

COUNTRY CURATE.

BY THE

AUTHOR OF "THE SUBALTERN,

&c. &c.

A man he was to all the country dear,
And passing rich with forty pounds a year.

GOLDSMITH.

REVISED, CORRECTED,
AND ILLUSTRATED WITH A NEW PREFACE,
BY THE AUTHOR.

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PREFACE

TO THE PRESENT EDITION.

MY Publisher has requested me to prepare a Preface for a new edition of "The Country Curate," which he is about to introduce into THE STANDARD NOVELS. Little is, however, left for me to say respecting the origin of these Tales, in addition to the short account which I considered it necessary to give in the Advertisement to former editions. They are all founded on real occurrences; though the reader will easily understand that, in most cases, the amount of truth is, as compared to the amount of fiction, like Falstaff's "hap'orth of bread to his gallons of sack."

The original of the Poacher was (and, for aught I know to the contrary, still is,) an old man in the parish of Westwell, in Kent, by name Joe Skinner. His cottage, which I have visited a hundred times, corresponded both in its internal and external appearance to that described in the text; and to the accurate resemblance of his personal habits to those of the imaginary Simon Lee there is not a gamekeeper in all the country round who is unable to bear witness. I am not, indeed, aware that he ever moved in a circle more elevated than that of the day labourer: but I remember well his pride, his honourable pride, which made him shrink from the

idea of receiving parochial relief; as well as the casuistry with which he argued, in all companies, in defence of the moral fitness of poaching. "God made the birds of the air, and the wild beasts of the field, for the poor as well as for the rich," were his own words, repeated to me over and over again; "and as long as I can wield a gun or set a snare I will have my share of them."

I never knew a more honest or industrious man than this poacher upon principle. Put any species of property under his charge, and you might go to sleep with the firm assurance that you would find it in the morning where you left it at night. Set him about a piece of work, and whether you paid him by the day or by the job, he would always do you justice. I frequently employed him in my garden, and I never had cause to find fault with his lack of industry. There was another peculiarity about him, of which I became on one occasion the unwilling spectator. He endured bodily pain like a stoic. I saw him once, while striking with a bill-hook at the limb of a tree, miss the branch, and drive the weapon upon his own wrist, which he laid bare to the bone. He coolly wrapped a handkerchief round the wound, and would have gone on with his work, had I not insisted upon his getting the hurt dressed by a surgeon.

Joe had a large family of sons and daughters, whom he brought up to follow his own habits; for even the girls, at least when I knew them, were perfectly acquainted with all the mysteries of snaring. It is scarcely necessary to add, that he and his boys were almost as familiar with the interior of the county gaol as with that of their own cabin. He was, however, incor-

rigible; and if the catastrophe with which my tale winds up did not actually occur, the circumstance is attributable rather to the forbearance of the keepers than to the exercise of any caution on the part of the Skinners.

The idea of the Smugglers was suggested to me by the condition of a family in the parish of Ash; of which, however, I do not conceive that I should be justified in saying more, than that the father is now a convict in New South Wales, the mother a degraded drunkard, and the children paupers. They were once people of some property.

Of the Miser I have already taken notice. His name was Williams. He served a cure for many years in Romney Marsh, and saved, by a life of penury, enough to purchase back a small estate in Wales, which had been in his family time out of mind. He went back, took possession, and was found dead in his bed on the morning after his arrival.

For the original of the Schoolmistress I must again go back to Westwell. She was an amiable and a gentle girl, whom I myself trained up to teach, under her mother, a national school; and she died at the early age of eighteen. Her mother did not long survive her.

I should but weary the reader's patience were I to describe the minute facts round which the details of the other stories have been woven. Let me, therefore, be content to remind him, that he who has the care of a large parish, and goes about, as he ought to do, among his people, cannot fail, if he keep his eyes open, to see a thousand things which have the power of calling the imagination into play, almost involuntarily.

To myself the associations connected with these tales are distinct enough ; but I could not hope to lay them open to others, and I therefore abstain from further allusion to them.

In conclusion, I have only to thank the public for the kind reception which these volumes have received

London, April 10. 1834.

ADVERTISEMENT.

OF the following sketches there is not one which cannot lay claim to be founded upon fact, whilst there are several which deserve to be received as little more than plain narratives of real occurrences. The Miser, for example, will, I doubt not, be recognised by many persons now living in the Weald of Kent; the Poacher flourished not long ago in a village not far from Ashford, in the same county; the Smuggler ran his risks within the memory of the last generation; and even the Parish Apprentice is no creation of the fancy. His history is given, almost as it is given here, in an old volume of the Scots Magazine; only that he is stated to have perpetrated his crimes not in Kent, but in Yorkshire. I mention these facts in order to shield myself from the charge of devising fables too monstrous for credibility; and to convince my readers, that actual every-day life teems with adventures not less extraordinary than are recorded in the pages of the poet or romance writer.

I have only to add, that the plan of this work was devised several years ago; that the Introduction, with three of the tales, appeared in Blackwood's Magazine; and that the substance of a fourth was given in Friendship's Offering, for 1827.

November, 1829.

THE
COUNTRY CURATE.

INTRODUCTION.

THE ordinary traveller who journeys from London to Paris, and who is not greatly in the habit of diverging from the beaten track, — who neither sees, nor desires to see, more of the country through which he passes, than the fields on each side of the highway may chance to present, — can form no idea of the rude and romantic scenery which is occasionally to be met with, even in the southern county of Kent. I am not quite sure that the border districts of Scotland itself can boast of glens more striking, or hills more wild and pastoral, than are to be found in this the cultivated garden of England. The general aspect of the country is, indeed, rather beautiful than grand; swelling downs, luxuriant corn-fields, rich hop-gardens, and exquisite hedgerows, furnishing the more customary features in a Kentish landscape. But Kent is not altogether deficient in what deserves to be ranked as the sublime; and it may be worth while to inform this wandering generation whereabouts it behoves them to look for it.

Soon after he has passed the racecourse on Barham Downs, the wayfaring man will arrive at a sort of by-road, which, striking off from the highway in a direction to the right, winds between a couple of fir plantations that skirt the extremities of Denne Hill and Broom. Let him pursue this path without hesitation. It leads across a wild country to Folkestone and Hythe; and it conducts to the very glens and hills of which notice has just been given.

As he goes on he will perceive a change in the aspect of external things, not less remarkable, perhaps, than any which he may have previously noted. Cultivation will soon end with him, or, if it continue at all, it will be in that melancholy state which seems to indicate that the plough ought never to have reached those regions, over which Nature, and Nature alone, had asserted her supremacy. He will see, it is true, a few spots here and there broken up on the side of a bleak hill, but even in these, the ploughshare has cast up gravel, rather than soil : whilst round them, and above them, all is pasturage, if not rankly luxuriant, at least abundant — short thick grass, such as grows along the sides of the Ochils, or over the summits of the Lomonds. This is the general covering of the hills. Few trees flourish here, and the few that are, consist of dwarf fir and stunted oak ; whilst, from time to time, abrupt precipices of white chalk intervene, as if to diversify the extent of green which might otherwise pall upon the eye.

In a pastoral country like this, it is probably needless to say, that glens and valleys of a very striking appearance run in all directions among the waving hills. The road, indeed, winds, in more places than one, along the summit of as beautiful a vale as the crowding in of grass-covered eminences is capable of producing. In general, these valleys are narrow, resembling ravines rather than glens ; and the only herbage which grows to any height down them, is the fern and the gorse. But they are often deep ; it may be a couple of hundred feet or more from the level of the pathway, whilst the hills which surround them arise to perhaps the same altitude above the head of the gazer. He who wishes to visit this country at an advantageous season, is recommended to choose, not the height of summer, but the spring, or the fall of the year. A bright sunshine suits not such scenery. In its blaze, you see things too plainly : even a mountain, however lofty, being but half a mountain when you can distinguish a sheep upon its summit. The traveller who is really in earnest in looking out for the sublime, is accordingly advised to traverse the Folkestone hills, whilst a storm of rain and wind is abroad. If the blast drive directly in his face, so much the better. But

failing the happy occurrence of such a storm, let him at least select a day of thick fog. Then, when the tops of the hills are shrouded, and the bottoms of the glens invisible, he may very well be pardoned, whether a cockney or not, if he fancy himself, not among the downs of Kent, but among the wildest productions of uncultivated nature.

In one of the most striking of these glens, the last indeed which occurs before you obtain a view of Folkestone and of the British Channel, stands the church and parsonage of St. Alphage. They are the only buildings distinctly visible to the traveller; and to see even these, he must abandon the beaten track, and swerve considerably to the right. They lie at the very gorge of a deep dark vale, just where it seems to end in a narrow pass, which, winding away around the elbow of a green hill, conducts you know not whither. The church is an old-fashioned, unassuming structure, built of round shingle-stones, called boulders, and covered over with the flat gray stone, which our forefathers were in the habit of using instead of slate. It belongs to no class of architecture whatever; it is neither Saxon nor Gothic; though, if pointed arches in the doors and windows be undeniable proofs of Gothic architecture, they are certainly to be found here. There is no steeple attached to it; a little wooden belfry, in which hangs a single bell, being meant to represent one; and the entire temple, including its gallery, is capable of containing, provided they sit close, perhaps three hundred people.

This little edifice is surrounded by a churchyard, which, for the extremely good taste in which it is preserved, might serve as a model to the cemeteries of many more assuming houses of God. It is begirt by a wooden paling, painted purely white, in which the traveller, let him view it when he may, will perceive neither break nor dilapidation. Four gravel-walks run from the four corners of the fence, where neat gates are suspended; and meet, or rather end, in a broader walk which surrounds the church itself. A few aged yews are scattered, apparently at random, among the graves; and a row of elms adorns that side of the square which looks towards the vicarage. But there are no gorgeous monuments here; no spots railed round, as if the

ashes of one man were too pure to be mingled with the ashes of another ; an air of primitive equality is spread, on the contrary, over the place, where, if ever it is to be sought for at all, it ought surely to be found. Even head and foot-stones are not very abundant in the churchyard of St. Alphage, and such as appear mark the resting-places of men who filled no higher rank in society than that of graziers or pilots ; whilst of wooden crosses a more than usual proportion exists, all of which seem to be objects of care and veneration to the parishioners.

I confess myself to be one of those who are prone to form a judgment of the habits and dispositions of men in a country place, from the degree of respect which they pay to the graves of their fathers. When I behold a churchyard kept as is that just described, I am apt to think kindly of the inhabitants of the parish, as an innocent and unviolated race of people. When, on the contrary, the village churchyard forms the playground for their children ; when its fences are broken down, and the green sod torn from its little mounds ; when the yews, which its former owners planted, are stripped of their branches, not by time, but by the hands of rude urchins ; and when, in addition to these marks of carelessness, proofs of petty pride present themselves in the shape of tombs clumsily constructed and vilely inscribed, I cannot divest my mind of the persuasion, that the people are dissolute and cold-hearted ; that the odious distinctions of modern society have made too much progress among them ; and that the farmers are grinding and vain, the peasantry drunken and dishonest. No doubt I have been sometimes deceived in these conclusions ; but I have much more frequently found them to be correct.

Divided only by its neat garden from the western side of the churchyard, stands the vicarage-house, the very representative of what English vicarages were wont to be in the days of our great-grandfathers. It is a cottage of one story high, containing two little parlours, a kitchen, and a few closets on the ground-floor ; whilst three excellent garrets, rendered more commodious by their storm windows, furnish all the dormitory considered necessary for the family of an humble vicar. Of its parlours, indeed, the little green-room

which looks into the garden behind, is, comparatively speaking, a modern addition; whilst a long wash-house, or scullery, has likewise been tacked-on, of late, to one of the gables, more as a matter of convenience than of ornament. Nevertheless, the general appearance of the mansion — with its tiled roof, its walls white as the drifted snow, except in those parts where they are covered with jessamine and china-roses — its green entrance door, ornamented by narrow window-lights on each side, and its little leaded casements — cannot fail to attract the notice of him who loves to think of religion as the parent of peace and humility; and of its teachers, not as mingling with the great and the titled of the land, but as setting an example of meekness and lowliness of heart to their several congregations.

In perfect keeping with the size and construction of the house, are the grounds by which it is surrounded. Here are no extensive lawns, so laid out as to require the constant attention of a couple of gardeners to hinder them from running wild and bringing discredit on the taste of the proprietor; no beds of foreign and expensive flowers show their gaudy colours to the sun; nor have the trees which gird the little paddock and inclose the garden been brought from afar. A meadow, containing, perhaps, three acres of land, forms at once the glebe and the domain of the vicar. It lies chiefly in front, and on the right of the parsonage; only a narrow strip winding round the left, to join the garden with the churchyard; and it is begirt by a well-trimmed hawthorn hedge, which is never suffered to exceed the height of four feet from the ground. In the centre of this hedge, and directly opposite to the door of the house, is a green swing gate, on opening which, and passing through the meadow, you come to another little hedge, drawn, at the distance of perhaps twenty feet, entirely round the vicarage. Within this a belt of genuine English shrubs — of lilacs, laburnums, guelder-roses, mountain ash, and filberts, is planted, which overshadow, on each side, a gravel-walk, and embosom the cottage in their green leaves. On the left, however, the belt swells out into a little thicket, concealing the stable and other offices attached; beside which grow several taller trees such as

the fir, the beech, and the poplar; while behind the thicket is a little fish-pond, having a well-trimmed grass-walk carried round it, and several elegant weeping willows dropping their tresses into the water. Such are, properly speaking, its pleasure grounds; and if to this be added a kitchen-garden, well filled with apple and plum trees, and bisected by a broad turf-walk, on each side of which grow roses and hyacinths, and lilies of the valley, with violets and bluebells, and here and there a lofty hollyhock — a tolerably correct notion will be formed, even by such as never have, and never may behold the place itself, of the unassuming vicarage of St. Alphage.

In this secluded spot dwelt for fifteen years one of the most kind-hearted and pious individuals of whom the church of England has cause to boast. Of him the world knew nothing. Like other men, he was ambitious of fame when he first started into life; but misfortunes, neither romantic nor uncommon, taught him to curb his ambition, and to seek for happiness, not in this world, but in a better. It is to him, indeed, more than to any other person, that the vicarage of St. Alphage owes all of simple beauty which is around it. There is not a shrub upon the premises which was not planted by his hand; and the elms which adorn the churchyard form the only monument which his modesty would suffer to be raised to his memory. As I have undertaken the care of his papers, and propose to make the public acquainted with their contents, it may not be amiss if I premise that task with some account of the author. Not that the life of a country curate can have in it much of general interest, — and the life of my friend was not greatly different from that of other curates, — but his sketches being for the most part sombre, it appears but reasonable to assign some cause why melancholy subjects should have taken a faster hold upon his mind than subjects of a lighter nature: and that, I think, the detail of his own brief career will effect.

CHAPTER I.

THE PASTOR.

ABRAHAM WILLIAMS, the subject of this memoir, was the son of a clergyman in North Wales, whose preferment, though not extensive, enabled him to support in gentility and apparent comfort a family which consisted only of his wife and two children. Of the latter Abraham was the elder by four years, the girl having been born, as Benjamin was born to Jacob, in the old age of her father ; for Mr. Williams, like many other English clergymen, had found it impossible to marry till he was considerably advanced in life. Neither he nor his wife were scions of any noble stock. She was the daughter of a retired major in the army, and he the representative of a long line of ancestors, who had all followed the profession to which he was himself devoted ; and who had succeeded, generally after thirty or forty years' apprenticeship, in obtaining some small rectory, or poor vicarage, from the bishop of the diocese, or from the colleges of which they were members.

Mr. Williams, the father of my much respected friend, was among the number of those whose benefices were bestowed upon them by their colleges. For five and twenty years he had held a fellowship in Jesus College, Oxford, in which house of conviviality and good-humour no one was more good-humoured and convivial than he ; and as he obtained the situation almost as soon as he took his degree, no opportunity was afforded him of learning the important lesson, that he whose subsistence depends wholly upon a life annuity, ought never, at least, to exceed it. The consequence was, that when, at the age of fifty-three, the worthy man found a college-living at his option, and himself thereby enabled to fulfil a loving engagement of some twenty years' standing, he prepared to occupy the one and to make good the other, not, indeed, encumbered with heavy debts, but without possessing money enough to

defray the expenses attendant upon induction, the payment of the first-fruits, and the purchase of a licence. His preferment was not, however, rated highly in the King's Books, and the price of a licence was then more reasonable than it is at present ; so he borrowed twenty guineas from a friend, and went with that sum in his pocket to marry a wife and to take possession of his benefice.

Mrs. Williams's fortune, which amounted to two hundred and fifty pounds, barely sufficed to furnish the parsonage, and to purchase such conveniences, both in-doors and out, as were considered indispensable to the rectorial establishment. The good rector accordingly began his wedded career without one sixpence in his purse to defray the daily cost of housekeeping ; and hence, long before tithe-day came round, the sum total of the proceeds of his rectory was absolutely forestalled to meet current expenses. But Mr. Williams was too good-hearted and too thoughtless to regard this. As soon as the compositions came in, they were paid away to last year's creditors, and the necessaries for the year in-coming were procured, as those of the year preceding had been procured, upon trust. By this means there was one day in every three hundred and sixty-five, at the return of which he could boast of being clear with the world ; and there was not one hour in the course of twelve long months, when he could truly affirm that he was worth a-penny.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Williams were, however, blessed with that calmness of temper, which hindered them from anticipating evils, and from embittering a present enjoyment by any over-cautious prying into futurity. Occasionally, indeed, the latter, who was several years younger than her husband, would remind him of the uncertainty of human life, and advise him to curtail his expenses, in order that he might save something for his family in case he should be prematurely called away. But to exhortations of this kind the good man would reply by recommending an implicit trust in Providence, which never, he said, deserts the righteous man, or suffers his children to beg their bread. It was likewise a maxim with him, that the clergy have no right to accumulate fortunes for their

families out of the proceeds of their livings. "We are stewards of the poor," added he, "and society, in all its branches, has peculiar claims upon us. We ought not to live unsociably, because, by avoiding a friendly intercourse with our neighbours, we withdraw from them that example which it is our duty to set even in our hours of hilarity; whilst, in matters of charity, he who comes not freely forward himself, cannot reasonably expect that his preaching or admonitions will have much weight with others." Perhaps the worthy rector carried his ideas on these heads somewhat too far; but his broad view of the duties of a parish priest were correct; and they are, I will venture to say, entertained to this hour by no trifling majority of his much-slandered brethren.

When such were his abstract notions of things, it will readily be believed, that Mr. Williams's practice in no respect contradicted them. Even against the wandering beggar his door was never shut. To the poor and the sick among his own flock he was a father and a friend; whilst his bread, his cheese, his cold meat, and his beer, were at the command of all who chose to visit his kitchen. Being of a cheerful and happy temperament, too, he freely met the advances of what is called a respectable and wealthy neighbourhood, among whom his gentlemanly manners and cultivated mind rendered him at all times an agreeable visitant. Thus, upon a rectory of five hundred pounds per annum, was the father of my friend accustomed to keep up an establishment, and to support appearances, which it would have been scarcely prudent to support, had his estate been a real one; whilst his children, educated in the midst of seeming abundance, ran no slight risk of acquiring notions very little in agreement with their future fortunes.

The first eighteen years of Abraham's life were not marked by the occurrence of any incident worthy to be recorded. During their progress, he had resided constantly at home, and was well instructed in classical and mathematical lore by his father, whose most anxious wish was, that he might be admitted into holy orders, and elected to a fellowship at Jesus, before he himself should go hence and be no more seen. As a necessary consequence upon

this system of domestic culture, the lad grew up with feelings of the warmest attachment to his relations ; and another tie was also formed, which, though pure and sacred in itself, effectually defeated, by its melancholy issue, the only chance which the son of an unknown country clergyman possessed, of making his way in the profession which had been chalked out for him.

Not far from the residence of Mr. Williams dwelt a widow lady of the name of Evans, who, with an only daughter, inhabited a neat cottage, and subsisted upon a scanty pittance, which her husband, the former incumbent of the parish, had left. Julia Evans was two years younger than Abraham, a gentle, delicate, and retiring creature ; in whose soft blue eye, and exquisitely pure complexion, the most common observer might behold the prognostications of a premature dissolution. She was the sole surviving child of seven, who had all, one after another, dropped into their graves, just as their parents began to count upon their attaining to the full vigour of manhood. Of her, therefore, the most anxious care had been taken ; and now her widowed mother breathed hardly another prayer to Heaven, except that it would be pleased to preserve for her a life, which even she could not but observe to be suspended by a single hair. Between Mr. Williams's family and that of Mrs. Evans an intimate acquaintance subsisted ; and it brought about, as might have been anticipated, the most ardent and romantic attachment on the parts of Abraham and Julia towards each other.

