. So she said not a word, but he read in her looks that the proud and haughty woman was completely subdued, and that she was pliant and ductile to his will. We should observe that the spot to which he had conducted her, and where they were thus seated together, was the farthest removed from the assembled company, so that whatever he might now say to her, stood no chance of being overheard by any others present.

Meanwhile Lord Harold Staunton, not knowing how to act or what to think, had retired apart from the rest, and seating himself in a window recess, folded his arms, endeavouring to appear calm and unconcerned, but was evidently much troubled in mind. For he too had a guilty conscience, he too was tortured with fears lest his uncle should have obtained a clue to the full measure of his turpitude, and if for a moment the idea again struck him of putting on a bold countenance and assuming an air of bravado, his heart failed him, he could not do it, he was cowed, dismayed, overawed. And now, therefore, all that cheerfulness of spirits which had seemed to inspire him in the morning — an unnatural cheerfulness, the forced effort of a peculiarly morbid state of mind — gave way and yielded to despondency, suspense, and alarm.

After Juliana had accosted her mother in the manner above described, and had whispered that rapid hint in her ear, she returned to her seat, but Mr. Hawkshaw did not resume his place by her side. She saw her mother approach the Marquis of Eagledean, she beheld her ladyship seize an opportunity to whisper something to that nobleman, she could guess what it was, she herself having furnished the hint, and she was thoroughly disconcerted on perceiving how lost it seemed to be upon the marquis. Thus she observed the sudden change which came over Lady Saxondale, and she saw that her mother was afraid. As the marquis

led her ladyship to the farther extremity of the room, Juliana followed them with her eyes. She could scarcely comprehend what all this meant, and presentiments of coming evil once more took possession of her soul. She glanced toward Hawkshaw; he was now conversing in hurried whispers with Mr. Denison, and there was something in both their countenances but little calculated to reassure Juliana or cheer her spirits. She had never seen Hawkshaw look as he now did; she had never seen such an expression of dark implacability and inexorable sternness upon that countenance whose aspect was habitually of such open-hearted and good-humoured frankness. In a word, she now apprehended everything terrible, — exposure, disgrace, and ruin. She would have sprung from her seat and quitted the room, but she had not the power; she was transfixed there. The consternation which was now upon her was of paralyzing influence, — her limbs felt as if turned into marble.

It has taken us a considerable time to give all these explanations, but in reality only a few minutes had as yet elapsed since the Marquis of Eagledean was so suddenly announced. The lookers-on were still for the most part lost in bewilderment, but it was evident enough that there was a storm-cloud which was about to burst. The clergyman, feeling himself somewhat awkward, — being in full canonicals, and all signs of the intended marriage rites having as it were suddenly died away, — was resolved to bring the present uncertain aspect of things to an issue, if possible, and approaching Mr. Hawkshaw, he said, “ You perceive that I am in readiness to commence the ceremony.”

“ Ah!” ejaculated the squire, and a very strange expression passed over his countenance. “ You would wed me to Miss Farefield, is it not so? ”

Those who understood nothing of the undercurrent of that new turn which the proceedings seemed to have taken since the entrance of the Marquis of Eagledean were naturally astonished at what appeared to be so extraordinary an observation on the part of the squire; but Juliana was smitten with a more terrible dismay, if possible, than that which had already seized upon her.

“ Ladies and gentlemen,” continued Mr. Hawkshaw, placing himself in the middle of the room, “ I must crave

your attention for a few minutes. When an honest man gives his heart to a young lady, — and when he likewise proffers her his hand, purposing to bestow upon her the unsullied name which descended to him from his forefathers, as well as a share in all he possesses, — it is but right and just to suppose that he will be met in the same frank and generous confidence by the young lady herself. If she be aware of any impediment which in a moral, if not a legal, point of view should prevent her from responding in the affirmative to her suitor's proposal, should she not honourably decline it, even though she were to keep the reason closely locked up in her own heart? But what will you think, ladies and gentlemen, of a young lady, who, loving another, — who, having given her heart to that other, and more, who having surrendered up her purity to that other, — should nevertheless consent to become the wife of this honest and confiding man who loved her so faithfully but so blindly."