Abraham Williams had passed his eighteenth year, when his father deemed it necessary that he should remove to college. It was a bitter parting between the youth and his relatives, but the parting with Julia was more bitter by far. Yet there was a keenness of enjoyment in the latter, which perhaps more than counterbalanced its bitterness. The young people had hitherto been to each other as brother and sister ; they loved tenderly and ardently, but they knew not the real nature of the love which subsisted between them. How should they, indeed ? — how should a boy of eighteen, and a girl of sixteen, who met every day with all the unreserved confidence of childhood, know that their

love was different in kind from that which the one felt for her only parent, the other for his parents and his sister? It is the moment of parting, which, in such cases, divulges the truth; nor is there a moment, in all the years of our after-existence, more wildly yet purely delightful, than that in which the discovery is first made. Young as they were, Abraham and Julia exchanged vows of eternal fidelity before the last embrace was given. These vows were never broken, yet they were never fulfilled.

How often has my poor friend spoken to me of that hour! "I had bidden farewell to her mother," he said, "and was preparing to do the same by Julia, when she suddenly turned away from me, and quitted the room. I followed her instantly, and found her leaning against the paling which overhangs the brook, and weeping bitterly. It was a soft serene evening in October; the withered leaves were lying in quantities on the path, and the few which still clung to the branches overhead, were sere and yellow, and rustled sadly as the quiet air moved them. The sun had set, but daylight had not yet passed away. I cannot paint to you her look of agony, when I put my arm round her waist, and, gently pressing her soft hand in mine, murmured, what I could not speak, something about comfort and farewell. The tears were flowing fast from her beautiful eyes, and mine too gushed out in torrents. "Farewell, Julia," said I at length, "you will sometimes think of me when I am gone, and, as you follow our favourite walk, or sit beside that little stream, you will wish that I were beside you, and look forward with satisfaction to the day of my return." I shall never forget her reply. Every word of it sank deep into my memory, and can never be erased while memory lasts. "Think of you, Abraham!" cried she, "shall I ever think of aught besides? What will these walks or that stream be to me when you are gone? Nothing, nothing! I will never follow them, I will never sit down where we have so often sat together, till you return." "It was then, continued he, "that I felt how passionately I loved her; and then, for the first time, I spoke to her of love. From that moment we were betrothed! O God, O God, how vainly!"

Abraham and myself entered College together. We were matriculated on the same day, we attended the same lectures, we belonged to the same set, and, going forward together in our academical course, we passed our examination on the same morning, and on the same morning took our degree. From that period we never wholly lost sight of each other, though our different walks in life kept us generally apart; but the intercourse which could not be continued in person was constantly maintained by letter. Hence it is, that, though we separated before his misfortunes began, I was not kept ignorant of them, and am now enabled to detail them in the order in which they occurred.

It has sometimes been doubted whether an early attachment be or be not of advantage to a youth, who must make his way in the world. For my own part, I am decidedly of opinion that, if his affections be properly bestowed, such an occurrence is always advantageous to him; and the case of my poor friend fully justifies me in adhering to that opinion. Though of a disposition naturally gay, Abraham Williams never, during the entire course of his college life, ran into the follies and excesses of which most of his companions were guilty. Not that he was either niggardly or parsimonious; no man lived more like a gentleman than he; but there was a degree of seriousness about him such as very rarely shows itself in the deportment of a reasonable and sensible youth under twenty years of age. Where morose fanaticism prevails, then, indeed, we cannot wonder that the fanatic should be sober and cautious; but Williams was no fanatic, though a very pattern of sobriety and good conduct. The consequence was, that he made amazing proficiency in his studies; and the proudest desire of his excellent father was gratified by beholding him, at the early age of two-and-twenty, numbered among the respectable fellows of Jesus College.

In the mean while the attachment between the young people continued daily to increase; and joyful was the heart of the poor widow when she beheld the last prop of her old age an object of regard to a young man so highly and so justly respected. But Julia loved too warmly. Sweet and gentle as her outward manner was, her heart

was the abode of feelings not more pure than enthusiastic, and these preyed upon a constitution greatly too delicate to support a struggle with hope deferred; for all Abraham's success brought not the day of their union nearer. As fellow of a college, he could not marry; and both he and she were aware, that his only chance of preferment was from the society of which he was a member, and which had bestowed his preferment upon his father. At each visit which he paid to his paternal fireside, the lover was accordingly more and more shocked at the change in Julia's appearance; though, when he was by, she was all life and spirits, and her cheek glowed and her eye danced as they had been wont to do in other days. But as soon as he departed, she drooped again, and it was but too manifest that, unless some fortunate accident should occur, such as might authorise their speedy union, poor Julia would not survive to fulfil her engagement.

Just at this time, when Abraham, having attained the canonical age, was preparing to enter the sacred profession, his father was struck with a paralytic affection, from which he never recovered. The old man, after lingering a few weeks, died; and he died as he had lived, calm, contented, full of trust in the God who had guided him hitherto, and full of affection for his family and his people. The blow was deeply felt both by his wife and children; and it came upon them the more heavily, because now, for the first time, the sad effects of his liberal and unrestrained course of life appeared. He died absolutely penniless. There was not in the house money sufficient to defray the expenses of the funeral; and the demand for dilapidations—that demand so little creditable to the constitution of the Church of England—swept away the whole produce of the sale of furniture and effects, which necessarily ensued. With his usual consideration for others, and disregard for himself, Mr. Williams had made no charge upon the widow of his predecessor in the Rectory; but he was succeeded by a man widely different from himself in all respects—by a fellow of a school not yet, I fear, wholly abolished, and which is not likely to be abolished till human nature undergo a change. The new incumbent, though a bachelor.

and though determined to continue a bachelor to the day of his death, entertained no thought of being merciful to the widow and the orphan. He caused the house, the barns, the stables, the chancel, and even the fences and stumps of fences, to be accurately surveyed; and he exacted the full amount of the valuation from a family whose sole dependence was now upon the exertions of my friend.

When the bitterness of grief for the loss of a kind parent began to subside, it was not possible for Abraham to hinder the reflection from arising, that now a greater bar than ever was thrown in the way of that marriage, in the completion of which all his hopes of earthly comfort were centred. His mother and sister must be maintained. This was a duty, of the paramount importance of which his mind was far too properly regulated not to be fully convinced; but let him not be deemed selfish, if something like sorrow would occasionally mingle with his feeling of gratitude towards that Providence, which had happily supplied him with the means of discharging it. Alas! we are not always made happy — at least, perfectly happy — by the conviction that we are doing, or striving to do, our duty. Ours is not the nature of angels, but of men; of creatures partaking as much of the dross of the earth as of the essence of the Divinity; and till that dross be wholly purged away, something of imperfection must cling even to our best resolutions and endeavours. Nevertheless, Abraham was too good a son, and too sincere a Christian, not to relinquish his own wishes freely, now that they came into collision with his duty; only he had not the courage to make Julia a partaker in his sorrows and in his apprehensions.

But it is not possible, at least during the season of youth, absolutely to divest ourselves of hope.

“ I will work harder than I have yet done,” said he to himself. “ I will strive for the place of tutor at my college; or I will obtain a curacy in the country, and take private pupils into my house; and, whatever my savings may be, I will settle all upon my mother and sister, so that, when a living falls, I may share it with Julia.”

It is very probable that he might have succeeded in the first of these schemes, had he attempted it; for his talents

were well known and duly appreciated in the university ; but then where could his mother and sister reside ? That plan, therefore, was abandoned ; and he accordingly set himself with all diligence to carry into execution the other alternative, to which nothing but an overwhelming sense of duty could have driven him.

CHAPTER II.

THE PASTOR.

THE curacy which my friend Williams obtained was that of St. Alphage, of the localities of which a slight sketch has already been given. It was retired, and therefore it suited the state of his finances ; for the stipend allowed was only 40*l.* a year, and the emoluments of his fellowship amounted to an additional 80*l.* His was one of the poorer fellowships of Jesus. Had he resided, it might, perhaps, have brought in 100*l.* annually ; but the value of such things is always diminished by non-residence. With a yearly income, therefore, amounting to 120*l.*, Abraham prepared himself to nurse his aged mother, to protect his sister, and to discharge the unostentatious, but useful and often irksome, functions of a country curate.

St. Alphage was far removed from the sweet Vale of Abberquate, in North Wales, where Julia continued to reside, and where his own youth had been spent. He had selected Kent as a part of the empire in which, from its proximity to London, his chances of obtaining pupils were the best ; and being a stranger to the country, he naturally accepted the first offer that was made of a cure and of a residence. Perhaps, too, he was fearful that a constant lingering near the object of his devoted affections might induce him to deviate from the rugged path which he had prudently determined to follow. He knew that Julia was

all excellence and purity ; that she would not tempt him to a premature union, or willingly consent to any step which would compromise the happiness or comfort of his mother. All this he knew well : but he knew also that she doted upon him with woman's fondness ; and he dared not leave it in his own power to propose at any moment a measure so rash as that which inclination was constantly suggesting. He distrusted not Julia, but himself ; and to place it beyond his own reach to act otherwise than as he had wisely resolved to act, he abandoned scenes rendered dear to him by the recollections of his childhood, and by the presence of the only human being in whose society life was truly valuable.

I have said, that between Abraham and myself a constant epistolary communication was kept up from the day of our departure from the university till the commencement of his last illness. Many of his letters are in my possession ; and as I cannot but think that a more correct idea of a man's character and feelings is to be obtained by perusing his unrestrained correspondence with a friend than by any other means, I will here transcribe a few passages from one or two of the epistles which I received from him after his settlement in Kent. The letters are for the most part entirely devoted to the discussion of topics in which the writer himself was, as may be supposed, deeply interested. But these are subjects which might not equally interest the public, were they detailed at length ; and hence I will offer only a few short specimens of the general style in which they are written.

“ I like my situation,” says he, in one of them, “ as much as any man can like a place which is new to him, and which has no natural claim upon his regard, by being the residence of persons whom he loves. The people appear to be, in general, very ignorant, but very civil : they are all of the lower orders, or of a class in society just removed from the lowest, and they seem well-disposed to treat with kindness and respect the person who is to propagate God's word amongst them. The only thing, indeed, which I do not entirely relish, is the order of my duties. I feel the responsibility imposed upon me as something far

more awful than I ought to have undertaken ; and when I remember that I must shortly add to it the care of private pupils, I confess that I am sometimes inclined to regret having embarked in a profession so arduous and so poorly remunerated.

“ But this is wrong. I thank God that there is a home under my roof provided for my mother and sister. I thank God, too, that my gentle Julia continues faithful to me, in spite of the little prospect which is before us of coming speedily together. Ah ! my friend, if you knew that girl as I know her, you would not wonder that she thus engrosses so many of my thoughts ; ay, that she sometimes comes between me and my Maker : — so good, so pure, so sensible ! who would account any labour too severe, which promised to secure her as its final reward ? ”

Some time after the receipt of this letter, I heard of his having succeeded in obtaining a couple of pupils, and I naturally wrote to enquire how he relished his new employment. I give his answer to that question at length, as a just reproof to such as consider a private tutor amply remunerated, provided he receive his 200*l.* or 250*l.* per annum with each pupil.

“ The only consideration at all capable of reconciling me to the task which I have undertaken is the prospect which it holds out of providing for my mother and my sister, and ultimately for Julia. Trust me, my friend, that he who has never acted the part of a private tutor knows not, and cannot know, one twentieth part of the annoyances and inconveniences to which that occupation gives birth. In the first place, you are necessarily ignorant of the kind of characters which you are about to receive into your family. If there be nothing notoriously bad against a young man, you must accept him, otherwise you are called fastidious, and no more offers are made to you. And granting that you are fortunate, — granting that your pupils are all youths of correct conduct and proper feeling, — from the moment they cross your threshold, your home is no longer your own. You live, as it were, continually in a public thoroughfare ; even during meal-times you cannot converse with your nearest relatives, except on common-place topics ;

you never walk abroad when your pupils are within, nor remain within when they walk abroad, with an easy mind.

“ With respect to the mere labour of tuition, that, no doubt, is wearisome enough. It is but an uninteresting occupation to go continually through the pages of Aristotle and Livy, or even to point out the beauties of Pindar and Horace ; but that might be endured. It is the breaking up of all family comfort,—the utter annihilation of home,—the constant restraint imposed upon your conduct, your words, and your very thoughts : these are the circumstances which to me, at least, are most grievous, in the duties of tutoring. Then, again, there are the thousand chances that young men of seventeen and eighteen years of age will involve themselves in scrapes ; not, perhaps, discreditable in the eyes of the fashionable world, but exceedingly hurtful to the morals of a country parish, and to the influence of him who is placed at its head. And, above all, there is the necessity of humouring, as far as they can be humoured, the dispositions and propensities of your inmates. You cannot treat youths of these years as you would treat children ; neither are they quite fit to be treated as men. You can neither reason with them altogether, for to mere reason they will pay no heed ; nor can you employ coercive measures, for to such they will hardly submit. Rest assured that the daily labourer in the fields, who returns when his work is done to his own fireside, and to the bosom of his own family, leads a far happier life than your private tutor who is largely paid for receiving strangers into his house.”

In spite of his dislike to the employment, Williams continued, however, to labour in his vocation as a private tutor for upwards of three years. To his parish he was, as may be supposed, most attentive all the while ; and he never murmured at his lot, let happen what might, because the approbation of his own mind, and the affectionate letters which he regularly received from Julia, more than compensated for all his daily and hourly grievances. Nor did the contemplation of a mother and sister, made happy through his exertions, fail to increase that holy calm which was upon him. Perhaps he was never more happy than

during these years ; he certainly never enjoyed so much happiness after they departed.

From the period of his father's death, up to the expiration of the time specified, Abraham had visited his native vale only once. That visit occurred about twelve months after his removal into Kent. It was a short but a delightful one, because it was spent under the roof of Mrs. Evans, and in a constant and unrestrained intercourse with Julia. If any thing, indeed, could be said to imbitter it, it was the extreme delicacy of the maiden's health, who exhibited even then symptoms of that fatal disease, which in two years after brought her to an untimely grave. Abraham could not but observe the change in her appearance. Her form was wasted to a shadow ; her cheek was sunken and hollow, and alternately pale and ruddy, as the fever went and came. But she laughed at his expressions of alarm ; and he returned home, if not quite at ease, at least determined to believe her own assertion, that love was her only malady, and that love never yet caused death so long as it was not slighted.

In perfect accordance with her words were all Julia's letters during the entire space of eighteen months which followed their last parting. At the end of that time, however, her style became somewhat more gloomy. She spoke of the worthlessness of earthly enjoyments, and of the wisdom and necessity of her lover's fixing more of his affections upon Heaven, and less upon her. She talked of her utter inability to fulfil the expectations which he had formed, or to render him happy, who was far too good for her or for any woman living. To this topic, indeed, she recurred so repeatedly, that Abraham became seriously alarmed, and at last urged her to satisfy his fears by stating the true cause of those expressions, which, instead of comforting, tormented him with a thousand apprehensions too horrible to be named. He had not seen her for nearly two years, when the above letter was written. In due course of post an answer arrived, of which I subjoin a copy.

“ I will not blame you, dearest Abraham, for the impatience in which your last appears to have been written ; far less will I insult you, by supposing that you could

seriously suspect your Julia of inconstancy or fickleness. Oh, no—no! God is my witness, that you are the subject, and the only subject, of my thoughts by day, and of my dreams by night. I fear, indeed, that I think of you too much; I am sure that I think of you far more than I think of my religion, or of my God. But He knows how frail and weak we are; and I pray that He will forgive me, if, indeed, there be any sin in suffering the mind to dwell continually upon the most perfect of His creatures. Enough, however, of this. You beg of me to be explicit, and I will be so, though I had determined to defer my communication a little longer, and to spare you the pain which I fear it will occasion, till things had assumed a more decided aspect.

“Be not alarmed, my beloved Abraham, when I inform you, that my health has not of late been so robust as usual; and that my medical attendants have assured me, that there is some risk that I shall not recover. I say, be not alarmed—perhaps I ought rather to have said—be not wholly cast down. If it be the will of God to remove me, your image will be the last that shall fade from my memory; and I will only go before, to prepare a place for you in a world where, when we meet again, nothing can part us. But I cannot myself believe that it will end in this. True, I am ill, very ill: I have not indeed quitted my bed for these ten days past; but I am not yet willing to die, because I am not yet willing to be separated from you. Nevertheless, come to me if you can. Your presence will, I think, be worth all the medicines which they force upon me; and which, to please my mother, I am reluctantly compelled to take. God bless you, dearest friend! prays your own affectionate Julia.”

Immediately on the receipt of this distressing intelligence, Abraham set off, by the most ready conveyance, to the Vale of Abberquate. Of the circumstances which attended and ensued upon that journey, he has himself drawn so vivid a picture, that I readily avail myself of it, in laying the detail before the reader. The following is the substance of a long letter which he forwarded to me, several months after his return into Kent:—

“ The bitterness of death is past. She for whom alone I desired to live, for whose sake labour was easy, and anxiety light, whose angel form, when it crossed my mind’s eye, came ever as a minister of peace, and the teacher of holy things ; that gentle being, who was indeed too good for earth, has departed to her Father which is in heaven, and left me not a ray of hope to guide me along the way which it behoves me to travel. Julia is dead, and I am alive to tell it. There was a time when the bare idea of such an occurrence froze the very blood in my veins, and I deemed it utterly impracticable to survive her ; but I have survived, though for what purpose, or to what good end, can be known only to Him who sees into futurity. Yet, that it is for some good end, I have faith enough, in the midst of my sufferings, to believe ; nay, I am already striving to submit without repining to the dispensations of that Power whose will it is thus to try me.

“ You will be better able to imagine, than I am to describe, the state of mind in which my last journey from this place to Wales was performed. It appeared to me that I should never reach my native valley ; and when at length the old church tower became visible in the distance, the horses which dragged our vehicle seemed to relax even their former tardy speed. Yet, strange to say, when the coach stopped, my strength absolutely failed me ; I could hardly alight ; and when I did, I was obliged to lean, for a moment or two, against the signpost of the inn, before I recovered vigour enough to walk on towards Mrs. Evans’s cottage.

“ Once in motion, however, and I could not move too quickly—I was soon beside the little wicket which opens into the garden, and within view of the paling on the right hand, where Julia first pledged to me her love. I could hear, likewise, the waters of the stream bubbling and brawling as they did on that sweet evening ; and the sound brought back a thousand tender recollections, which flitted across my mind during the instant that elapsed whilst I was hurrying up the pathway towards the door. I observed, then, that the window-curtains in Julia’s room were drawn ; and my heart beat almost to suffocation, as I

strove, at first in vain, to raise the latch. But I did raise it, and was met by Mrs. Evans, who fell sobbing and weeping into my arms. 'How is Julia?' cried I; 'for the love of Heaven speak, and tell me that she is better!' The poor woman was about to reply, probably to entreat me to be cautious, when a shriek from the apartment of the invalid told us that my exclamation had been overheard. I flew towards the stairs, and ascended them in a state of insanity. I heard my name murmured in Julia's voice; I burst open her door; she was sitting up in bed with her arms extended; I rushed towards her; she fell upon my bosom, and, again repeating my name, lay perfectly still. Oh, how can I proceed?—After holding her in my embrace for several seconds, I laid her gently back upon her pillow—she was a corpse. Her spirit fled at the instant of our meeting; and my name was on her lips when they ceased to move for ever.

"Of what followed this scene I have no recollection, till I found myself in bed in my own house, and my sister watching affectionately beside me. They say that many weeks have elapsed since Julia died, and was buried; that a violent fever confined me during a fortnight at Abberquate, and that when it departed, it left me a poor maniac. I believe these accounts to be correct, for my limbs are wasted to nothing, and my cheek is as pale and hollow as was that of Julia when last I beheld her. If it be so, I can only thank God that He has restored to me my reason. Of my health, too, I must strive to be careful, for the sake of those whose dependence is upon me. But of ambition not a shadow remains. My pupils are dismissed—I no longer desire preferment—why should I, for who is there to share it? For the support of my mother and sister, this curacy, with the profits of my fellowship, will amply suffice; and as Mrs. Evans has taken up her abode amongst us, the addition of her pittance will place us all in affluence. Such are my plans for the future, until it shall please God to remove me whither Julia has gone before."

Mr. Williams survived the date of the preceding letter upwards of twelve years. During the whole of that time he steadily adhered to the plans which he had laid down for

himself, and was never known to utter one sentence of complaint against fortune, or rather against Providence. Of Julia, too, he neither spoke nor wrote, except occasionally to myself, when I have from time to time visited his cottage; but he wore a lock of her fair hair in his bosom, and carried it with him to the grave. To his parochial duties he became more and more attentive every day. His chief amusement was gardening; and to diversify that, he was in the habit of noting down all such events as appeared worthy of record within the circle of his little district. Thus were his sorrows sanctified to him, and he died at last, composed and happy; having previously committed to the dust both his mother and mother-in-law. Of his sister it is needless to take farther notice, than that she is the mother of my children, and that nothing gave my poor friend so much comfort on his death-bed, as the knowledge that she was provided for. Peace to his ashes!

CHAPTER III.

THE POACHER.

In a distant part of the parish, in one of its wildest and uncultivated regions, stands a solitary cottage, which, not more from the absolute dreariness of its location, than from the melancholy aspect of its architecture, can hardly fail to attract the notice of any wanderer who may chance to pass that way. It stands all alone upon a desolate moor. There are not even the varieties occasioned by hill and dale to give to the thing the least of a romantic appearance; but, as far as the eye can reach, all is one flat, dreary common, so perfectly bare of pasture, that the very sheep seem to shun it, whilst one or two old withered firs give evidence that man has, at some period or other, endeavoured to turn it to use, but has abandoned the attempt, because he found it fruitless.

Almost in the centre of this moor stands the cottage above alluded to. Its walls, constructed partly of brick, partly of deals, give free passage to every blast, let it blow from what quarter it may ; and its roof, originally tiled, is now covered over, where it is covered at all, in some parts by patches of miserable thatch, in others by boards nailed on by an unskilful hand to the rafters. The cottage is two stories high, and presents five windows, besides a door on each side of it. The windows, as may be guessed, retain but few fragments of glass within the frames, the deficiency being supplied by old hats, rags, jackets, and rabbit-skins ; whilst of the doors, the front or main one hangs by a single hinge, and that behind is fastened to the sinister lintel by no fewer than five latches made of leather.

Of the grounds by which it is begirt, a few words will suffice to convey an adequate idea. In setting out from the Vicarage, he who wishes to reach that cottage had better make, in the first place, for the high road. Having traversed that for a while he will observe a narrow foot-path on the left hand, which, after descending to the bottom of a glen, and rising again to the summit of a green hill, will bring him within view of the desolate tract already noticed, and will conduct him safely, for in truth there is no pass besides itself across the wild, to the hovel in question. There it ends. It stretches nowhere beyond : indeed, it has evidently been formed by the tread of the tenants of that lonely habitation, as they have gone to or returned from church and market ; and the scantiness of the soil has doubtless given a facility to its formation ; for, in truth, were any human being to walk twenty times backwards and forwards over any given spot in the moor, he would leave a trace of his journey behind him, which whole summers and winters would hardly suffice to obliterate.

Whilst the front door of the cottage opens at once upon the heath, a couple of roods of garden-ground, surrounded by a broken gorse hedge in the rear, give proof of the industry or idleness of its tenants. Through the middle of this plot runs a straight walk, ending at a stile, or immovable gate, erected in the lower fence. The articles

produced are such only, on each side of that walk, as require little or no soil to bring them to perfection. A bed of potatoes, some rows of cabbages and savoys, two apple-trees, a damson and a bullace, half a dozen gooseberry-bushes, with twice as many of red currant, constitute the sum total of the crop ever reared upon it. To make such a soil produce even these, must, I apprehend, have required some labour; and I will do its inhabitants the justice to observe, that overgrown as it is now with nettles and rank weeds, there was a time when labour was not spared upon it.

In this miserable hovel dwelt, for many years previous to my arrival in the parish, Old Simon Lee, the most skilful and the most determined poacher in all the country. He was the father of five children, the eldest of whom, when I first became acquainted with him, had attained his twenty-third year, whilst the youngest was just beginning to run alone, being as yet afraid to trust itself beyond 'arm's length from the chairs or tables, or any other substance of which it could lay hold. Simon himself was turned of sixty. He was a short man, measuring not more than five feet five inches from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. His make was spare, but bony and muscular; his face, seamed as it was by exposure to weather, had, on the whole, a good expression, and there was a great deal more of intelligence in his keen black eye than you will often observe in the eye of an English peasant. Simon's ordinary dress, when he went abroad, was a short brown gaberdine, which reached barely to his knees, a pair of fustian trowsers, hobnailed shoes, and thick worsted stockings. His hat was made of straw, and manufactured by his own hands, and you never failed to observe a piece of black tape or riband bound round it, just above the brim. Simon was, or rather would have been, but for his determined predilection in favour of the primitive employment of the chase, one of the best and most trustworthy labourers in the parish. Set him to what you would, he never failed to do you justice. I have had him, again and again, to dig in my garden, and have compared his diligence with

that of other men who bore a fairer character; and I must do Simon the justice to say, that he has invariably worked harder for his day's pay than any individual among them. In the matter of honesty, again, you might trust him with untold gold. Much as he was disliked, and I know no character in a country place more universally disliked than a poacher, not a human being laid a theft or robbery to his charge: indeed, he was so well thought of in that respect, that it was no uncommon circumstance for the persons who blamed him most severely to hire him, when occasion required, to watch their orchards or hop-poles; for Simon was well known to fear neither man nor devil. He really and truly was one of the few persons, among the lower orders, whom chance has thrown in my way, whose propensity for poaching I should be disposed to pronounce innate, or a thing of principle.

As a proof of this, I need only mention, that Simon and I have discussed the subject repeatedly, and that he has argued in favour of his occupation as stoutly and openly as if there had been no law in existence against it.

"Why, you know it is illegal," I would say, "and you must likewise know that it is little better than stealing. What right have you to take the hares or partridges which belong to another man?"

"Lord bless you, sir," was Simon's invariable reply, "if you will only tell me to whom they belong, I promise you never to kill another while I live."

"They belong," said I, "to those upon whose lands they feed. Would you consider it right to take one of Sir Harry Oxenden's sheep or turkeys? Why, then, will you take his hares or his pheasants?"

"As to the matter of that," replied Simon, "there is a mighty difference between sheep and hares. Sheep are bought for money, they remain always upon one spot, they bear the owner's mark, they are articles of barter and sale," (I profess not to give my friend's exact words, only the substance of his argument,) "and they have always been such. But the hare which is found on Sir Harry's grounds to-day may be found on Squire Deeds's to-morrow, and mayhap Sir Edward Knatchbull's the day after; now, to

which of these three gentlemen can the hare be said to belong? No, sir! God made the wild beasts of the field and the fowls of the air for the poor man as well as for the rich. I will never so far forget myself as to plunder any man's hen-roost, or take away his cattle; but as long as these old arms can wield a gun, and these old hands can set a snare, I will never be without a hare or a pheasant, if I happen to want it."

There was no arguing against a man who would talk thus; so after combating the point with him for a time, I finally gave it up.

The worst of it was, however, that Simon not only poached himself, but he brought up his son to the same occupation. The Lees were notorious throughout the country. Not a gamekeeper round but knew them; nor was there one who did not in some degree stand in awe of them. It was suspected, too, that they had good friends somewhere behind the curtain; for though the patriarch had been convicted several times, he always managed to pay the fine, and, except once, had never suffered imprisonment.

I deem it no part of a country clergyman's duty to quarrel with one of his parishioners because he happens to set the game-laws at defiance. Perhaps of all the laws that exist, they are in themselves the least defensible; and they lead to consequences often more serious than their warmest advocate would willingly anticipate. But with the justice or injustice, the policy or impolicy, of these laws, I have no concern: there they are upon the statute-book, and, like all other laws, they ought to be observed. Still I repeat, that a clergyman has no business to quarrel with a poor man who transgresses in this point, and in none besides. For my own share, though I never told Simon as much, I could not but feel a kind of respect for him, such as I never felt for any other of the fraternity, because he not only deemed it unnecessary to deny his poaching, but defended it. I love to see men act upon principle, even when the rectitude of the proceedings may be questionable.

I have said that Simon Lee was no favourite among his

neighbours, and the only cause which I have as yet assigned for the fact is, that he was a poacher. Doubtless this had its weight. But the love of poaching was, unfortunately for himself, not the only disagreeable humour with which he was afflicted. There exists not within the compass of the four seas a prouder spirit than that which animated the form of Simon Lee. He never would accept a favour from any man; he would not crouch or bend to the highest lord in the land. Yet Simon was no jacobin; quite the reverse. His was the genuine stubbornness, the hardy independence, which once rendered an English peasant more truly noble than the titled slave of France or Germany, but which, unfortunately, has of late years yielded to the fashionable agricultural system, and to the ruinous and demoralising operations of the poor laws. Simon was the son of a man who had inherited a farm of some thirty or forty acres from a long line of ancestors; who loved his landlord, as the clansmen of the Highlands were accustomed to love their chief; and who prided himself in bringing up his children so as that they should earn their bread in an honest way, and be beholden to no human being. Simon, being the eldest of the family, succeeded, on the death of his father, to the farm. But he had hardly taken possession, when the rage for large farms began to show itself; and in a few years after he was sent adrift, in order that his fields might be added to those of a wealthy tenant, who undertook to cultivate them better, and pay some two shillings per acre more to the landlord. Whether the new tenant kept his promise in the first of these stipulations may be doubted. In the last he was very punctual, and in a short time he rode as good a horse, and kept as good a table, as his landlord himself.

It was a severe wound to Simon's proud heart, his expulsion from his paternal roof. "In that house, sir," said he to me one day when we talked of the circumstance,— "in that house I drew my first breath, and I hoped to draw my last. For two hundred and fifty years have the Lees inhabited it; and I will venture to say, that his honour has not upon all his lands a family who pay their rent more punctually than we did, or one more ready to

serve him, either by day or night. Well, well, the landlord cares nothing for the tenant now, nor the tenant for the landlord: it was not so when I was a boy."

I have been told by those who remember his dismissal, that Simon seemed for a time, after leaving his little farm, like one who had lost every thing that was dear to him. To hire another was impossible, for small farms were not to be had; and had the contrary been the case, it was more than questioned whether he could have brought himself to bestow the labour of a good tenant upon any besides the fields which he persisted in calling his own. Under these circumstances he took the cottage on the moor, as much, it was said, because it stood far from neighbours, as on any other account; and there he remained in a state of perfect idleness, till his little stock of money was expended, and he felt that he must either work or starve.

Simon had married before the inheritance came to him: his eldest boy was able to run about when he left it. His fifth was weaned, when at length, the proceeds of the sale being exhausted, and all the little capital swallowed up, he found himself under the necessity of looking out for a master. I have always been at a loss to conceive why he should have applied to the very man who displaced him, in preference to any of the other parishioners; but so it was. He requested and obtained permission to cultivate as a hind, at daily wages, those very fallows which he and his ancestors had so long tilled for their own profit; and from every account, no man could be more faithfully served than his employer, nor any lands more skilfully managed than those which he ploughed. Was this the affection of a rude mind to inanimate objects? or what was it?

Time passed, and Simon's family increased upon him year after year. Still he laboured on; and though his wages were not, perhaps, competent to support a wife and eight children in comfort (for there were originally eight of them), still they made their wants square with their means, and so kept above the world. But there is no struggling against sickness. It pleased God to visit him with a malignant fever, of which every individual, from the father and mother, down to the infant at the breast,

partook, and from which three out of the number never recovered. Alas ! the rich man knows not what the poor man suffers, when disease takes up its abode in his dwelling. It is bad enough if his children be attacked ; bad, very bad, because even then there is the doctor's bill to pay, and the little comforts to procure which the doctor may recommend as necessary to their recovery ; but when he himself falls a victim to the infection, when the arm upon which all depend is unnerved by sickness, and the limbs which ought to provide food for half-a-dozen hungry mouths are chained down to a wretched pallet — God forgive the rich man who knows of this, and leaves a family so situated to its fate ! Such, however, was the case with Simon Lee and his household. For a full fortnight he was himself confined to bed. His wife caught the infection from him, and communicated it to the children. The little money which they had in the house was soon exhausted : they lived for a while on the produce of their garden ; but at length nature rebelled, and Simon, after many a struggle, had recourse to the parish. I shall give the particulars of this application as they were communicated to me by one of the committee.

“ We were sitting,” said my informant, “ as usual, on a Thursday evening, in the room allotted to us in the workhouse. We had had a good many applications, for the typhus was prevalent at the time, and we had relieved several, when, on ringing the bell to see whether any more were waiting, to the astonishment of all present in walked Simon Lee. At first we hardly knew him, he was so wasted and so altered. But he looked at us with the same keen glance with which he used to regard us when he was one of our number, and stood leaning upon his stick in silence. Our overseer at that time was Farmer Scratch,—a man, as you know, sir, not remarkable for his kindness of heart or liberality of disposition.

“ ‘ What want you, Simon ? ’ said he ; ‘ surely you cannot be in need of relief ? ’

“ ‘ I am in need, though,’ said Simon ; ‘ I would not have come here, were not my family starving.’

“ ‘ We have no relief to give you,’ answered the over-

seer ; ‘ you ought to have taken better care of your money when you had it. I wonder you are not ashamed to come here like a common pauper, you that used to grant relief, and not to ask it.’

“ Simon’s blood rushed to his cheeks as the overseer spoke. He raised himself erect upon his staff, and looking proudly at us, he turned upon his heel and walked away. ‘ This is the first time I have asked alms,’ cried he, as he opened the door, ‘ and it shall be the last.’ Simon has had sickness in his family repeatedly since that time. I have known him to be a full fortnight without work, yet he has never come to the parish since.”

I was a good deal struck and affected by this story, so I took the first opportunity that offered of discussing the subject of it with Simon himself.

“ It is all quite true, sir,” said he. “ The overseer was harsh, and I was proud, so we parted.”

“ And how have you done since ?” asked I.

“ Why, had enough sometimes,” was the reply ; “ but poor folks, you know, sir, cannot be nice. And I will tell you. It never entered into my head, till I was on my way home from the committee, that to be in want of food, whilst the hares were eating my cabbages every night, and the partridges feeding not a rood from my door, was no very wise act. I poached, as you call it, to feed my children. I have never killed game for any other purpose ; and whilst there is a head of it left, and I am able to catch it, they shall not be beholden to the parish for a meal.”

I cannot help thinking that the history of Simon Lee, as far as it has yet been detailed, contains a lesson well worth the attention both of country gentlemen and farmers. Whilst the old system of land-letting continued, and every thirty or forty acres of ground supported an honest family, it is very probable that the landlord received a less sum in the shape of gross yearly rent, and that the yeomanry rode poorer horses, and kept poorer tables, than they do at present. But it is equally certain that the paupers to be relieved by their parishes then, came not up to one fiftieth part of those which are continually seeking and obtaining

parochial relief now ; and if the increased burden thereby imposed upon the land be taken into account, it will probably be found that agriculturists are not such decided gainers by the change as most of them imagine. Besides all which, it must be manifest to all who have eyes to look round them, and minds to comprehend what they see, that with the race of petty farmers has expired one of the finest and most virtuous classes of society. Their houses were the nurseries of good and faithful servants : they were themselves hospitable to the utmost extent of their means, and almost always honest. They were really, I say not upon principle, but certainly upon honourable prejudice, attached to the constitution in church and state. If, then, the country have suffered in its moral character by their annihilation, he must be a very short-sighted politician indeed who imagines that the injury thereby inflicted upon society can be at all compensated by any improvement in the art of agriculture, or increase of the amount of produce raised from the soil.

CHAPTER IV.

THE POACHER.

HAVING thus made my reader in some degree acquainted with Simon Lee and his family, I proceed at once to detail the circumstances which alone, when I took up the pen, I had intended to detail. Simon had been an inhabitant of his cottage on the moor upwards of twenty years before I came to the parish. The fits of sickness already hinted at had come and gone by long ago, and the habits consequent upon them were all entwined in his very nature, so as that nothing could remove them. In fact, Simon had ceased to be regarded by any of his neighbours with an eye of pity, for his misfortunes were all forgotten ; whilst his poaching

propensity continuing in full vigour, all men spoke of him with abhorrence.

One of the first acts of a country clergyman, after he has settled himself in the spot where his duties lie, is, at least ought to be, to call upon the whole of his parishioners, rich and poor, and to make himself acquainted, as well as he can, with their respective characters and circumstances. In prosecuting these enquiries, he is of course liable to be imposed upon, according as neighbours chance to live on good or bad terms with one another ; for it very seldom happens, I am sorry to say, that the poorer classes speak of their acquaintances, except from the dictates of prejudice, either for or against them. Of course, every prudent man will hear all that is said, and remember it ; but he will use it only as the mariner uses his log-book : he will take it as a guide in the mean while, but make large allowances for the possibility of being deceived. In the case of Simon, I found this caution peculiarly necessary. To whomsoever I put a question respecting the inhabitant of the cottage on the moor, the answer was invariably the same : — “ We know but little of him, sir, for he neighbours with no one ; but they say he is a desperate fellow.” By the farmers, again, I was told of his extreme insolence ; whilst Sir Harry’s gamekeeper, who attended my church, assured me, “ that he was the most troublesome rascal in all the county.” So, thought I, here is a pretty sort of a person with whom I am to come into contact. But I remembered the lesson given to me by my good father ; and under the idea that he really was a very wretched character, I resolved to spare no labour to effect his reformation.

The first time I visited Simon was in the month of October. As I was anxious to see and converse with the man himself, I delayed my stroll till the sun had set, and the hours of labour were passed ; then, fully anticipating a disagreeable interview, I sallied forth. Half an hour’s walk brought me to his hovel. I confess that the external appearance of it by no means induced me to doubt the evil rumours communicated from so many quarters ; but appearances, I recollected, were often deceitful, so I determined to suspend my judgment till better grounds should

be given for forming it. I accordingly knocked at the door ; a rough voice called to come in ; I pushed it open, and entered. Let me describe the *coup-d'œil*, as it then fell upon me.

Stepping over a sort of oaken ledge, perhaps three or four inches in height, I found myself in a large apartment, the floor of which was earthen, and full of inequalities. The apartment in question occupied the better part of the basement of the house ; that is to say, it took in the whole of the lower story, except a scullery and coal-hole, partitioned off at one of the extremities by a few rotten boards. There was no want of light here ; for though the better part of each window was stuffed, as I have already described, there being two casements, besides a door on one side, and a like number on the other, besides various fissures in the wall, the crevices capable of admitting the sun's rays were greatly more abundant than may usually be seen in the English poor man's dwelling. The room was low in the roof, in proportion to its size. The walls, originally whitewashed, were of a dingy brown ; on the right hand, as you entered, was the fireplace—a huge orifice—in the centre of which stood a small rusty grate, having a few sticks burning in it, and a pot boiling above them. On one side of this grate, and within the cavity of the chimney, sat Simon. At his feet lay a lurcher, a spaniel, and two ragged black terriers ; and he himself was busy twisting a wire, no doubt for some useful purpose. His wife (originally, I have been told, a pretty woman, but now a hard-favoured slatternly dame,) leaned over the pot, and was in the act of brushing off such particles of a handful of salt as adhered to her palm. Two children, one apparently about five, the other about seven years old, were rolling in the middle of the floor, in a state but few degrees removed from nudity ; whilst a taller girl, whose age I should guess to be about thirteen, dandled an infant in her arms beside an opposite window.

Such was the general aspect of the room, and the disposition of the family, when I entered. With respect to furniture, I observed a small deal-table, four chairs, rush-bottomed once upon a time, but now greatly in need of repair, a stool or two, a little arm-chair, with a hole in its

seat, and a long bench or form. But there were other implements to be seen more attractive than these. On the beam which ran through the middle of the ceiling was suspended a long fowling-piece; there were cranks near it for two others, but at present they were empty. A game-bag, dyed all sorts of colours with blood and grease, hung upon a nail in the wall opposite to me: beside it were two flew nets, such as fishermen use when they drag drains or narrow streams; and a third, of longer dimensions, fit for use in a pond or lake, was thrown across the boarding which separated the apartment from the coal-hole. Three or four shot-belts dangled over the fire-place; whilst several pairs of strong mud-boots, leathern gaiters, hobnailed shoes, &c. &c. were scattered at random in the different corners of the room.

The dogs, whose growling had been sufficiently audible even previous to my knock upon the door, no sooner eyed me, than with one accord they sprang to their legs, barking angrily, and showed every tooth in their heads, as if prepared to pounce upon me. They were, however, in admirable training. Simon had only to raise his finger, giving at the same time a low whistle, when they dropped down as if they had been shot, and remained belly to the ground, without moving limb or tail, during the whole of my visit. I could not but pity the unfortunate country gentlemen, into whose preserves these dogs, with their master, should make their way.

It was easy to discover, from the demeanour of all present, that Simon had been little accustomed to receive visits from the minister of his parish. Both he and his wife appeared utterly confounded at the vision which now stood before them. The wire which he had been twisting was hastily dropped: he rose from his seat, and uncovering his head, stood staring as if he had seen a spirit. In like manner, the housewife seemed rooted to the spot which she occupied when I raised the latch; and the noise of the very children ceased, as if by magic. I had actually advanced as far as the chimney corner before my parishioner recovered himself, or found tongue enough to request that I would be seated.

It was not long, however, before Simon and I found ourselves mutually at ease, and the prejudices under which I laboured respecting him began to give way. He was civil, without meanness; respectful, without exhibiting the most remote approximation to cringing; and honestly, yet manfully, professed to be flattered by the marks of attention which I paid him.

“You are the first minister that ever darkened these doors,” said he; “and the only gentleman that has condescended to notice old Simon Lee since he became poor and friendless. I am glad to see you, sir. I liked your discourse last Sunday much; but, thank God, want nothing from you except your good-will.”

“And that you shall have, my friend,” replied I; “but they tell me, Simon, that you do not lead exactly the sort of life that you ought to lead. How comes it that men’s tongues seem so free, when you are the subject of their talk?”

“Indeed, sir,” replied Simon, “that is more than I can tell. I know very well that I am no favourite here; and why? because I hate gossiping; because I fancy myself as good as any of them; because I sometimes speak my mind, and will not always run into the mud when a farmer or his horse chances to be in the middle of the way. But judge for yourself, sir. Try me, and if you find me a thief or a rogue, then turn your back upon me.”

“But you are a poacher, Simon; and poaching, you know, is against the laws of your country.”