Mr. Hawkshaw paused, and there was an indescribable sensation pervading the apartment. Juliana herself was almost annihilated. She sank back, covered with shame, filled with confusion, devoured with feelings which defy all description. She would have given worlds to be enabled to fly from the apartment, but she could not. Such was the state of her mind that she was as powerless and helpless as if physically a statue.

"This is too much — too much," said Lady Saxondale, who felt that the exposure of her daughter's shame would to a certain extent redound upon herself; and forgetting for an instant all her own sources of terror, she was about to spring up from the ottoman and rush forward to do something, anything, though she knew not what, to put an end to this most painful scene, but she felt herself held back.

"Your ladyship must remain here," said the marquis, in a low tone, but he spoke and he looked in a manner which rendered her again fearfully alive to the perils, whether real or imaginary, of her own position; so she sank back with confusion in her brain, terror in her soul, and torture in every nerve.

"Ladies and gentlemen," resumed Mr. Hawkshaw, in accents more implacable than those which he had hitherto used, "this is no common case, and therefore I am taking

no common course to expose it. It was sought to make me a dupe, to deceive me most grossly, to render this marriage a cloak for the most shameful profligacy, to turn the name of husband into a convenience to shield the part which it was hoped a paramour would play. Juliana Farefield," continued Hawkshaw, speaking in a voice of thunder, "I accuse you of all this. I will not mention that other name, unless you yourself choose to parade it, but I will tell you that I heard all that took place in the conservatory at my friend Denison's house. I saw upon what a precipice I stood. Rage filled my heart; a feeling sprang up within me, which I had never known before: it was a craving for revenge. Ah, then I mastered my emotions, or at least the outward expression of them, for my resolve was promptly and suddenly taken. In a word, I determined to see how you would act, to continue with you as if I knew nothing, to see if remorse would smite you, — and then to proceed accordingly. No, you have experienced no remorse; you would this day have given me your polluted hand, and hence this vengeance, hence this exposure. It is terrible, I know, but it is not more than you deserve. Had you been less guilty, it would seem an unmanly and a cowardly part which I am now performing. But you had no pity for me; you would have become my wife with the preconceived and deliberate intention of violating your marriage vows. You are not a woman; you deserve not the consideration usually given to your sex; you are a fiend in female shape, and it is thus you are treated."

There was a terrible energy in Hawkshaw's words, and the sensation they created, as the reader may suppose, was immense. But scarcely had he finished this speech — scarcely had the sounds of his crushingly denunciatory language died away — when a cry burst from Juliana's lips. She could endure it no longer. She was becoming mad, and springing from her seat, she bounded to the door. But Mr. Hawkshaw, still merciless and implacable, was by her side in a moment, and catching her by the wrist, he thundered forth, "Come forward, infamous creature! You have yet another ordeal to pass through. Your punishment is not complete. Remain, while I read a letter which was addressed to you by him whom you sought to retain as a paramour while taking me as a husband. This letter was



written in the presence of Mr. Denison, and it confirms all that I have said."

"No, no!" shrieked forth Juliana. "I will not—I cannot. Kill me if you choose, but spare me a further infliction!"

There was a wild agony in her accents, a piteous anguish in her looks, which moved the hearts of some present to compassion; and a murmur arose, which, without definite expression, nevertheless intelligibly conveyed an opinion that the squire was sufficiently avenged.

"Well, then," he said, disdainfully tossing away from him the arm which he had grasped violently and had held firmly, "begone! Perhaps it were best for the sake of these ladies here that you should relieve them of your polluted presence."

But the door had closed behind Juliana even before the indignant and excited Hawkshaw had finished his sentence.

"My lord," said Lady Saxondale, in a low voice, but replete with ineffable anguish, "my daughter will commit suicide, she will destroy herself, permit me to hasten to her, I conjure you!"