“So it is, sir,” was the reply, “and I am very sorry for it; but is it against the law of the Bible? I have read that book through more than once, and I cannot see that a poor man is there forbidden to kill the creatures which God has made wild, and given up as a sort of common possession to all. I know man’s laws are against me, and I have felt their severity before now; but I go by the law of my Maker, and as long as I do that, I care for no man.”

“But God’s laws are against you also. We must submit to every ordinance of man, for the Lord’s sake; and to the game laws among the rest.”

“So I have been told,” answered Simon; “yet the

very persons who persecute me most severely for occasionally killing a hare or a pheasant are continually violating the laws in matters quite as serious. Why, there is not a magistrate upon the bench against whom I could not *peach*, for purchasing India handkerchiefs for himself, and French gloves and stockings for his ladies. I do not blame them for that, not I; I see no reason why all these things should not be within the reach of every man who can afford to pay for them; only, I say, let them wash their own hands clean of breaking the laws of the land, before they are so severe upon a poor man like myself, if he catch a head of game now and then to fill his children's bellies. Besides, if they had left me to rear these young ones on my father's farm, they never would have found me cross them, let them do what they would."

The conversation being continued in this strain for some time, and no effect produced upon the poacher's sentiments, I gradually changed the subject, and led him to talk of other things, such as I deemed most likely to betray him into a disclosure of his real character in the common occurrences of life. The result of the whole was, that I rose to quit his house, full rather of compassion than of any other feeling. I was conscious that he had in him at least the elements of a good member of society; and if these were somewhat deranged by the preponderancy of an illegal habit, I could not, in my own mind, avoid blaming for it, not only the proprietor of his little farm, who had so rudely ejected him from his home, but the parishioners at large, who originally drove him to it by the needless severity of their manner, when want and sickness first urged him to apply for relief. I learned from him, that neither he nor his son had any regular employment.

"People are afraid of us," he said, "God knows why; and yet, sir, there is not one among them who will deny, that both Joe and I do a good day's work when we can get it, and that we are always ready to undertake any job that may be offered."

I was at the time in want of some one to assist me in laying out the grounds about the vicarage, and planting the churchyard; I engaged Simon on the moment, and I

never had cause to repent of the measure during the whole time that he was in my service.

I have said, that Simon's eldest son had attained his twenty-third year at the period when our acquaintance commenced. He was a well-grown, powerful youth; not handsome, certainly, but straight, broad-shouldered, full-chested, and five feet ten inches high without his shoes. It was not often that Joe Lee mixed in the sports of the village youths; for, brought up as he had been, he was shy, or, as the neighbours called it, proud, like his father: but, when he did join their meetings, there was not a lad among them all that could heave the bar, bowl, bat, or run against him. In wrestling, too, he was unrivalled; and as to shooting, when Shrove Tuesday came round, Joe saved many a devoted dunghill cock, by challenging his companions to shoot at penny-pieces, or small shingle stones thrown into the air. Generally speaking, indeed, he never strove at any game without gaining the prize, for he was prudent enough never to attempt any thing of which he had not some previous knowledge.

It chanced that, about a year and a half after the interview above recorded, the young men of the parish met, as their custom was, on a certain holyday, to play their match at cricket, and to try their skill in foot-ball, racing, and other athletic sports. To these meetings, by the way, I never failed to give my countenance. For the most part I stood by till one or two contests came to a close; and by thus proving to them that religion is no enemy to mirth, as long as it exceeds not the bounds of moderation, I have good reason to believe that I put a stop to many a drunken brawl. Such meetings, at least, I was assured, had invariably ended, during my predecessor's time, in riot and intemperance; in mine, I can safely say that the instances were rare indeed in which the slightest deviation from strict sobriety and good fellowship occurred. As ill luck would have it, however, a violent quarrel arose this day between Joe Lee and another person; and as the quarrel ended not where it began, but led to very serious consequences, it may be proper to state how it originated, and to what height it was immediately carried.

Our squire had lately added to his establishment a new gamekeeper, a blustering, hot-headed native of Yorkshire. This person having been worsted in a variety of games, in which he appeared to consider himself an adept, finally challenged any man upon the common to shoot with him, for a wager, at a number of sparrows which he had brought in a cage for the purpose. The challenge was accepted by Joe. The number of birds to be let loose was a dozen a-side, and the parties were to take the alternate shots, whether they chanced to be fair or cross. Both men were noted as excellent marksmen: a great degree of interest was accordingly excited on the occasion; and though the majority of those present wished well to Joe Lee, simply because he was a man of Kent, and not a Yorkshireman, there were not wanting numbers who backed the keeper to the customary extent of a pint or a quart of ale. The preparations for the match were soon made — the umpires took their stations; and a trap being formed at the distance of thirty paces from the sportsmen, the sparrows were removed to it from the cage, one by one.

The first fire fell by lot to Joe, and it was successful — he killed his bird. The keeper was equally fortunate when his turn arrived. Thus they went on, displaying an extraordinary precision of aim, till the fifth fire came round; Joe's took effect; the bird at which the north countryman shot flew off untouched. A shout was of course raised by Joe's backers; whilst those of his opponent were proportionably downcast. It soon happened, however, that the rivals were again on an equal footing; Joe missing, and the other killing. And now each had but a single charge reserved; each, too, had missed but once, consequently, each could count ten dead sparrows for eleven shots. This fire must therefore decide the match. You might have heard a pin drop upon the very grass, when, the trap being raised, the little bird rose in air, and Joe, with one leg advanced somewhat before the other, followed it with his gun. He fired. The sparrow soared up for a moment, and dropped perfectly dead, just within distance. I looked at the gamekeeper at this moment, and observed that his knees trembled: he was flurried beyond measure;

and the consequence was, that the shot flew harmless, and the bird escaped. Instantly the shouts of the Kentish men rent the air, and I quitted them, having seen Joe, whose shiness and pride were both for the moment forgotten, elevated upon the shoulders of a couple of lusty youths, and commencing his triumphal march round the common. Perhaps it is to be regretted that I had not remained amongst them a little longer; had I done so, in all probability matters would not have taken the turn they did.

Chagrined and irritated at his defeat, the keeper mixed no more in the amusements of the day; but sitting down in a booth, swallowed large potations of ale and spirits, too often the resource of the uneducated classes against the pangs of disappointment or sorrow. As the liquor began to take effect, the man became quarrelsome. He accused Joe, who, having successfully finished a foot-race, rested upon a bench near, of foul play. He insisted that the eleventh bird fell out of bounds, and being corrected in that particular by a reference to his own umpire, he changed his mode of attack for another annoyance. The poaching propensity of Joe's father, his pride, and his poverty, were thrown in the son's teeth. Joe bore it, not without a struggle, but he did bear it. Encouraged, probably, by the calmness of his rival, the keeper next began to vent his spleen upon Joe's dog. One of the ragged terriers of which I have already spoken, belonged, it appeared, to Joe, and it seldom left his heel, let him go where he would. On the present occasion it lay beneath the form on which its master sat, perfectly quiet and inoffensive.

"It is a d—d shame that such fellows as you should be allowed to keep dogs," said the surly keeper, giving at the same time a violent kick to the unoffending animal. "If I was master, I would have them all shot; and by G—d, the first time I see that brute self-hunting on our land, he shall have the contents of this piece in his stomach."

Still Joe kept his temper, and parried the attack the best way he could; but his blood was boiling, and it only

wanted a little more provocation to bring matters to an issue.

“ Will you wrestle a fall, you —— ? ” cried the keeper, rising and throwing off his jacket.

“ With all my heart, ” exclaimed Joe ; “ and don’t spare me, for, by the Lord, I don’t mean to spare you. ”

To it they went, and after a few severe tugs the keeper was thrown heavily. He rose with considerable difficulty, and complained grievously of his head, staggered, and fell again to the ground. Immediately some of the lads ran to his assistance : he was black in the face. They undid his neckcloth, threw water upon him, but all to no purpose ; his limbs quivered convulsively, his eyes opened and shut once or twice, a gasp, a rattle in his throat, and he was a corpse ! A quantity of blood gushing from his nose and mouth gave evidence of some severe internal injury ; whilst the only word uttered by himself, namely, “ My head, my head ! ” seemed to imply, that a concussion of the brain had occasioned it. Let the injury, however, be where it might, it was a fatal one ; for when the medical assistance arrived, which was promptly sent for, life was wholly extinct.

CHAPTER V.

THE POACHER.

As may readily be imagined, a termination so awful to sports begun, and heretofore carried on in the best possible humour, produced no trifling sensation among those who witnessed it. The question most keenly agitated was, how were they to dispose of the unfortunate perpetrator of the deed ? That he willingly killed his antagonist, not one among them supposed ; but there is a propensity in human nature to regard the shedder of man’s blood, whether by

accident or design, with abhorrence, and who but a minute ago was a favourite with all the by-standers became now an object of loathing to the majority. Whilst a few voices, therefore, called aloud to let the poor fellow go, hundreds were decidedly of opinion that he ought to be detained. As to Joe himself, he never attempted to escape. Whilst the fate of the fallen wrestler was in doubt, or rather as long as his hurts were considered in no degree to endanger his life, Joe kept aloof from him, and, probably, congratulated himself on the extent of the chastisement which he had inflicted; but when a cry was raised, "The keeper is dead," there was not an individual in the throng who appeared more anxious to falsify the rumour, by bestowing upon its object every attention in his power. Dead, however, the keeper was; and Joe readily gave himself up to the parish constable, until the issue of the coroner's inquest should be ascertained.

Several hours of daylight still remaining, no time was lost in despatching a messenger for the coroner; and as the office for this part of the county happened at the time to be filled by a Folkstone attorney, that gentleman speedily arrived. A jury was summoned, witnesses examined, and the body viewed on the spot where it had ceased to breathe. There cannot be a doubt that a verdict of accidental death would have been returned, but for the unfortunate speech delivered by Joe previous to the commencement of the match, — "Do not spare me, for, by the Lord, I do not mean to spare you." This sounded very like malice prepense; and the fact, that the parties were at the moment in a state of hostility towards one another, furnished strong ground of suspicion that, if there existed no design on either side positively to take away life, still each was resolved to inflict upon the other as severe a bodily punishment as it was possible to inflict. "Under these circumstances, gentlemen," said the coroner, "I see not how we can suffer this matter to end here. You must return a verdict either of murder or manslaughter, which you think proper. My own opinion is, that the latter will suit best with the state of the present affair."

It is said that the coroner was the identical attorney who

had conducted all the prosecutions hitherto carried on against the Lees. Whether his judgment was warped by prejudice, or whether he hoped to conciliate the good-will of the landed aristocracy by involving one member of a detested family in trouble, or whether he acted, as charity would dictate, in accordance with his own sense of duty, I cannot tell. Certain it is, however, that a verdict was returned according to his recommendation, and, under the coroner's warrant, Joe Lee was removed to gaol.

It is needless to describe with minuteness the circumstances which attended the young man's imprisonment and trial. Neither is it necessary to observe that the misfortune in which their son was involved gave to Simon and his wife the deepest concern; more especially as they dreaded a degree of interference from certain high quarters, which they considered capable of carrying all before it, even to the conviction of an accused person, in defiance of the clearest evidence of his innocence. Simon and his wife, however, only fell, in this respect, into the double error which frequently possesses the minds of the lower orders in this country. They groundlessly imagined, first, that their betters would desire to pervert the course of justice, for the sake of furthering a selfish purpose — a crime of which some, no doubt, may be guilty, but from which the aristocracy of England are, as a body, entirely free; and, secondly, they erroneously conceived that wealth and rank are able to overwhelm innocence and poverty — a calamity from which our glorious constitution effectually guards us all. Had Joe Lee been arraigned before a bench of county magistrates, it is just possible that his general character might have told against him; but he was given over to be dealt with according to the judgment of twelve plain Englishmen, in whose eyes there really are some crimes more heinous than that of killing game without qualification, licence, or permission. Nor did the jury which tried his case disappoint my expectation. In spite of the formidable sentence which, in the view of the subject taken by the coroner, rendered a verdict of manslaughter inevitable, Joe Lee was fully acquitted; and he returned home, after a

sojourn of a week or two at Maidstone, to follow his former occupations.

If the Lees had formerly been objects of general dislike, they now became so in a tenfold greater degree. The gamekeepers on all the neighbouring estates entered into close alliance with the tenantry, for the protection, as it was said, of their masters' property, but more justly, I believe, to revenge the death of their comrade. The farmers, again, resolved to give neither work nor relief to characters so desperate; and the very labouring classes shunned them, as if they had been polluted creatures, and a deadly infection rode upon their breaths. Simon and his family were not unaware of this. It had the effect, not of softening or reclaiming, but of rendering them more ruthless than ever; and it was now pretty generally understood, that both father and son were resolved to follow their vocation at all hazards; whilst strong, and even armed parties, were nightly abroad, for the purpose of intercepting them. It was in vain that I sought to reason with either party. The *world* would not give way to an individual; that individual would not give way to the world: indeed, I soon found that, by attempting to make things better, I only made them worse, and weakened my influence over each of the contending factions. Matters at length attained to such a crisis, that I anxiously desired to hear of Simon's capture and conviction; for I had little doubt that the latter event would be followed by his banishment from the country; and I was quite sure, that nothing short of his removal would prevent some act of desperate violence from being sooner or later committed. A single month had barely elapsed from the return of Joe out of prison, when, on wandering to Simon's cottage one morning, with the view of making a last effort to reclaim him, I found that my worst fears had been realised.

Having knocked at the door several times without receiving any answer, I raised the latch, for the purpose of entering. Instead of the loud barking which usually gave notice of the watchfulness of Simon's four-footed companions, a sort of broken growl, something between the sound of a bark and a howl, alone caught my ear. It was ac-

accompanied with a wailing noise — the noise of a woman weeping ; but, except from these noises, there was no intimation that the house was inhabited. I stepped in. There sat Simon in his old corner, with his head bent down, and arms crossed upon his bosom ; of his dogs, only one was near him, the identical black terrier which usually accompanied his son ; and it lay upon the ground, with its tongue hanging out, and its limbs at full stretch, apparently in the agonies of death. Simon either did not, or would not, notice me. The wounded dog, however — for on a nearer inspection I saw a desperate wound in its flank — made an effort to raise its head, and repeated the melancholy growl which it had given when I first stepped across the threshold ; but the head dropped again to the earth, and the sound ceased. Still Simon took no notice. I went up to him, placed my hand on his shoulder, and called him by his name ; he looked up, and in my life I never beheld such expression in the human countenance. Agony, grief, rage, and despair, were all depicted there. His eyes were bloodshot, his cheeks pale as ashes ; there was blood upon his garments, and his whole form was defiled with mud. Without apparently knowing what he was about, he sprang to his feet. In a moment the butt-end of a gun was brandished over me ; and, had I not quickly stepped back, it would have dashed my skull to pieces. As it was, the blow falling upon the unfortunate dog put an end at once to its agonies.

“ Simon,” said I, “ what means this ? Why lift your hand against me ? ” The unhappy man stared at me for a moment ; the savage expression gradually departed from his face, and, falling down again upon his seat, he burst into tears. I know no spectacle more harrowing than that of an old man when he is weeping. The grief must be deep-seated indeed which wrings salt tears from the eyes of such a man as Simon Lee ; and I accordingly trembled when I again requested to be made acquainted with the cause of behaviour so extraordinary, and so unlike that which I usually met at his hands.

“ I thought you had been one of the blood-hounds, sir,” cried he ; “ I thought you had tracked us to our very

home ; but go up-stairs, go and you will see, for I cannot speak of it." I went up accordingly, and beheld, upon a miserable pallet, all that remained of the stoutest wrestler, the fleetest runner, and the best shot in the parish. His mother was standing near him, wringing her hands in pitiable agony ; his little brothers and sisters were clustered round him, and joining, some of them scarce knew why, in the lamentations of the parent. I was much affected. " How has this happened ?" asked I, hardly able to articulate.

" Oh, my boy ! my boy !" exclaimed the unhappy mother, " my first-born, and the dearest of my children, has it come to this ? Was it for this end that I reared you with so much care, that you should die by the hands of common murderers ? Look here," cried she, at the same time rolling down the bed-clothes, " look what they have done."

I did look, and beheld a wide wound upon the left breast of the corpse, as if a whole charge of slugs, or swan-shot, had entered. The left arm, too, I saw, was broken : it was a horrible spectacle. I covered it up again. It was plain enough that a rencounter had taken place, during the preceding night, between some of the keepers and Simon and his son ; and that it had ended fatally, the proof was now before me. I could not, however, enquire into particulars just at that moment, for the parents were too much overcome by the fate of their child to repeat them ; but I learned them soon after. They were as follows : —

About ten o'clock on the preceding night, the moon being in her first quarter, Simon and his son, each armed with a fowling-piece, and attended by their dogs, set out, according to custom, in quest of game. As they had placed several snares in the woods of ——— in the course of the preceding morning, they directed their steps thither ; not only because they were tolerably sure of filling their bag in a moderate space of time, but with the view of ascertaining whether or not the wires had availed them. The distance was considerable. They walked seven good miles before they reached their ground ; consequently midnight was hard at hand when they began to penetrate

the preserves. Their object being to obtain as many head of game, and with as little noise as possible, they had taken care to provide themselves with brimstone matches, for the purpose of smoking such pheasants as they might happen to see at roost upon the boughs. They had succeeded in bagging a brace without the necessity of firing, when the dogs starting a couple of hares, both father and son discharged their pieces almost at the same moment. All this occurred close to a particular corner of the wood where they had placed no fewer than three wires, at short distances from one another. No doubt the wires had been observed ; and the keepers, rightly judging that those who set them would return at night to take away their spoil, laid themselves up in ambush in their immediate vicinity. The report of fire-arms drew them instantly to the spot ; neither Simon nor Joe considered it at all derogatory to their dignity to escape, if they could ; so, seeing three men advancing towards them, they took to their heels. The keepers followed. Joe might have escaped with ease ; but his father, grown stiff by years, was unable to keep up with him. The pursuers gained upon him rapidly.

“ Run, Joe ; run, my boy,” cried the old man ; “ never mind me. Remember your mother and sisters ; run, and take care of them.”

“ That I will not, father,” answered Joe ; “ where you are, I am ; let them come on.”

Old Simon was by this time pretty well spent with running. He stopped to breathe : Joe stopped also. He endeavoured to load his gun, but had only time to ram home the powder, when the assailants came up. One of them made a blow at the old man’s head with a bludgeon, which, had it taken effect, would have put him beyond the reach of surgical art ; but Joe caught it ere it fell. His left arm received it, and was broken. Still the right remained to him, and with a single stroke from the butt of his gun, he laid the fellow flat upon the earth. A desperate struggle now ensued between the two remaining keepers and the poachers. Though powerless of one hand, Joe was still a match for most men ; and Simon, having recovered his breath, fought as if only half

the load of years had been upon his back. The keepers gave ground. The sole object of the Lees being escape, they abstained from pursuing them, and made the best of their way for the high road, and along it towards their home. But they were not permitted to go unmolested. The keepers followed. By way of checking their farther advance, Joe unfortunately turned round and levelled his piece. He had hardly done so, when one of the pursuers fired, and his gun being loaded for the purpose with buck-shot, its contents made their way through the young man's clothing, and entered his chest. The wound was not, however, immediately fatal.

"I am hurt, father," cried he; "fly, and leave me to my fate."

Another shot was fired while he was yet speaking, which took effect upon the only dog that stuck to them. Wild with rage, old Simon would have loaded his gun, and revenged his son or perished, had not the latter assured him that he was still able to proceed. By darting down a deep ravine they managed to evade the keepers; and then taking the most unfrequented ways, they made for the moor. But just as the light in their cottage window became discernible, Joe's strength forsook him; he reeled and fell; nor was it without much waste of time, and almost super-human exertions, that the old man contrived to drag rather than carry him home. Poor Joe never spoke after. He was laid upon his bed in a state of stupor, and about half an hour before daybreak breathed his last.

Such is a brief relation of the events that brought about the melancholy scene to which I was now a witness. From it I learned, that the blood upon Simon's gaberdine was his son's. The state of frantic sorrow, too, in which I found him, was sufficiently explained, as well as the impulse which drove him to raise a murderous arm against any intruder; and though it was impossible to acquit the old man of blame, though, indeed, I felt that the death of Joe was entirely owing to his lawless proceedings, I could not but pity him to a far greater degree than I condemned him. I did my best to comfort both him and the lad's mother; but

my words fell upon inattentive ears, and I departed, much troubled in my own mind, and without having the consolation to reflect that I had in any degree lightened the troubles of others.

The affair, fatal as it was, never came before a court of justice. It was not, of course, to the interest of Simon, had he been capable of attending to his interests, to stir in the matter; for he could not bring his charge home to any definite person, and the very attempt so to do must have involved him in additional trouble. The fact, however, is, that Simon was never, from the hour of his son's death, in a fit state to conduct any business, or even to take care of himself. His stubborn temper, if it could not bend, was at length broken. All his misfortunes, real and imaginary, seemed to press upon his mind with double violence, now that the child of his pride was taken away from him. I have myself seen him weep, at times, like a woman. Long after his wife had regained her composure, Simon was inconsolable; and the ravages made by sorrow upon his health and frame were many degrees more visible, and more serious, than those which threescore and three winters had effected. Simon was an altered man. The gun and the net were laid aside, but the spade and the hoe took not their place. At first he was deemed lazy; the parish refused to assist him; he was cited before the magistrates, and committed to gaol. Having remained there till the period of his sentence expired, he was again set at liberty. But of his liberty he made no good use. His very wife now complained of him. He would sit, she said, for hours at a time, with folded arms, staring into the fire. He seldom spoke either to her or her young ones; and when he did, it was incoherently and wildly. At length he was missing. He wandered forth one morning, unshod and bareheaded. In this plight he was seen to pass through the churchyard, resting for a minute or two on Joe's grave. But what became of him after no one can tell. He was never heard of again. By some it was surmised, that, under the influence of a crazed brain, he had wandered into a distant part of the country; and hence that, sooner or later, tidings of him would certainly arrive. By others it was insinuated,

that he must have either thrown himself from the cliffs into the sea, or fallen over and been destroyed. That the first report was groundless, an absence of five years, during which no intelligence of his destiny has reached his family, furnishes ample ground for belief; whether either of the latter surmises be correct, I am ignorant. All that I know is, that he has never been seen or heard of in these quarters since the morning above alluded to; and that his wife, and four surviving children, are now wholly supported from the poor's rates.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SCHOOLMISTRESS.

ABOUT a gun-shot, or something less, from the south angle of the churchyard stands a cottage, differing but little in its structure and general arrangement from other rustic habitations, and hence advancing no particular claims upon the notice of a stranger. It is a plain, unadorned, low building, constructed like most others in this district, partly of brick, partly of beams of timber, and roofed over with thatch. There is a small patch of garden, behind, cropped for the most part with potatoes; and one of the lanes or cross-roads which abound here sweeps by its front.

In that dwelling resided for many years Dame Tapsal, one of those striking characters which occur but rarely in England; but which, when they do occur, make, perhaps, the more forcible appeal to our interest, in consequence of their paucity. Left a widow before she had attained to middle life, without any other ostensible means of support besides her own exertions, she not only abstained from becoming a burden upon the parish, but supported a singularly respectable appearance; bringing up her children to habits of honest industry, and of something like delicate and

even gentlemanly feeling. How she contrived to do all this, seeing that her family consisted of two sons and three daughters, it were a hard matter to say. Her husband, a sea-faring man, it was well known, died poor; and though she kept the village school ever since his decease, the proceeds of that humble seminary were clearly not adequate to cover the expenses to which she appeared to be subject. It is true that one of the lads contributed something towards the support of the rest. He was twelve years old when his mother removed to the school-house, and being a steady and attentive boy was seldom without a day's work. Yet it seemed inconceivable that the paltry pittance arising from both of these sources could suffice to defray the costs of an establishment, over which, visit it when you might, an air of extreme neatness and comfort reigned.

It was but natural that an event, unhappily so singular in the south of England, should excite no trifling degree of curiosity among those who witnessed it; and many surmises were in consequence hazarded touching its cause. As Dame Tapsal was not a native of these parts, and nobody knew from whence she came, one rumour in circulation affirmed, that she had lived previous to her marriage with some man of rank, and that she now enjoyed a pension — the reward of her early depravity. Somehow or other, there is in all country places a strong disposition to believe the worst; and the rumour in question, though no one could trace it to its source, gradually obtained almost universal credence; yet were there strong reasons for rejecting it. The woman was, and had ever been since first she came to the parish, a great deal too circumspect in her general conduct to warrant a suspicion so degrading; at least if she had been guilty, her maturer years exhibited no such traces as a youth of guilt seldom fails to leave behind. The more charitable accordingly discovered a solution to the mystery in a principle of pride, which prompted her to endure many privations in secret without complaining, at the same time that it caused her to keep, perhaps, too much aloof from society and the conversation of her neighbours.

But though industrious to a great degree, and in the strictest sense of the term upright, the widow's career was

far from being a placid one. She had not long been settled in her new abode when sickness visited it, and her children, one after another, became infected. She bore this with her accustomed fortitude ; and when four out of the five exchanged the mortal for the immortal state, even then she was never known to murmur. Weep she doubtless did, — heavily, bitterly, keenly, — especially when her eldest boy, the pride of her heart, was carried to the grave ; but she recovered her composure in a shorter space of time than could have been anticipated, and returned, as if nothing had happened, to her former occupations. One daughter was yet left to her, in whom her affections, hitherto divided, seemed to centre ; and her sole object appeared to be, to rear that girl, that she might make, what is termed, a good settlement in the world.

It is not very easy, sometimes, to account for the pertinacity with which misfortunes follow those, who, as far as outward circumstances can testify to the point, appear by no means to deserve them. Doubtless there is a wise cause for this, though we may be unable to see or comprehend it ; and if so, then was Dame Tapsal but one out of many, whom Providence tries for the sake of their ultimate good. The daughter whom she had snatched back, as it were, from the brink of the grave, and who during many years was a source of pious consolation to her, proved in the end a cause of her most poignant sorrow. She had scarcely reached the period of early womanhood, when her virtue was undermined by the wiles of an artful seducer, and the widow became a mourner on account of a calamity far more heavy than any under which she had previously suffered. But even here the matter ended not. The poor girl, uncontaminated in principle, though blasted in reputation, never held up her head from the time on which her shame became publicly known, and she died soon after she had brought into the world the innocent fruit of her sin. •

Now, then, at last Dame Tapsal's fortitude seemed to forsake her. For the first time she was heard to exclaim, that a weight was laid upon her more heavy than she could bear, and in bitterness of spirit to pray that it would please Him who thus severely tried, to remove her at once from

the scene of so much suffering. Every body knows, that however prone they may be to speak evil of their neighbours in prosperity, there is no class of persons more prompt to succour such as stand in need of it, than the English peasantry. There was no lack of comforters in the widow's apartment. One took the little orphan and nursed it with her own ; another sat all day long with the afflicted grandmother ; whilst a third kindly desired permission to occupy, for a few nights, the bed left vacant by the decease of her daughter. Thus were friends raised up to the desolate in her hour of greatest need ; and a mind ready to sink into utter despair was gradually roused into action.

The same judicious kindness which led to the removal of the infant, whilst yet its presence threatened to heighten the mourner's sorrow, induced the person who had taken charge of it to bring it back as soon as the bitterness of grief passed away. It was welcomed with an intensity of feeling of which it would be hard to say whether the character were pleasurable or the reverse ; and it was pressed to a bosom that beat with a thousand varied emotions, all of them too powerful for utterance. Yet, upon the whole, the little orphan was welcomed as a gift sent from Heaven. True, it was helpless, and from its helplessness could not fail, at least for a time, to be a serious burden upon one whose increasing infirmities stood in need of support. True, it was the child of sin and shame, a living memorial of a daughter's frailty ; but then it was all that was left to her out of a numerous offspring,—it was the only human being in whose veins her blood circulated. She blessed it, with an aching heart, as she received it from the arms of its nurse ; and from that hour took upon herself again the anxious duties of a parent.

All these events occurred long before I knew any thing of the parish. The orphan, when I arrived, had grown up almost to womanhood, and was, without any exception, the prettiest and most interesting girl in the parish. Who her father was, nobody but her grandmother could say ; for though various surmises were abroad, there was no sure ground on which to rest them, the old woman preserving an impenetrable silence. Report had it, indeed, that

Eleanor was the daughter of a gentleman ; but whether the report was well-founded or otherwise, as the child never became chargeable to the parish, there were no means of ascertaining. One thing, however, is certain, that of such a daughter no man had cause to be ashamed, though many a titled house would have willingly claimed her. Scarcely reaching to the middle stature, her form was cast in a mould of the most perfect symmetry ; and her air and gait, at once dignified and easy, stamped her as one whom nature never designed to move in the humbler circles. Her face, again, was a very model of Grecian beauty, — pale, placid, perhaps melancholy in its general expression, yet capable of being lighted up, as occasion offered, by smiles of the purest happiness ; and her quiet blue eye told a tale of feelings, deep, fervent, yet subdued. On the whole, it is not often that a more attractive creature is seen than Eleanor Tapsal, when she had attained to her seventeenth year, and I first beheld her.

Nor was it from her personal charms alone that Eleanor deserved to be admired. There never lived a more amiable or guileless creature.

“ Nobody knows that girl but myself,” was Dame Tapsal’s usual observation, as often as we chanced to meet her. “ I thought when it pleased God to send her into the world, that He was, indeed, resolved to bring my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave ; but experience has taught me that in this, as in all other arrangements, he acted for my good. She is the best and kindest-hearted child that ever breathed the breath of life ; and, as such, dearer to me by a thousand times than any child that I had. Could I but live to see her respectably settled, my fondest wish would be accomplished.”

Thus spoke one whose strong natural sense was not likely to be blinded by the partial feelings even of a grandmother ; and, from all that I could learn of the proceedings of her *protégée*, I am persuaded that she spoke the truth.

Time passed, bringing in its course those changes and revolutions which it usually brings. The old woman, struck with a paralytic affection, became powerless in her limbs ; and her mind partaking of the frailty of the body,

she relapsed almost into a second childhood. As a necessary consequence, the duties of a nurse devolved upon Eleanor, in addition to the care of providing for her grandmother's subsistence ; but the girl's energies seemed to rise with the urgency of the occasion, and she accomplished all with apparent ease and satisfaction. It was a beautiful sight to behold her tending the aged invalid ; supporting her tottering steps to the seat beside the door, or striving to amuse by reading from that book, which the invalid continued to love more from habit than because she understood it ; and not less interesting was she, when, surrounded by her little flock, she divided her care between them and her grandmother.

It was not to be expected that a girl so pretty, and, withal, so good, — whose acquirements, not less than her person, far surpassed what might have been looked for in her station, — would be regarded with indifference by the young men of the place. It was not often that Eleanor found time or inclination to mix in the gaieties of St. Alphage. She had been educated, whether wisely or otherwise I pretend not to say, in a fashion which somewhat unfitted her for the society of her ostensible equals ; but at Christmas, or other privileged seasons, when she did join in the festivities of the place, no partner was so eagerly sought as herself. Moreover, she was the standing toast at all parish meetings, and the pole-star of many an enamoured swain, whose courage failed him at the moment when he desired to make her aware of her influence over him. Yet were offers of marriage not wanting, some of which deserved, in a worldly point of view, to be pronounced advantageous ; for the wheelwright, the blacksmith, nay, the squire's bailiff himself, were of the number. But Eleanor declined them all. She had no desire to change her way of life : she was sure that Granny could not do without her ; and, as she loved Granny better than all the world besides, no consideration on earth could induce her to abandon her. These were her constant arguments, even when Granny herself, scarcely conscious of what she said, stood forth as the advocate of a suitor ; and as they were advanced with firmness, though with perfect

good-humour, they failed not to carry conviction along with them. Doubtless they had their full weight with one whose principles were as sound as her heart was warm, but there was another reason equally powerful: Eleanor had never beheld the man on whom her young heart could lean; and till she should see him, marriage was a thing not to be thought of.

Things continued thus till Eleanor's twentieth birthday was passed, and it seemed as if they were not likely ever to change their order, when an event befell which at once, and effectually, broke in upon the even tenor of their existence.

It was on the evening of a summer's day, soon after their little school had been dismissed, that Eleanor and her grandmother seated themselves, as usual, the one with her stockings, the other with her needlework, on a bench beside the door. The sun had just sunk behind the hill, and the whole of the romantic scenery around them glowed in the softened splendour of twilight. The blackbird and the thrush sang sweetly from a neighbouring hedgerow, and the clear full note of the nightingale was beginning to be heard, when they were suddenly startled from the state of mental and bodily quiet into which they had fallen, by a spectacle which is never witnessed without horror. There appeared, descending the hill at a tremendous rate, a gig, containing two persons, neither of whom seemed to possess the smallest command over the furious animal that dragged it. On they came, with the speed of lightning, till they had gained an angle in the road, where one path leads down towards the beach, and another by the churchyard up the glen. To have followed the former, at the rate at which they proceeded, must have inevitably led to destruction; no carriage could descend that declivity, except at a foot's pace, without gaining what is technically termed the mastery over the horses, and, as a necessary consequence, oversetting. But on either side of the narrow road there is a precipice many feet in depth, over which, if upset, they must have fallen; and from which there was slender probability that they could have been taken up alive. It is probable that the person who held the reins saw this; for, just as the enraged animal gained the perilous point, he made a

desperate effort, and succeeded, almost by a miracle, in turning it.

The consequence of this exertion on the part of the charioteer was, that the horse came on towards the church, like the blast of the simoom. Now the spectators could observe that he was covered with foam ; soon that his head was lowered to his knees, and that the persons who sat behind, ceasing to make farther efforts to stop him, were looking round for a convenient opportunity to leap out. But before they could effect their object, the carriage dashed round the corner of a wall. Sufficient space was not granted for clearing it ; and one of the wheels, striking against a protruding angle, was instantly broken. For a moment, as if checked by the resistance offered, the horse paused ; the next he again started forward, and the gig falling with a hideous crash, the unfortunate men were thrown out. All these occurrences took place in a shorter space of time than has been expended in relating them ; and the horse, with its shattered encumbrance, rushed past the school-house before either Eleanor or her grandmother could obey the natural impulse that directed them to retreat within doors.

They had risen, however, for the purpose, and would have carried it, in all probability, into effect, had not the situation of the travellers arrested the movement. One of these was on his feet, exhibiting manifest symptoms that from his perilous fall he had received no material injury ; the other lay perfectly motionless, like one in whom life was extinct. A fearful apprehension that the case really was so, instantly darted into their minds, and they trembled violently as they shrieked, rather than exclaimed, " Good God ! one of the gentlemen is killed." The next instant saw Eleanor dart from the cottage across the road, and hurry towards the object of her anxiety, whose plight, though not so desperate as her fears had represented, was certainly bad enough. One of his legs was broken, his left shoulder was dislocated, and he bled profusely from a severe cut in the head, which had come in contact with a sharp flint ; and, though ~~not~~ actually dead, he lay in a state of total insensibility.

The most callous could not look upon such a spectacle without being affected by it, nor the most prudent abstain from offering every assistance in his power. Eleanor, whose feelings were more than ordinarily acute, gave signs of deep commiseration; and, without waiting till the request had been made, entreated the wounded man's companion to remove him to the school-house. This was accordingly done, with the help of one or two labourers whom the accident had likewise drawn to the spot; and he was carefully put to bed in the best room which Dame Tapsal's cottage afforded. Finally, the parish doctor was called in, the stranger's wounds and bruises were dressed, and the broken limb being set, as well as the dislocation reduced, he was pronounced to be, though extremely ill, in no immediate danger.

It is not necessary to waste time by describing much at length how the events above recorded were brought about; let it suffice to state that the wounded man was a Captain Morton, a young officer attached to a regiment at that time quartered in Canterbury, and that the individual who accompanied him, and fared so much better than he, was his servant. They were on their way, it appeared, to visit a friend of the Captain, whose corps occupied the barracks at Shorncliffe, when the horse, taking fright at the report of a gun, in a field near the road, became furious, and as he was a young and fiery animal, no efforts of theirs had been sufficient to curb him. So much Eleanor and her grandmother heard soon after Morton had been put to bed; and the servant being sent back to head-quarters, with an account of his master's accident, they knew nothing more for many days after.

As little as I required to enter into a minute detail of the young man's sufferings whilst disease lay heavily upon him, or of the care and tenderness shown towards him by his kind-hearted hosts. Enough is done when I inform the reader that for many days the pain arising from his hurts was such as to render him quite insensible to any other consideration; and that the kind-hearted Eleanor intermitted nothing which promised at all to alleviate his distress. Dividing her time, as well as she could, between

her grandmother and the stranger, Eleanor seemed scarcely to leave the bedside of the latter either by day or night. All his medicines she administered to him with her own hands: his little gruels and comforts came to him regularly through the same channel; and his very wishes, as far as circumstances would allow, she appeared to anticipate. Attendance like this, aided by a constitution naturally sound, could not fail of producing the best effect; and the young man steadily, though very gradually, recovered.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SCHOOLMISTRESS.

THE accident referred to in the preceding page took place early in June, and before the middle of July Captain Morton was so far restored as to be able, when the state of the weather permitted, to wander forth for a brief walk from the school-house. I had seen a good deal of him during his confinement, and of course saw more of him now; and what I did see I felt in most respects disposed to admire. He was frank, open, manly, and generous; not very deeply read, it is true, but as well informed as young officers generally are; and his gratitude towards the kind creatures who had contributed so largely towards his recovery knew, or appeared to know, no bounds. Money he would have lavished upon them, had their honest pride permitted; but they refused to accept of a shilling beyond what I and the medical gentleman should pronounce a fair remuneration; whilst to his protestations of respect and esteem, and everlasting gratitude, Eleanor at least listened with impatience. There was a circumstance, however, which could not escape the observation of any one at all acquainted with human nature, and which gave me, I confess, no little uneasiness. Morton's attentions to his young nurse became, as his strength returned, more marked, and more peculiar

than could have been wished in an intercourse between persons filling situations in life so different ; and it was not difficult to discover that these were far from being unacceptable to the individual who was their object.

The truth is, that sickness on the one hand, and unremitting kindness on the other, produced in this instance the effect which they usually produce, when a handsome young man is the sufferer, and a very pretty girl the attendant. Morton naturally regarded with partial eyes the delicate creature who seemed ready at all moments to soothe his sorrows, and administer to his comforts ; whilst Eleanor could hardly fail of acquiring a lively interest in one whose sufferings rendered him in a great measure dependent upon her exertions. As health returned, these sentiments, far from losing, only gained ground on both sides. Eleanor saw in Morton all that her imagination had ever depicted — probably a great deal more than it ever depicted — of what is attractive in man ; whilst Morton, finding Eleanor endowed with finer feelings and a more enlarged understanding than frequently attach to persons in her station, believed her to be a very heroine of romance. His gratitude accordingly assumed by degrees a more tender character. He began to look upon her, not as a pretty country girl who had tended him in sickness, and therefore deserved to be rewarded, but as a creature whom fate had by some caprice thrown into a condition quite unworthy of her. In a word, Morton loved Eleanor before he could well understand that there was any danger of his committing so serious an offence ; whilst Eleanor, in utter ignorance of the passion with which she had inspired him, worshipped, rather than loved, him in return.

Days and weeks passed over in that state of intense happiness, which, when encouraged under such circumstances as those that attended it here, never fails to end in sorrow. Dame Tapsal either did not observe, or abstained from noticing, the growing intimacy between her grandchild and her lodger ; for Morton, now a convalescent, had regularly hired a couple of rooms in the school-house, and the lovers were, in consequence, permitted to enjoy as much of each other's society as they desired. They were constantly to-

gether. The invalid's walks were seldom taken till after the school was dismissed, when Eleanor, freed from restraint, was able to accompany him; and they generally chose such retired lanes and passes as most effectually screened them from the gaze of the curious. It was impossible that such things could long go on in a country place without public attention being attracted. Those who had formerly been loudest in Eleanor's praise began now to change their note; and many and bitter were the hints thrown out as to the probable end of such doings. Nay, numbers affected to discover, that both Eleanor and her grandmother had always possessed spirits too proud for their situation; and it was sagely enough concluded, in the language of Scripture, that "pride goes before a fall." In plain language, Eleanor, instead of being admired and respected as she had been by persons of all ages and both sexes, became to most an object of suspicion, whilst not a few spoke of her in terms of pretended pity, as one totally and irretrievably ruined.

Though far from inclining to the latter of these opinions, I saw so much of impropriety in the line of conduct which she at present pursued, that I determined, if possible, to put a stop to it. With this view I was proceeding on a certain day towards the school-house, when, in the church-yard through which it behoved me to pass, I was met by Captain Morton. The thought struck me that it were perhaps better to state the case as it stood to him, and I obeyed it. After exchanging the customary salutations, and receiving an assurance of his rapid convalescence, I entered upon my subject, by demanding how much longer he designed to remain amongst us; and how it came about that he was able to absent himself all this while from the routine of his professional duties. He answered these questions with perfect frankness and good-humour; but his answers were far from satisfactory. I therefore adopted a different course.

"Perhaps," said I, "you are not aware that your continued sojourn in a village like this excites some speculation among the rustics, and even among those who rank higher than the rustics."

“That,” replied he, “is extremely probable. Of all the peasantry in Europe, our own have their curiosity and surprise most easily excited; but, I presume, it is not on every occasion necessary to gratify the one, or allay the other.”

“No,” replied I, “unless the characters of ourselves or others be endangered; and then, I take it, we are bound to pay attention even to the surmises of the vulgar.”

Captain Morton looked startled. It seemed as if he saw in part into my design, yet were unwilling to confess as much.

“You say truly,” answered he; “but in this case there can be no hazard to any body’s reputation. I am my own master, at least till my leave expire; and if I choose to spend my time here, who has a right to enquire into the reason?”

“Captain Morton,” said I, gravely, “I will be candid with you. The persons with whom you lodge have, as you yourself acknowledge, laid you under serious obligations; I am sure you would not wish, in return for their kindness, to work them evil. But you have already wrought them evil, and if you continue your residence here much longer, that evil will be beyond your power to remedy. Your intimacy with Eleanor has not passed unnoticed, and it can be no satisfaction to you to learn that the very worst construction is put upon it.”