"Yes, speed after her," replied the Marquis of Eagledean, smitten with the truth of Lady Saxondale's apprehension, and in another moment she also had disappeared from the apartment.

But let it be understood that though she certainly thought it quite probable that Juliana would be driven to self-destruction by the tremendous exposure which had just taken place, it was not this that had distressed her; she had caught at the pretext in order to escape from a room where her own position had become perfectly intolerable.

"Ladies and gentlemen," resumed Mr. Hawkshaw, "it pains me to occupy your time in such a manner, but for my own justification must I read this letter, suppressing only the signature that is appended to it. For I feel that the course I have taken is indeed so extraordinary and of such an extreme character, that if one single tittle of the accusations made by me against Juliana Farefield could be disproved, — or, on the other hand, could not be supported by evidence, — I should deserve to be branded as an unmanly coward, — as a mean and paltry dastard. I beseech your

attention, therefore, for a few minutes,—only a few minutes.”

He stopped short. A dead silence reigned, but curiosity was depicted on the countenance of almost everybody present, and therefore Mr. Hawkshaw proceeded to read aloud the letter which he drew forth from his pocket, and the contents of which were as follows:

“JULIANA:—Everything is completely at an end between us. It is impossible that I can look upon your conduct otherwise than with horror and aversion. You have mistaken me; I am not so depraved as yourself. On the contrary, I thank God I possess feelings honourable enough and sentiments generous enough to save me from connivance in the detestable cheat which you proposed to practise toward a confiding gentleman. Deeply do I deplore the weakness of which I myself have been guilty, but into which you beguiled me. I understand you now, all too well. Never did I deem it possible that a young lady of high intelligence, excellent education, and with every faculty to appreciate the difference between right and wrong could become so utterly depraved and so deeply profligate as you have shown yourself to be. I am shocked when I think that when you had once revealed your true nature, I could have been weak or insensate enough to throw myself in your way again. What! you dared insult me with the proposal that when you were married to another, I should become your pensioned paramour? You dared insult me with a proposition which by the mere fact of its being made proved that you thought me as vile and infamous as yourself? No, Juliana, I am not. I have awakened from a dream. I tear your image from my heart, but only to trample it under foot,—to tread it down deep in the mire as that of a polluted and loathsome creature.”

Thus ended the letter, save and except the signature, which Mr. Hawkshaw suppressed. Again did a profound silence prevail. The bridesmaids exchanged looks of mingled wonder and stupefaction; Lord Blackwater and Sir John Knightley gazed on each other as if to ask whether it were not all a dream; the clergyman stalked out of the room, in cold and offended dignity, to put off his canonicals. The

Denisons rose with the evident intention of taking a prompt departure. Lord Harold Staunton, to whom all Juliana's wickedness was as new and as startling as to most others present, sat confounded, forgetting everything except the monstrous revelations he had just heard. As for the Marquis of Eagledean, he likewise remained seated on the ottoman at a distance, and appeared to be wrapped up in profound and mournful reflection. Such too was the case, for he thought with deep sorrow of his daughter's past career, which had enabled Lady Saxondale to throw out that menace at him, and he likewise pondered with regret upon the amour of his son with Juliana Farefield.

Suddenly arousing himself from this reverie, the Marquis of Eagledean rose from his seat, walked straight up to Lord Harold Staunton, and placing his hand upon his shoulder, said, in a low but authoritative voice, "Nephew, follow me."

The young nobleman started, and for an instant looked vacantly up at his uncle, for it appeared to him a dream that the Mr. Gunthorpe, whom he had plundered and insulted, should be really and truly identical with the Marquis of Eagledean. But being thus recalled to the full consciousness of those circumstances by which he was surrounded, he rose from his seat, and followed his lordship from the room. When they were on the landing outside, the marquis said, "You are better acquainted, Harold, with the interior of Saxondale Castle than I am; lead the way to some apartment where we may converse without fear of interruption."

"Will you come to my own chamber?" asked Lord Harold, and on the marquis nodding an assent, he led the way thither.