“Good God!” exclaimed he, “who has dared to act thus? Eleanor is as pure and good as she was when I first beheld her, and he that insinuates otherwise is guilty of the grossest injustice.”

“That,” replied I, “I do not doubt; but surely you must yourself perceive that a continued intimacy between a man of your rank and a girl in her humble station must blast the fame of the latter, however spotless. The world cannot understand that such things may be, and yet be innocently.”

“What would you have me do?” asked he. “To injure her from whom I have received so much kindness is the last thing in the world that I desire. How would you

have me act, so as to repair the fault which, you say, I have committed?"

"I would have you make immediate arrangements for quitting St. Alphage; and till these are complete, seek the society of Eleanor as little as you can. This is the only means of proving how groundless the rumours are to which your past imprudence has given rise."

"Quit St. Alphage immediately!" replied he; "why, my dear sir, that is impossible. My home is with my regiment, for my family reside in a remote county; and in my present state of health the tumult of a barrack were insufferable. Besides, would not proceedings so abrupt tend to strengthen, rather than weaken, the suspicions at which you hint?"

"Well, then," said I, "at all events change your lodgings. Those which you inhabit at present cannot be very commodious, and the sea air would assuredly be of benefit to you. Remove at least to Sandgate, or even to Folkstone."

Morton was silent for a minute, and then said, "Even this I am apprehensive that I shall not be able to effect. I have hired my present lodgings for the summer, and it would be but a shabby return to the good dame were I abruptly to violate my bargain."

"But you may quit your lodgings, without refusing to pay for them," observed I.

There was a second lengthened pause, which he seemed by no means desirous to interrupt, so I broke in upon it. "The truth is, Captain Morton, that something of this kind must be done, otherwise Eleanor is ruined. I cannot for a moment believe that the tales already in circulation have the smallest truth in them; but it is not what I believe, but what the world believes. Unless you intend to marry the girl, which, I presume, is out of the question, you must cease to live as you do, or you must forfeit the good opinion of all honourable persons."

"Well," replied he, smiling, "you speak plainly at all events, and, I am sure, conscientiously. I will consider of this matter, and if my mature judgment tell me that you are right, I will obey you."

We parted here, and as he had given me this pledge, I considered myself bound to leave the matter, at least for a time, in his hands. I accordingly returned home, and for several days abstained from taking any farther interest in the question.

The lapse of a week served to convince me, that the hope which I had nourished, in consequence of the above conversation, was perfectly groundless. Morton not only made no preparations for shifting his residence, but he continued, day after day, to indulge in those lonely walks with Eleanor, which had already told so much against her; and he studiously avoided — at least, so it appeared to me — all opportunity of holding farther conversation with me on the subject. Hurt at this, as well because it occasioned me to relinquish, in some degree, the good opinion which I had hitherto nourished of the young man, as because it excited, almost against my will, suspicions of Eleanor herself, I resolved to address myself at once to the girl; and for this purpose I sought her. She was easily found, for Eleanor never shunned any one, least of all myself; and she readily listened to my remarks, though not without extreme emotion. My words seemed to pierce into her very heart. A veil was suddenly torn from before her eyes, and she became aware of the reality of her situation, which she had not hitherto contemplated, except through its medium. She wept bitterly; and having thanked me for my advice, and promised to attend to it, we parted.

I had not quitted her many minutes, when Morton, who happened during my visit to be from home, returned. It was the hour which they usually devoted to their evening walk, and, as usual, he tapped at the door of the little parlour, as a signal that he was ready and waiting. It was ajar, and he entered, — not to be met, as had hitherto been the case, with smiles and blushes, but to see Eleanor seated in the great chair near the fireplace, and drowned in tears. She rose as he approached, and strove to wipe away the trace of weeping; but her effort availed her nothing: once more she threw herself into the chair, and sobbed violently.

“Eleanor,” exclaimed Morton, seriously alarmed as

well as shocked, "for Heaven's sake, what is the matter?"

"Oh, nothing, Captain Morton," replied she, struggling hard to compose herself; "nothing but what I ought to have known long ago. We must not walk together any more: it is not fit that a poor girl like myself should keep company with you; and you must leave us."

"Who has put this nonsense into your head?" cried he, whilst his cheek burned with blushes.

"It is not nonsense, sir," answered the poor girl. "Mr. Williams has just been here, and has told me how improper my conduct is; and I know that he never says what he does not think, and what he thinks must be right."

"Mr. Williams is no judge of such matters as this, Eleanor. I allow him to be as good a man as lives; but he knows nothing of the world, and has no right whatever to give an opinion in a case quite beyond the reach of his comprehension. Dry up your tears, and come with me as heretofore; I will give you a thousand reasons why, in this instance, Mr. Williams should be mistaken."

"Ah, but it is not Mr. Williams alone that says so," replied Eleanor; "all the neighbours cry out against me, and there is something within, Captain Morton, which assures me that they are right. No, no, we must walk no more together. Go, go, and leave us."

"Never, Eleanor!" exclaimed Morton, advancing towards her, and putting his arm round her waist. "If I have hitherto abstained from speaking to you as I do now, it is not because I have been hitherto insensible to my own feelings. Eleanor, I love you, passionately, ardently love you; we must never part — you must be mine!"

Poor Eleanor could not reply. Her head fell insensibly upon his shoulder; and, with a silence far more eloquent than words, she confessed that of her own fate she was no longer the arbitress. That which followed was exactly such as might have been expected. Eleanor was easily persuaded to keep the true nature of the connection secret, till Morton should be able to reconcile his family to the match; and that evening, and for many evenings after, they walked abroad together as they had done before.

In this manner July glided away, the young people devoting themselves more and more to each other, and the villagers exhibiting by their manner unequivocal proofs that they looked upon Eleanor as utterly fallen. For myself, I spoke even more plainly to Dame Tapsal than I had done to her grand-daughter ; but the old woman's natural acuteness of understanding was gone. She either could not see the force of my reasoning, or motives of which I was not permitted to weigh the force induced her to disregard them. She reposed the fullest trust in Eleanor's correct principles. She was sure that Captain Morton would never be villain enough to aim at abusing the confidence with which he was treated ; and if he did, she knew her child sufficiently to be aware, that his attempts would meet with no encouragement. I was at no loss in conjecturing, from the general strain of her replies, that the good dame had become a dupe in one of two ways : either she had listened too fondly to the sophistry of her guest ; or her ambition, surviving, as it were, every other passion, blinded her into the persuasion that the personal beauty of Eleanor was sufficient to counterbalance the defects of birth and education, and that the affair, if it ended in any thing serious, would end in marriage.

July passed away, and August commenced, bringing with it the termination of Captain Morton's leave of absence. On the 10th it behoved him to be present at headquarters ; and he had already obtained so many indulgences, that to expect more would have been useless. Of course the lovers determined to make the most of the few days that remained to them, and the school being neglected, the mornings as well as evenings were spent in each other's society. But the progress of time no exertion could arrest, and at last the fatal day arrived which was doomed to witness their parting. Many and ardent were the protestations uttered by Morton, that he would soon return to claim her for his bride ; and Eleanor's tears, though they flowed fast, can hardly be said to have been tears of unmitigated sorrow. Hope was still hers, — the hope that never leaves us, till we know from sad experience how little its syren tones are to be trusted. She had never yet

doubted Morton's professions, — how could she doubt them, pronounced as they were with all the energy of deep passion and fervent grief? No, no! for a time, doubtless, she was doomed to be desolate enough; but in the end all her sorrows would be dispelled. Thus they parted, he with vows of eternal fidelity upon his lips, and she with a strong persuasion in her heart that those lips could utter nothing but the truth.

For some weeks after Morton's departure nothing occurred calculated to excite the apprehensions of Eleanor that her confidence had been misplaced. It is true that he came not, as he had promised; but then he wrote regularly once a-week, and his absence was easily accounted for by a press of military duty, which, as she well knew, it was impossible for him to evade. She accordingly persevered in her own quiet way, existing upon memory when hope began to wax faint, and applying again to hope when memory by chance failed her. Thus the remainder of August and the whole of September were passed, and October, with its cold winds and short days, found matters unchanged. Now then, at length, Eleanor began to apprehend that all was not as it ought to be. He had solemnly assured her that within three weeks at the farthest he should be able to arrange his affairs; but six weeks were gone without his pledge being redeemed, and, what was worst of all, his very correspondence began, by degrees, to be both less regular, and more distracting. Poor Eleanor! now, at length, doubts and fears began to pass like dark shadows over her, and visions the most hideous rose as frequently into her mind as their opposites.

It was the month of November, and for five weeks previously Eleanor had received no communication from Morton. Day after day she repaired to the post-office, with a quick step and a beating heart; and day after day she returned, dejected, disappointed, sorrowful, and visibly changed. Hers was not a constitution to hold out against the inroads of violent agitation, and her health began rapidly to decline. Still she clung to the persuasion that even yet Morton meant not to deceive. She looked back upon the hours that she had watched beside his sick bed;

she remembered his expressions of gratitude uttered there ; she traced once again the whole progress of his passion ; and seeing in it nothing from which the most sensitive delicacy could shrink, she would not permit the idea to root itself in her mind, that time could change him. Nevertheless, anxiety, doubt, fear, and hope itself, made visible inroads upon her health ; and long before the year expired, she was pronounced to be in a decline.

From what has already been stated of Eleanor's temperament of mind and body, the reader will easily understand that consumption, once begun, would, in her case, do its work with even more than common rapidity. The case was so. Week by week, day by day, hour by hour, she wasted, till at last she kept her bed entirely. All hope of her recovery was now laid aside, and she herself perceived, not less surely than those about her, that her days were numbered.

She was thus circumstanced, having received no communication from Morton during three months previously, when, on a cold gusty day in February, in the midst of a heavy fall of snow, a carriage drove to the door of the school-house. I happened at the moment to be in her room, and saw from the window a young man alight, whom I instantly recognised as Morton. I hurried out of the chamber with the view of arresting him in his progress, fearful of the consequences that might follow, should his arrival be made too suddenly known ; and I met him, just as he had raised the latch, and was about to enter.

" Ah, Mr. Williams !" cried he, grasping me by the hand, " this is, indeed, a happy omen. Now confess, before I see Eleanor, that you did me injustice ; for here I am, after many serious trials, come in my own proper person to prove that I am not the villain you accounted me."

I was much affected, and my countenance betrayed my feelings.

" How is this ?" exclaimed he, " sorrowful, downcast ! surely nothing is wrong with Eleanor ? She is still the gentle and affectionate creature that she was when she and

I parted? What mean these melancholy looks? I had anticipated a different welcome from this."

"Come with me," said I, "to the Vicarage, and you shall know all; but speak softly while you are here. Eleanor has been ill; your voice might agitate her even fatally."

I never beheld a more sudden change of expression than passed at this announcement over Morton's face. His smile withered, as it were, upon his lip; and in a state of agitation that left him no power over himself, he permitted me to draw his arm through mine, and to lead him away. It is probable that from my manner he expected to hear even more tremendous tidings than those which awaited him; for at first, though I asserted the contrary over and over again, he seemed to doubt whether Eleanor were not already dead. But when satisfied that the case was not so, hardly any persuasions of mine could prevail upon him to remain apart from her. A single word from his lips would go farther, he asserted, towards her recovery, than all the prescriptions of the faculty; and it were the height of cruelty to detain him where he was a moment longer. I persisted, however, in my entreaties, that he would at least allow me to prepare her for the interview; and to that he at last gave a reluctant consent.

Leaving him in the Vicarage, I hurried off to the school-house, for the purpose of executing my assumed trust; and I was already within a rood of the door, when a shrill and ear-piercing cry rang through my brain, and forcibly arrested my progress. That it came from Eleanor's chamber could not be doubted; but by whom uttered, or on what occasion, it was no easy matter to divine. I sprang forward in a state of apprehension the more distressing because it was vague; and hurrying to the sick room, was soon made aware of the catastrophe which had occurred. There was no effect of over-wrought feeling, no sudden shock of the nervous system, for Eleanor knew nothing of Morton's arrival; but an equally sudden, though perhaps a less tumultuous agitation, ended at once her sorrows and her life. A violent fit of coughing had burst a blood vessel, the

crimson stream from which flooded the floor, and Eleanor, after uttering the shriek that so appalled me, fell asleep.

Over the scene which followed, I must draw a veil of forgetfulness; it too nearly resembles one in which I was myself an actor, to be thought of, even now, with calmness, and to record it minutely is a task to which I find myself incompetent; let it suffice to state, that the horror of Morton, when that terrible issue was communicated to him, left an impression upon all who witnessed it not to be effaced; and that whatever might have been the conduct of the villagers towards Eleanor in her lifetime, at her death she was sincerely lamented. She was buried without parade in a grave selected for her by her betrothed, and a stone raised to her memory.

With respect to Morton himself, it is but justice to say, that as he never made the most distant attempt to undermine the virtue of his artless sweetheart, so to the last he had continued faithful to her. But Morton was an only son, whose parents revelled in wealth; and the idea of his marrying a village girl was one which they could not be brought to admit. The consequence was, that every obstacle was thrown in the way of the indulgence of his wishes; nor was it till their opposition began seriously to affect his health, that they gave at last a reluctant consent. His long silence, again, though injudicious, was by no means unkindly meant. Deeming it utterly hopeless to look for his father's sanction to the match, he did what he considered to be his duty, by dropping a correspondence which promised to lead to nothing; and he acted thus, not more with a view to his own welfare than to that of Eleanor. He calculated on the pliability of an untutored peasant girl, and took it for granted, that were she satisfied of his intention to violate his promises, she would cease to take an interest in his fate. Such, at least, was his own account of the matter; though for its truth I pretend not to vouch.

One thing, however, is certain, that of Dame Tapsal he ever after took the greatest care. He settled upon her a pension, sufficient to maintain her in comfort without the aid of a school, which she was no longer capable of teach-

ing ; and though she lived to reap the fruits of his bounty but a very short time, it deserves not the less to be recorded.

Such was the fate of Eleanor Tapsal the schoolmistress.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SHIPWRECK.

DURING the months of February and March, in the year 18—, the coast of Kent was visited by a succession of violent storms, which caused a greater quantity of damage to the shipping and villages on the sea-shore than had been known to have occurred in the memory of man. On a certain day in the earlier part of the latter month, my duties led me to visit that quarter of my parish which lies on the other side of the last range of hills, and adjacent to the parish, or rather to the outskirts of the town of Folkstone. The wind was out with a degree of fury, such as even I, who reside so near this tempestuous coast, have seldom witnessed. The clouds were not sailing, but rushing through the sky, in grey fleeces : a huge black mass came up from time to time upon the blast, driving away from east to west, and sending forth a shower of hailstones, which beat in my face as I ascended the height, and compelled me more than once to cling to a piece of gorse, or fern, for support. The sheep were all cowering under the hill-top for shelter, with their backs turned towards the storm, and huddled closely together ; and the shepherds either took their places beside them, or ran home to their different houses amongst the glens and hollows near. It was, indeed, a day in which no one who could find a roof to cover him would have chosen to be abroad ; so boisterous was the gale, and so keen and cutting were the gusts of hail and sleet which rode from time to time upon it.

It is impossible for one whose habitation, though it be
seen from a view of the ocean, stands within the sound
of its waves, when they are in wrath, not to think with
peculiar anxiety, during every gale or storm, of the poor
mariners who are exposed to its violence. To-day, in par-
ticular, I felt myself full of apprehension; for there was a
considerable fleet of vessels at anchor in the Downs, and
several large Indiamen had been seen at a late hour last
night not far from the Point of Dungeness. They had
not passed during the night; indeed, the night had been
too dark, and too blustering, to encourage them to lift their
anchors; but the gale had increased so much towards sun-
rise, and was still so heavy, that I could hardly hope that
the anchors had not dragged, or, which might prove even
more fatal, that the cables had not parted.

As I neared the top of the hill, the noise of the mighty
element increased upon me, till its roar would have almost
drowned the thunder itself, so loud and so increasing had
it become. But if the sense of hearing had impressed me
with feelings of awe, these feelings were increased to an
indescribable degree by the spectacle which presented itself
to the sense of sight. Immediately below me was the
ocean, boiling and foaming far and near — one huge cal-
dron of troubled waters, which tossed and tumbled, as if a
thousand fires were burning beneath it. The coast of
France, which, on other days, may be distinctly seen, even
to the glancing of a sunbeam on the windows of the houses
in Calais, was now entirely hidden. I could not, indeed, send
my gaze beyond mid-space between the two shores; and from
that point onwards, wave followed wave, in fearful succes-
sion, till, one after another, they burst in tremendous force
upon the chalky cliffs and pebbly strand of Kent. The
town of Folkstone appeared devoted to utter destruction.
The tide was pouring through its lower street, sweeping
all live and dead substances before it: the few fishing ves-
sels which had been moored in the harbour were lying
high and dry, far up the side of the hill, or floating in
broken fragments upon the water; whilst the inhabitants,
who had with difficulty escaped, were congregated in the
upper parts of the town, to watch with grief and dismay

the progress of a power to which human ingenuity could oppose no obstacle. All this was awful enough ; but my fears were too much alive for the brave men who were embarked in ships, to think much of the state of those who suffered only from a loss of property.

I looked anxiously, first towards the Downs, and afterwards in the direction of Dungeness. From the former point the fleet had entirely disappeared. Many I saw stranded upon the shore ; others had probably escaped to a more safe anchorage ; and those which had endeavoured to beat out to sea were just visible on the lower part of the Goodwins. The waves were dashing over their broken hulls, and their very masts were hidden, as every breaker, of a size somewhat larger than the rest, burst upon them. For them and for their crews there was no hope — all must perish — and all did perish before I quitted my station. In the direction of Dungeness, again, only one ship could be descried. She had succeeded, apparently, in working out before the storm had reached its height ; and now having secured sea-room was endeavouring to scud, either for the Downs or the river. Her top-gallant masts were all struck ; the only sail hoisted was the fore-top-sail, and that close-reefed ; under which she made way, rapidly indeed, but not without falling every moment faster and faster to leeward. It was, in truth, manifest, that if she persisted in going on, she must run ashore several miles on this side of Deal ; and of that her crew appeared to be as fully convinced as those who watched her from the land.

She was now abreast of Folkstone, with a hurricane right on shore, and herself not above a mile and a half from the breakers. Having carried a telescope in my hand, I saw by the help of it that her decks were crowded with people, some of whom held by the rigging and shrouds, others by the binnacles and bulk-heads ; whilst some were lashed to the wheel, by which they vainly endeavoured to guide her. An attempt was now made to wear, but it failed. The ship reeled round, and drove towards the shore with a velocity which caused me to shut my eyes, that I might escape at least the horror of beholding her strike. But she did not strike. Two anchors were let go

at once from the bow. By little short of a miracle, they held ; and as if Heaven itself had desired to save her, the tempest suddenly lulled. The waves, however, ran as they had run before, " mountain high ;" consequently no boat could be launched to her assistance ; and there she rode, straining and pitching her bows and bulwarks under, at the mercy of a couple of cables, and a couple of crooked bits of iron.

Having stood for about half an hour to observe her, and fancying that, as she had hitherto done well, she would continue so to do, especially as I thought that I could observe a clearing up to leeward, indicative of a change of wind, I paid the visit which I set out to pay, and returned home. Here the rest of the morning was spent in alternate hope and fear, as the face of the heavens seemed to indicate a total cessation or a renewal of the storm ; but hope gradually gave way to alarm, and alarm grew into despair, soon after darkness began. The sun went down fiery red, like a ball of burning coal. The wind, as if hushing him to sleep, began again to renew its violence. It came, for a while, in alternate lulls and gusts ; which, succeeding each other more rapidly every moment, ended at length in the same tremendous hurricane which had prevailed during the day. I could not sit quietly in my chair. " I must go," said I, " to see how the Indiaman fares ; and I will pray upon the beach for the poor people whom I cannot otherwise serve." So saying, I put on my great coat, and seizing my hat and stick, sallied forth.

The clock struck nine as I laid my hand on the latch ; and I rejoiced to find, on crossing the threshold, that it was moonlight. I looked up into the sky, and beheld the fleeces receding in the direction which they had followed in the morning ; but not so thick as greatly to obscure the moon's rays ; which, on the contrary, shone out clear and bright occasionally, and at all times exerted some influence. I rejoiced at this ; not only because I regarded it as a good omen, but because I hoped that it might prove of essential service to the people on board ; whose fears, at least, would be more tolerable than if the night had been pitchy dark ; and under this impression I pushed on with a quick pace.

But my satisfaction was not of long continuance, — if, indeed, the feeling which the mere glancing of the moon's rays had excited be worthy of that title.

I had not yet reached the top of the hill, when the report of a gun, heard amidst the roar of the tempest, assured me that the vessel had struck. It came upon me like the last despairing shriek of a drowning man, who cries out because nature so urges him, though aware that no human aid is at hand. Nor were my prognostications erroneous. When I attained the summit, I beheld a multitude of lights glancing along the shore; I heard voices and shouts, and every other indication which sound could give, that all was over. I ran towards the spot, and beheld the ship, her masts gone, and her hull broken, in the midst of the breakers, at the distance of a full mile and a half from the land. Another gun was fired — it was the last. Planks, bulk-heads, and spars, began now to drive upon the shingle. A sort of rending noise came from the wreck, which instantly disappeared. She had split up into fragments, and of the living creatures which had hitherto clung to her, the majority found a grave amid the surf.

There are few spectacles more appalling, and at the same time more full of deep excitation, than that of a shipwreck. Not only is your attention drawn to the vessel and its crew, but the hurry and bustle on shore — the real sympathy displayed by men from whose outward appearance little sympathy could be augured — the cries, and exclamations, and movements of the crowd, all tend to give to the thing a degree of additional interest, which in sober earnest it hardly requires. It is enough to see a number of our fellow-creatures hovering on the brink of eternity, without having our feelings additionally worked upon by the proceedings of those around us.

A cry was now raised for boats. “Where is the Dauntless?” shouted one.

“High and dry,” exclaimed another.

“Is the Nancy safe?”

“No, she is in pieces.”

And so it was, that not a boat or barge of all that usually lay at anchor in the harbour could be brought on

the instant into play. But the Kentish fishermen are not restrained from action by trifles. "Launch the Dauntless,"—"Down with the Sisters,"—"There lies the Pilot," were echoed from mouth to mouth; and in half a second a hundred hands were at work, hauling the boats named from the beach, where the ebb-tide had left them, and rolling them along the shingle. "Hurrah, hurrah!" was now the only word uttered. Down they came over the loose stones, till they neared the reach of the waves, and then, having watched a receding billow, the gallant party which dragged them hurled them into the breakers, whilst half a dozen stout fellows sprang into each as it rose upon the foam. "God speed ye, God speed ye! away, away!" and away they went. But the next wave was fatal to two of them. Over they rolled, bottom upwards, and the crews were dashed upon the beach. The third, however, rode it out. She bore one lantern in her bow, and another in her stern; and it was truly a nervous thing to watch these lights appearing and disappearing, as the brave boat rose and fell with the rise and fall of the waters.

In the mean while, many eyes were eagerly turned towards the water-mark, with the expectation of discovering some human creature who might be washed ashore, on a plank or raft. All such, however, came tenantless. Either the beings who had clung to them lost their hold, or, not expecting the ship to part so suddenly as she did, they neglected the precaution of making themselves fast to the spars. Our best hope, accordingly, centred in our own boat, which we saw bravely making her way; the tide being in her favour, though the wind was against her. At length she appeared to have gained her utmost limit. There she lingered, rising and falling, her lights glancing and disappearing to our unspeakable terror, for a full quarter of an hour; when having, as it would seem, done her utmost, she put about, and made towards land. Twenty torches were held up to guide her. Her progress was like that of the lightning, and her crew having watched the opportunity, she mounted upon the top of a wave, and rushed with its white foam, far up the beach. Then our party running

in, seized her by the bow, and so securing her against the ebbing, in three seconds she was safe.

The search which her dauntless rowers had undertaken proved all but fruitless. So complete was the wreck, that they could not discern any single portion of the Indiaman more attractive than the rest. Nothing could be observed, indeed, in the darkness of the night, except floating boards, all of them without occupants; and hence their sole success was in saving the life of one man, whom they found clinging to a hen-coop, and a good deal exhausted. I must do the men of Kent the justice to observe, that the shipwrecked individual had no right to complain of want of hospitality. Each of the spectators appeared more anxious than the rest to afford him accommodation; and it was only because I pressed his removal to the Vicarage, that they yielded the point to me. A postchaise was accordingly prepared, into which we lifted him; and as the distance by the road exceeds not one mile, he was undressed, and laid in our best bed, within half an hour of his landing. Some mulled wine and other cordials being administered to him, he was left to his repose, and it was not till a late hour on the following day that the ringing of his bell gave testimony that he had awoke from the sleep into which our narcotics had lulled him.

When he joined our family circle next morning, we were all much struck with the appearance and demeanour of the stranger. He was very tall, considerably upwards of six feet — his figure was commanding and noble — his features were fine; but there was an expression of wildness in his dark eye, which could not pass unobserved. His age I should guess to have been about fifty; perhaps it was under that, for black hair soon grows grey; and the lines, which were strongly marked in his forehead, seemed to be the traces rather of violent passions than of time. With respect to his manner, it is not very easy to describe it. No one could mistake that he was a gentleman; but there was a restlessness and incoherence in his conversation, which produced the reverse of an agreeable sensation upon those around him. It was curious enough that he never once alluded, of his own accord, to the events of yesterday.

We, of course, referred to them, and were beginning to congratulate him upon his escape, but he abruptly changed the subject, by asking some trifling questions respecting the surrounding country. Had any person entered the parlour, ignorant of the mode of his arrival amongst us, he would have imagined that the stranger had landed the day before, in perfect safety, and in an ordinary way, from a voyage. The effect of all this upon the ladies was to create in them feelings of absolute horror, and they soon began to view him with dismay ; for myself, I was astonished, and more than half-suspected that the poor gentleman was not altogether in his sound senses.

The stranger continued an inmate of my house for three whole days, and nothing passed between us all this while beyond the common intercourse of social life. I did not deem it consistent with propriety to demand his name, or to make any enquiry into his condition ; and he, as it appeared, felt no inclination voluntarily to offer the information. Only once he observed, casually, that he was afraid he must intrude upon my hospitality till he should receive remittances which might enable him to travel ; for that there was no money in his pockets when the ship foundered, and that all his effects had perished. Beyond this, however, he communicated to me nothing, and of his company I enjoyed no more than was absolutely indispensable during meals.

Whilst his sojourn lasted, our mode of living was accordingly this : the stranger rose early, and walked out ; he returned to breakfast, which he hastily swallowed, and then went forth again ; and immediately on the conclusion of dinner, he retired to his apartment, where the remainder of the evening was spent in writing. This I learned from my servant, who carried up lights when he rang for them ; and because he had requested me to supply him with pens, ink, and paper ; but whether they were letters, or what the subject of his writings might be, I, of course, had no means of ascertaining. On the evening of the third day, however, a slight change occurred in his manner. He sat with me after the dinner had been removed, and made an effort to be sociable, but he drank no wine ; and continually, after

supporting a common-place conversation for several minutes, relapsed into silence. The ladies soon left us, and then it was that I determined to sound him, as delicately as I could, on the state of his mind.

The fire was blazing brightly, for the evening was frosty and calm : we had drawn our chairs round it, and I again urged him to take wine.

“ I have not tasted wine,” said he, “ these twenty years, and I may not taste it while I live.”

“ Perhaps it disagrees with you ; you may be of a consumptive or inflammatory habit ? ”

“ I know not what you mean by inflammatory,” said he ; “ there are inflammations of the body, and inflammations of the mind ; mine is, I believe, of the latter description.— Is it not strange,” continued he, abruptly, “ that the only individual saved out of a whole ship’s company should be one who desired it not ? Heavens ! if you had heard the lamentations of the poor wretches in that vessel when she struck, if you had seen their wild and despairing looks — strange, strange, that they should perish, and I survive ! Are you a fatalist ? ”

I must confess that this commencement of familiarity between us by no means delighted me. I looked at my guest again, and saw with horror a sort of smile or grin upon his countenance, indicative of a feeling such as I could not commend. “ I am not a fatalist,” answered I ; “ nor am I able to conceive how any rational being can adopt a creed so absurd. He who regards himself as the mere tool of invincible destiny must hold his opinion in direct opposition to the surest of all testimony — that of consciousness.”

“ Yet some of the wisest men the world has ever produced were fatalists,” rejoined he. “ Among the celebrated writers of antiquity, almost all were fatalists. Homer and Hesiod were both fatalists. Socrates and Plato were of the same way of thinking ; so were Zeno, Chrysippus, Epicurus, and all the Stoics. So was Herodotus, so was Lucretius. Seneca has declared, that the same chain of necessity constrains both gods and men ; and even Cicero shows, in more passages than one, a leaning favourable to

a similar view of the subject. In India, fatalism has ever prevailed. Those wise men, for an acquaintance with whose philosophy the sages of Greece scrupled not to undertake long and dangerous journeys, were all believers in irresistible destiny; and the principles which they held their descendants hold at the present day. Mohammed was a fatalist; and though he played upon the credulity of mankind, who will deny him the praise of transcendent talents? And to come nearer home, has not our own country produced a host of fatalists among her distinguished sons? What was Hobbes, Lord Kames, Hume, Priestley, ay, and greater than all these, what was Locke? A man may well be pardoned who adopts opinions which can be supported by such names as these."

Though not very anxious to enter into a metaphysical discussion, and though, indeed, I had hoped to draw my guest into a conversation on his own situation and circumstances, rather than to follow him through the labyrinth into which I saw we were about to plunge, I considered it due to my character and station to notice this remark:—"With respect to the classical writers you have named," replied I, "it is very true that the greater number are generally considered to have held the sentiments you attribute to them: my own persuasion, however, is, that the opinion is ill-founded. Whether Socrates was a fatalist or not, we are scarcely competent to judge, inasmuch as none of his own writings have come down to us; but I see the reverse of proof of the matter in the account given of his philosophy by his pupils. It was surely not consistent with fatalism to look forward, as he undeniably did, to a state of rewards and punishments beyond the present life. Fatalism, properly so called, is directly contrary to a theory, which necessarily depends upon moral responsibility; for moral responsibility cannot exist without perfect freedom of will. Of all the philosophers, therefore, whom you have enumerated, perhaps Lucretius is, in point of fact, the only real fatalist. Seneca speaks, indeed, in the sentence referred to, too strongly: but he more than once contradicts himself; whilst his reflections on the approach of death clearly imply, that, in the proper sense of the term, he was no

fatalist. The fatalism of Aristotle and Plato, again, extended only to such matters as we should call accidental occurrences; indeed, it may be held as a general truth, that not one among them all, Lucretius only excepted, no, not even the Stoics themselves, carried their notions on this head into the region of morals. As a proof of this, you have only to attend to the leading principle of their doctrines. The Stoics held, that the mind should not depend upon the body at all; that perfection was to be attained only by the absolute subjection of the passions to the understanding. Now, such an opinion cannot surely subsist, with a persuasion, that man is a mere machine, continually guided by the most pressing motives. For this, I apprehend, is all that can be meant by moral fatalism. That you should have enumerated Cicero among the defenders of fatalism particularly surprises me. True, he sometimes employs the common language of the day, exactly as I might remark, that the falling of my horse, or the dislocation of my arm, occurred by chance, though quite aware that chance is a non-entity. But when he seriously treats of fate, and its influence, he attributes to it no more power than we should attribute to Providence. Lucretius was, indeed, a fatalist, and to teach fatalism in its true sense is one object of his writings; but even he contradicts himself more than once, as all men must who support opinions in the face of their own consciousness.

“With respect to the sentiments of the Brahmins and of Mohammed, I scarcely think that they were worth quoting; whilst the contradictions and absurdities into which our own writers fall have been pointed out too frequently to render it necessary that I should point them out again. Of Locke’s fatalism, however, I would observe, that it amounts to nothing more, than a firm persuasion of the necessity which exists, that there should be some invisible power, not corporeal, to guide by fixed laws the corporeal world. Beyond this, I can discover no evidence of his having gone; and I esteem it an unfair thing towards him, that his name should be held out as giving authority to sentiments so outrageous. But, perhaps, I am doing you injustice all this while. Your fatalism,

probably, goes no farther than my chance; and if so, I freely allow, that, in our progress through life, many events happen for which we find it no easy matter to account."

The stranger was silent for some moments, and so was I; for I was not desirous of continuing the controversy, and yet wished not to appear afraid of it.

"It may be so," he at length said, and his countenance assumed at the same time a cast of deep melancholy; "I may be mistaken. There may be no power superior to us — we may be our own puppets, and not the puppets of fate; but I would give worlds to think otherwise. Do you see this mark?" continued he, at the same time untying his cravat, and exhibiting a broad scar round his throat, as if an iron collar had cut into the skin for many years: "how came that there?"

"How can I tell?" replied I. "Perhaps you were born with it, or——"

"Perhaps it was forced upon me," interrupted he, and then laughed hysterically.

I was now quite convinced, that the unfortunate man's reason was unsettled, and began to wish him fairly on his way to some other abode. But he recovered his composure again instantly, and, starting a new subject of conversation, became as rational and collected as possible. I now learned from him, for the first time, that he had taken his passage at Calcutta, having spent several years in India, and was returning to enjoy the fruits of his services at home. When he used the word "enjoy," indeed, I saw the same satanic curl of the lip which had shocked me before; but it soon passed away, and during the rest of the evening he was more collected and rational than we had seen him. He remained with us till our usual hour of parting; and then, having coldly wished good night to the ladies, and waited till they retired, he addressed himself to me in the following terms:—

"I have to thank you, sir, for much kindness and hospitality,—kindness bestowed upon one whom you did not know, and who is far from being worthy of it. I likewise owe to your people my life. It is a poor boon; but it

must not get go unrequited. Do me the favour to distribute the contents of this purse amongst them. To yourself I can offer no remuneration ; but as I see that you feel an interest in me, and that my manner has excited your curiosity, I have determined to gratify it. To enter into the detail of my own history in ordinary conversation is a task too hard for me : I have not even noted it down upon paper without much suffering. But it is recorded, and the sad record I now commit to you. This night I take my departure. My real name you will, of course, excuse me for concealing, as well as the names of other actors in the eventful drama ; but the facts stand as they occurred. Why I have thus made you my confidant, I cannot tell. I have never acted so with any one besides ; and the fact that I am now intrusting a mere stranger with a secret such as mine, confirms me in my belief, that we are none of us our own masters.—Farewell ! I hear the carriage at the door.”

The stranger here put into my hands the produce of his nocturnal labours, in the shape of a packet of papers closely written ; and before I had time to remonstrate with him on the abruptness of his departure, or to press his stay, he had quitted the house : the noise of wheels was soon heard, and the stranger was gone. I never saw or heard of him afterwards.

As soon as I had so far recovered my astonishment as to be fully convinced that the stranger was gone, I sat down to peruse the manuscript which he had committed, under circumstances so peculiar, to my care. It was written in a clear, strong, legible hand. Here and there traces of haste might be discovered in it, as if the writer had hurried over a passage or two under the influence of excited feelings ; but, in general, the person who inspected it would have said, that it had been compiled with perfect composure—even deliberation. Yet the opening was certainly not such as a man in his calm and rational senses would have given. The idea of fatalism seemed to have taken a strong hold upon the individual's mind, and his story, accordingly, began with the following expressions.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FATALIST.

“ I AM a fatalist. I am perfectly satisfied, and from the first dawn of reason I have been satisfied, that the things which men call chance and free-will exist only in their own bewildered imaginations. It is very flattering to human pride to suppose, that each man guides himself in all the changes and occurrences of life ; that his own will, or his own reason, or something worthy to be called his own, directs his action and regulates his thoughts. A slight degree of attention to passing events must, however, convince all who reflect, that the human will, even if it be the spring of human actions, is itself no more than part of a complicated machine, which is acted upon, and set in motion, by a power which it cannot control. Were it not so, why should instances occur, I say not frequently, but constantly, of persons ruining their own peace wantonly, with their eyes open, and with no other discernible purpose in view ? Why should the miser hoard his gold, and starve ? Why should the spendthrift waste his substance, knowing all the while that he must bring himself to poverty ? Why should the thousand extravagances occur, which society daily places before us, were not all men, without exception, mere machines ? Nay, nay, read the following narrative, and then determine whether it be possible to conceive that the freedom of will, which all are so anxious to claim, could have ever had existence, at least in me.

“ I am the representative of a family, which, from the period of the Norman conquest, has held considerable estates in the county of Rutland, and which, by a steady adherence to the custom of entail, has managed to preserve its estates almost in their pristine extent. My mother dying whilst I was an infant, and my father before I reached my tenth year, I was left to the care, or rather to the neglect, of certain titled personages, who called

themselves my guardians, because they were so called in my father's will ; but who conceived that they did enough when they entered me at one of our public schools, and permitted me to spend my vacations wherever and however my own fancy might suggest. Thus were my habits, temper, disposition, and pursuits, allowed to form themselves as chance directed, without any human being giving himself the trouble to advise me to what was good, or to warn me against what might be evil.

“ Nature had, however, settled these points so effectually, that I do not believe any care on the part of others would have made me very different from what I am. My earliest recollections represent me as a selfish, violent, capricious, revengeful being ; as one who desired a thousand things which he had not, and who no sooner obtained them, than he ceased to value them. It strikes me, indeed, that in my younger days I was never wantonly or gratuitously tyrannical. I cannot remember, that whilst at school I oppressed the little boys. I never crouched to the big ones, for I was not mean. But an injury I never forgave. However apparently slight it might be, — were it but a cross word or look, — I never felt at ease till I had taken vengeance for it ; nor was any labour too severe, or any plan too complicated, provided I saw the chance of obtaining my end by enduring the one, and acting upon the other.

“ I will give but one specimen of myself in my character of a revenger of wrongs whilst I was at school. One of my companions, my favourite companion for the time, played off upon me, on a particular occasion, some trifling practical joke. It raised a laugh against me, and I burned to chastise him for it. To beat him was not in my power, for he was older and stronger, and a better master of the pugilistic art, than I. To repay him in kind would not satisfy me. I knew that he would not feel as I felt, were he put in ever so ridiculous a light, but would probably laugh at the circumstance as readily as those about him. What I desired was to give him positive pain ; and I succeeded. He had a favourite dog, a white terrier, to which he was strongly attached. The animal used to go

with us when we were out rabbit-shooting; and the boy was naturally proud of its good nose, and great activity. I watched my opportunity one day, and pretending to mistake it for a rabbit, I shot it dead; my revenge was ample.

“ In like manner, with respect to caprice, I may observe, that I never loved any of my companions beyond the space of a few weeks, or, at most, a few months. The consequence is, that I never have had, and never expect to have, one friend. Of reptiles, who called themselves such, I have known many; but whenever an acquaintance has done me a favour, or exhibited a superiority over me in any respect, I have invariably quarrelled with him. Of all feelings, that of being under an obligation to another man is to me most insupportable.

“ With these dispositions, and in the course of acting which they were calculated to produce, my boyhood and youth were spent. I left school for college, detested by all who knew me, and cordially detesting them in return; and I passed through the usual academical career without forming a single connection which has survived it. It was then the fashion to travel: I followed that fashion, and travelled too; but my tutor and I quarrelled before half our tour was completed, and I left him. I returned home, determined to live for myself alone at the family mansion in Rutlandshire.

“ Having formed this prudent resolution, I endeavoured to acquire a decided taste for field-sports. I kept hounds, and hunted, or affected to hunt them myself. I invited all my neighbours to come and see me; pretended to be pleased when the field was full, and the sportsmen adjourned to my house; but, somehow or another, they and I fell out. Our quarrels too were generally about circumstances which no human being would have quarrelled about except myself. One man, for example, was better mounted than I; I was desirous of purchasing his horse, and he would not sell it. We never spoke again. Another rode better, and took the lead of me. I cursed him cordially, and so our acquaintance ended.—Thus it was, that, at the age of four-and-twenty, and after spending little more than

two years at home, I found my table absolutely deserted, except when the village apothecary found it convenient to eat my venison and drink my claret. Even the parson was too proud, or too right-minded, call it which you will, to put up with my freaks and humours; and he ceased to be my guest, though there was no man in the county with whom I was more desirous of continuing on a friendly footing.

“When I say this, do not suppose for a moment that I courted the rector’s society from any feeling of respect either for his character or talents. Both were undoubtedly excellent; indeed, if merit were rewarded as it ought to be, he never would have remained so long as he did upon that living. But what were the man’s character and talents to me? Nothing, or worse than nothing; inasmuch as I never heard him praised without suspecting that the design of his laudator was to pass censure upon myself. By no means. The chances are, that I should have liked him better had he been a profligate; for, in truth, it was on account of his daughter, a lovely and gentle creature. Well, well, let that pass.

“I say, that the rector of my parish, whom, for the sake of perspicuity, I shall call Travers, had a daughter. Oh, such a daughter! When I came to reside at Claremont, she had barely completed her seventeenth year. Sir, you never beheld the picture of an angel so beautiful; you never will behold a real angel (if there be such things) worthy to stand a comparison with her. And her mind, and heart, and disposition — there exists not her fellow throughout the universe. I loved her madly; but my love for her, like my love for every thing else, was purely selfish. Judging of her from the specimens of her sex which had heretofore crossed me, I dreamed that it would be no difficult matter to obtain her on my own terms; so I laboured assiduously, but with extreme caution, to accomplish her ruin. The young creature was far too pure to understand me. I gained her affections, — how, I am sure that I cannot tell, — but upon her morals and innate chastity I made no inroad; of course, I was too well versed in these matters to make my advances very openly, and she

was far too delicate in her ideas to detect any thing amiss in my proceedings.

“ Not so her father. The rector, though a scholar, was a man of the world, and readily saw into the motives which led me to pay attention to his daughter. He challenged me with my wickedness ; and I own it with shame, I quailed beneath his indignant frown. From that hour I hated, though I respected him ; but our acquaintance ceased for a time, and I had no means afforded of gratifying my malice.

“ To marriage I always had an insuperable objection ; and to marry the daughter of a country parson would, I conceived, disgrace me for ever. Yet to continue near Lucy — to see her, as I contrived to see her, every day — to hear the silver tones of her voice, her warm protestations of continued love, notwithstanding the prohibition of her parent — to do all this, baffled as I constantly was, in my base purposes, without so far committing myself as to propose a union, I felt to be impossible. The struggle was a desperate one, but I resolved to leave the country. I dared not trust myself with a parting interview ; for I was conscious of my own weakness, though I despised myself for it ; so I desired my valet one morning to put up my wearing apparel, and throwing myself in my travelling-chariot, set out for London.

“ Having now embarked, or rather having resolved to embark, in the business of a fashionable life, I was not so far guided by the caprice of the moment as to be unaware, that if I desired to act a creditable part in it, (that is to say, if I desired to amuse myself,) it was indispensably requisite for me to lay some restraint upon my natural irritability and caprice. I made the resolution, and adhered to it. Many a pang it cost me, to smile when I felt disposed to frown, and to hold out my forefinger to men on whom I desired to turn my back, if I did them no more serious injury ; yet I so far obtained a mastery over myself, as to be admitted into all the coteries, as well as into the best of the clubs, usually frequented by people of rank. My fortune, indeed, was known to be ample. My rent-roll stood in reality at four thousand a year — the world set it

down at ten ; and what are the freaks and fancies which will not be tolerated and excused in a young man supposed to be worth ten thousand a year ? All the unmarried women were a-flutter when I came among them, whilst their mammas took good care that I should be fully informed of their many commendable qualities, and of their amiable dispositions. ‘ My daughter Fanny,’ said the Countess of —, ‘ is all excellence. She is really too good-hearted, and too much the slave of delicate feelings. It was only yesterday that she was prevailed upon to subscribe one guinea a year to the Church Missionary Society ; and look here,’ drawing my attention to a number of shell pin-cushions, and other gewgaws, ‘ all these she made with her own hands : they are to be sold for the benefit of the children of — Sunday school. Perhaps you will become a purchaser.’ — ‘ Only think, mamma,’ said Lady Louisa Gallop, ‘ the horse that Charles bought for me took me clear over the bar at the highest notch this morning, in the riding-school.’ — ‘ You will never have done, child,’ replied mamma, ‘ till you meet with some serious accident.—What strength of nerve she has !’ continued the dowager, turning to me. ‘ She is none of your delicate hot-house plants. Dear creature ! what a misery it is for her to be cooped up in town when all her wishes point to a country life. You are fond of field-sports, I think, Mr. St. Clair ?’ Thus was I waylaid at every turn. Did I express my approbation of this or that habit, it was exactly the thing of which Lady Fanny, or Lady Louisa, approved. Did I abhor this or the other mode of proceeding, the young ladies abhorred it also. But all would not do. I looked at these minions of fashion as an ordinary spectator looks at the birds or butterflies in a museum — I never felt that they could have had one spark of life in them.

“ Of this silly mode of living I soon began to grow tired. My thoughts were eternally wandering into Rutlandshire — to the little drawing-room in the rectory — and to Lucy, as she has often sat at her instrument, and sung to me like a seraph. A thousand times did I resolve not to suffer pride to stand in the way of my happiness, but to hurry back, confess my errors to her father, and make

a tender of my hand and fortune. But then the idea of being triumphed over by a poor country clergyman — of sitting and whining before one so far beneath me in rank and station — this was gall and wormwood to me — I could not brook it. ‘No,’ said I, ‘I will never marry; at least I will never marry, except to advance me in circumstances, or to add to my dignity.’

“Excitement became now the sole object of my search. Drinking was then in fashion, but I had no taste for it. Intrigues, operas, masquerades, all palled upon me. I ran the round of them till they ceased to affect me, and I was disgusted. Play was my next resource. The dice-box was seldom out of my hand; and, to the honour of hazard be it spoken, for almost an entire season it continued to engross my attention. Like other amateur gamblers, I was, it is true, more frequently the loser than the winner; but that circumstance made no impression upon me. I played on till my ready money became exhausted — I raised several large sums on life-annuities; and I found myself, towards the close of three months — called, in fashionable parlance, ‘the winter’ — a poorer man by full two thousand pounds per annum than I had been on my first arrival in London.

“About this time, when even the gaming-table was beginning to lose its influence over me, it chanced that, to kill an hour one morning, I strolled into the British Gallery. I was gazing, or pretending to gaze, at one of the Cartoons which hung at the extremity of apartment No. 2., when my ears actually tingled, and my pulse ceased to beat, at the sound of a sweet voice, to which for some time back I had listened only in my dreams. ‘How beautiful!’ said the speaker. These were the only words uttered; but the tone of utterance was not to be mistaken. I turned round, and beheld Lucy, leaning upon the arm of her father. Our eyes met. A deadly paleness came over her countenance; and, fearing that she was about to fall, I sprang towards her, and caught her in my arms. A scene, of course, followed. The Dowager Lady Twaddle, happening to stand in the way, received a push which drove her back upon Lord Fiddlestick, who trod upon the gouty toe of

Sir John Callipash, who roared aloud with agony. The company were all in motion in an instant, crowding about us like moths about a candle ; and Lucy, who might, perhaps, have recovered the agitation produced by this unexpected meeting, overcome with shame and terror, fainted. This was not a time to regard trifles, and Dr. Travers himself made no opposition whilst I bore her through the throng towards the stairs. My carriage was at the door ; in it I placed her, and her father taking a seat on one side, whilst I sat on the other, I requested to know whither the coachman should drive. ‘ To Brunswick Square,’ replied he. Our destination was soon reached, and Lucy had regained her senses before the carriage stopped.

“ It was now for the first time that the remembrance of my last interview with the doctor, and the peculiar circumstances under which we parted, occurred to me. As long as Lucy lay motionless upon his bosom, I could think of nothing but her ; and the thoughts of her father were manifestly occupied by the same object. We never exchanged a syllable during the drive, except when he replied to my question as to the part of the town where they lodged. Now, however, I felt embarrassed and confused, as I had done when he formerly upbraided me with my intended villany, and forbade me his house ; whilst he too appeared to have recovered his self-command sufficiently to recall images unpleasant to himself, and unfavourable to me. I offered to accompany them up-stairs into their lodgings. This the doctor prohibited. ‘ No, Mr. St. Clair,’ said he ; ‘ though I thank you for the attention just received, I cannot forget former occurrences. Learn to respect the feelings of others, as well as your own. Become a good member of society, as I fear you have hitherto been a bad one, and then welcome. But till then, farewell !’ I slunk back into the carriage, and drove home in a state of mind utterly incapable of description.

“ The sight of Lucy, particularly under existing circumstances, at once renewed the passion which I had striven during many months to smother. Like other fires which have for a time been covered over, it burst forth again with increasing violence, and all farther attempts to

oppose it I felt to be useless. The contest between inclination and pride was at an end. To live without Lucy was impossible — to obtain her, it would at least be necessary to seek her upon honourable terms. I resolved to do so. Nay, I went farther than this — I doubted whether I had not been hitherto acting upon a wrong principle, and whether it would not conduce more to my own comfort, were I in some degree to study the comfort and wishes of my neighbours. I had tried every other road to happiness without success — I determined now to make the experiment, whether I might not be made happy myself by dispensing happiness to others. With this view, a good feeling at work within me, I sat down to address the doctor. I acknowledged my past misconduct — I entreated him to forgive and forget it — I assured him of my unalterable attachment to his daughter, and my determination to make myself, if possible, worthy of her — I even went so far, in the paroxysm of virtuous enthusiasm, as to beg that he would become my guide and director in all my concerns, promising to act in every matter in obedience to his wishes. Having sealed this letter, I despatched it by my servant, and waited the result in all the misery which an impatient man endures whilst any thing materially affecting his future welfare hangs in doubt.

“ My man returned in a couple of hours with a note from Dr. Travers. It was short, dignified, but not unkind. It expressed the satisfaction of the writer at the promises made by me, but it gave no immediate sanction to my suit. ‘ To conceal from you that Lucy’s affections are gained, would,’ continued the billet, ‘ be impossible ; but this I am proud to say of my daughter, that she will never give her hand to any man of whom her father does not approve. In your case I am willing to believe as much as in the case of other men ; but till I see some evidence that you can act as well as protest, I must still require you to abstain from visiting or holding any intercourse with my child.’ I cursed the old man’s suspicious temper, and tore his letter into fragments ; how I refrained from rushing forth again into my former vicious habits is more than I can tell.

CHAPTER X.

THE FATALIST.

“ It has been my invariable practice through life to act upon the spur of the moment, according as whim, or rather destiny, directed. I had engaged myself to dine with a party of gambling friends that day, and had resolved, when I rose in the morning, to return from the meeting either a ruined or a recovered man. Now I had neither spirit nor inclination to fulfil that engagement. On the contrary, I ordered my carriage to be got ready, and in an hour after the receipt of the doctor’s communication was on my way into the country. My reasoning ran thus: —

“ The doctor and Lucy will, without doubt, return home as soon as she is able to travel. I am still forbidden to call upon them; yet I know that if I remain in town I shall not be able to attend to the prohibition. But a breach of it may lead to the worst consequences; and therefore it is better, even viewing the matter thus, to fly from temptation. Again, should the doctor be informed of my sudden departure, it will doubtless act favourably for me. He will believe that my protestations were sincere, and that I really have abandoned for ever the haunts of vice, with the view of carrying my good resolutions into practice. Besides, a thousand circumstances were likely to operate in my favour in the country, which could hardly be expected to occur in town; and, let me do justice to myself, I was then serious in my design of acquiring other and better habits. Smile if you will, sir, but it is true. I actually felt at that time remorse, deep remorse, for my past misdeeds. I was actually eager to begin my new course of living: indeed, a gentleman of your cloth, to whom in epistolary correspondence I opened my mind, assured me, that I had experienced the new birth.

“ Well, I returned to the country. I found all things as lonely and comfortless as they had been when I left it:

I determined that they should be otherwise. My first directions to the house-steward were, that a huge caldron of good broth should be made ready every Tuesday and Saturday, and given to the poor. I caused a large portion of the village church to be new-pewed at my own expense; and presented the altar with a new covering, the desk and pulpit with new cushions. I visited the school; put my name down as a subscriber to double the amount formerly given; gave directions that each of the boys should be supplied with a cap and gaberline, and each of the girls with a frock and bonnet, at my cost. I attended one or two parish meetings; looked narrowly into the accounts of the overseer; ordered relief (for no one presumed to contradict my wishes) to several paupers who had been previously refused, and spoke largely of the necessity under which we all lay of alleviating each other's distresses. Several poachers were brought before me as a justice of the peace: I reprimanded them severely; but, as the crime had been committed on my own lands, I did no more. I dismissed them, and desired that they would never poach again. In a word, the change wrought in my behaviour and notions astonished all men. I was now talked of as the good squire, as the very pattern and model of a country gentleman; all this occurred previous to the return of the rector.

“ From the little which I have already said of Dr. Travers's temper and ideas, you will readily believe that he suffered me not to continue long in doubt as to the satisfaction which my present conduct gave him. He waited upon me a few days after he had resumed his parochial labours, and spoke to me more as a parent is accustomed to speak to his son, than a village pastor to his next neighbour. I was deeply affected. The perfect independence of manner, the more than independence, the decided superiority which a consciousness of rectitude always sheds over a man's external actions, shone prominently forth in the good doctor's deportment, and I felt and acknowledged it; ay, and with little, very little, of the bitterness with which I had been accustomed to feel it in other days. We became intimate friends. My past errors were blotted out:

I was admitted at all seasons to the rectory; and, in three months after the commencement of my reformation, was rewarded with the hand of Lucy.

“ If you or any other individual can explain whence it arose, that I was hardly put in possession of the prize for which I had so long sighed, ere it began to lose its value in my eyes, I will freely admit that men are not over-ruled in their deeds and wills by an irresistible fate. That I ever ceased to love Lucy — I say not. Far from it. I doted upon her ever, ever; I dote upon her memory now — I mean that I abhor and execrate myself for my behaviour towards her. But what then? We had been married little more than six weeks when I began to see a thousand things in her general demeanour of which I could not approve. Sometimes she was a great deal too affectionate towards myself; it was silly,—nay, it produced a suspicion that it could not be real. I checked it, and checked it rudely. At other times she was too cold and distant; I more than once caught her weeping. I hated tears, and I told her so. Then her unwearied attention to the poor and to the schools disgusted me. I became gloomy, morose, irritable. At last I determined to return again into public life. Ambition was now the idol of my worship. I resolved to shine in Parliament; and for this purpose I bargained for a seat, as the representative of a neighbouring borough, at the trifling cost of seven thousand pounds.

“ My gentle Lucy endeavoured once, and only once, to divert me from the scheme. As a matter of course, I imputed her opposition to the worst motives; and, in truth, had my mind not been previously made up to the matter, the very fact of her having ventured to speak against it would have determined me. I brought my bargain to a close. To make good my stipulations, I was obliged once more to have recourse to the plan of an annuity; and as my creditor chanced to be aware that the estate was entailed, he farther insisted upon my ensuring my life. For the loan of seven thousand pounds, I accordingly lessened my annual revenues by seven hundred; leaving little more than twelve hundred a year to support my new dignity.

“ For some time after the commencement of my career as a senator, I was myself conscious of a change for the better, both in my habits and notions. There was some excitation continually on my mind. I desired to take a lead as a speaker; once or twice I was fortunate, and my success delighted me. But, like most men in a similar situation, I permitted my vanity to carry me beyond my depth. I ventured to oppose the minister on a question which I had never studied; I gave utterance to certain common-places, badly put together, and ending in nothing. The honourable gentleman who replied turned me into utter ridicule; I reached my home in a state of insanity.

“ And now I come to a detail of the blackest part in my black course. I hated the man who had thus silenced me with the hatred of a brother who has quarrelled with his brother. Mine was not a rancour to be appeased by any thing short of the death of him who had offended me. There was not a morning of my life part of which was not now devoted to pistol-shooting. I practised till I could split a ball upon the edge of a knife, or snuff a candle at twelve paces distant; and as soon as I had attained this degree of perfection, I laid myself out for a quarrel. In public and in private I sought every opportunity to insult and irritate my opponent. I strove to satirise him as he had satirised me before the House; but I was no wit, and my satire consequently degenerated into personal invective: I was called to order. Out of doors I was more successful; though a brave man, he was exceedingly good-tempered, and either did not, or would not, see my intentions for some time. At length, however, I insulted him so grossly in the lobby of the Opera House, that it was out of his power to pass it by: he sent me a message. I accepted his challenge; and as there was some risk of the affair getting wind, I proposed that we should settle our dispute without delay. We met at an early hour the following morning, and at the first fire I shot him through the heart.

“ Was I happy after this? — by no means. Matters had been so well arranged, that though all the world knew by what hand my victim had met his death, the coroner’s jury found themselves at a loss to say on whom the sus-

pcion of guilt should rest. As far as my immediate fortunes were concerned, therefore, I experienced from the result of the duel no inconvenience whatever ; but my mind was never for an instant at rest. If ever man deliberately committed murder, I did. I prepared myself beforehand for a meeting — I studiously sought for it — and I went to attend it in the firm determination of destroying my enemy if I could. Were it possible to believe that men are free agents, — were I not perfectly satisfied that we never act but as fate decrees, — I should regard myself as the most guilty and cold-blooded of assassins. Nay, let me acknowledge my own inconsistency ; such was the light in which I then viewed — such is the light in which I sometimes view myself still.

“ From that fatal day I became more than ever a torment to myself, and to all around me. To Lucy I was absolutely cruel. We had been married upwards of a year and a half, and she brought me no child. Shall I confess it? I upbraided her for this, as if it were something blamable on her part, and yet I loved her all the while with an intensity such as few married men experience for their wives. Amiable and gentle being ! She bore my reproaches with the meekness of an angel ; she wept under them, but she never complained. Her father believed to the last that she was the happiest of women, and I the best of husbands. Every thing, too, went wrong with me. I lost all interest in public business ; the very gaming-table produced not sufficient excitement. I had recourse to the bottle. Among bon-vivants and jolly souls, none were now my superiors ; and I reeled home, morning after morning, only to overwhelm with reproaches and abuse one who never gave me cause to reproach her, even through inadvertence.

“ As a natural consequence upon the kind of life which I had led, my affairs became deeply involved. Creditors were importunate ; and the very Jews refused to furnish me with money, except on terms such as even I perceived to be ruinous. At last an execution was threatened ; my furniture, plate, horses, carriages, were all about to be seized. What was now to be done I neither knew nor cared.

“ My wife, though the daughter of a country clergyman, was connected, both by the father and mother’s side, with several families of distinction. One of her maternal uncles had held some high situation in India, and her cousin now enjoyed the fruits of his toil, which he himself never lived to enjoy. He mixed with the best circles — supported a splendid establishment — and withal was regarded, by those who knew him, as a person of singularly kind heart and correct morals. Of course he visited his cousin when she appeared in the hemisphere of London as the wife of an M. P. ; and as she relished his society we saw a good deal of him. Only conceive, Sir, I became jealous, madly jealous, of that man. I contrasted his frank, open, and affectionate manner, with my own pettish and inconsistent deportment. I could not deny that the first was far more attractive than the last, and I came to the conclusion that it must be so regarded by my wife. There wanted but some decided act of friendship on his part towards Lucy to convince me that a criminal passion subsisted between them.

“ When the execution above referred to actually occurred, Lucy, worn out with irregular hours, and broken in spirit by my unkind treatment, was exceedingly ill: the effect of the seizure of our furniture was to increase her illness to an alarming degree. I was not within when the bailiffs arrived, otherwise I should have probably done some deed which might have been the means of cutting short my career, as it deserved to be cut short. The news was brought to me at a moment when my last guinea was staked upon the turn of a die. The throw was against me, so I rushed forth with the firm determination of committing suicide. First, however, I resolved to see with my own eyes how matters stood at home ; for which purpose I flew towards Harley Street. I was met at my own door by Mr. Blake, Lucy’s relative.

“ ‘ For God’s sake go in and comfort your wife, St. Clair,’ said he ; ‘ she is very ill. I am now on my way for a physician.’

“ I passed him without speaking a word. The bailiffs were gone : the furniture and effects all stood as I had left them in the morning. I believed that I was in a dream.

I ran up-stairs to my wife's apartment, and found her lying upon a sofa in violent hysterics. Her maid was attending to her as well as she could, but I desired her to leave the room, and she did so.

“ ‘How is this, Lucy?’ said I, affecting to be calm. ‘Have done with these airs, and tell me how it comes about that there are no bailiffs in the house. I thought that an execution had been going on.’

“ ‘And so it was,’ cried she, struggling to subdue her emotions: ‘we were indeed ruined; but Blake, — good, kind Blake, — discharged the debt, and we are still left in possession of our house. — Oh, Charles, I will never, never upbraid you with the past; but let us change our mode of living. How happy were we at Claremont, till ——’

“ ‘Till what?’ exclaimed I, madly; ‘till I took into my family, and to my bosom, a wretch that has dishonoured me! Blake, Blake, eternally Blake! He paid the debt, and how was he paid?’

“ ‘Charles,’ replied Lucy, rising, and with dignity, ‘this is the worst of all. Neglect, harshness, cruelty, I could bear; but to hear you insinuate aught against my honour, or that of my cousin, to whom you are so deeply indebted ——’

“ My brain was on fire. I replied not; but struck her violently in the face with my clenched fist. She fell — a corner of the fender entered her temple — and she never moved again!

* * * * *

“ A notion very generally prevails, that insane persons, at least during the paroxysms of insanity, are ignorant of all things which pass around them. The notion is not more common than erroneous. I have been the inhabitant of a cell for six long years, — mad, raving, outrageously mad, — and there occurred not an event, either to myself or others, of which I was not perfectly aware at the time, and of which I retain not now the clearest recollection. I saw numbers of wretches, the slaves indeed of a wayward fancy, but I never saw one who felt not that he was not where he ought to be, or where nature designed him to be. For myself I had no fancy. My sole desire, it is affirmed, was to

destroy all who came within my reach, or to destroy myself. — How was this prevented? You shall know.

“ Having tried every other method in vain — having torn my back with the whip — subjected me to the restraint of a strait waistcoat — chained me down for days together to my crib — and finding, as it was affirmed, that I possessed craft enough to be calm till I was released, and only till then, the tyrants vented their spleen upon me thus. I recollect the occasion well. I had been for some time fastened by a long chain, which, passing through a hole in the partition, enabled the keeper, by going into the next cell, to draw me close against the wall at pleasure. This he was in the habit of doing several times a-day, and then he lashed me till the exercise wearied his arm. If I had been violent before, such treatment of course increased my violence. I no sooner felt the chain tightened than I roared like a wild beast; and when the brute appeared, armed, as he invariably was, with a heavy cart-whip, I gnashed my teeth upon him in impotent fury. But I had my revenge. With the straw allowed me in lieu of a bed, I so stuffed the chain, that it could not be forced through the aperture. One morning the wretch strove in vain to draw me up as usual; he failed, and trusting, I suppose, to the effect of habitual terror upon my mind, ventured to come within my reach. Ha, it was a glorious moment! I shrank up, as I had been wont to do, into the corner, for the purpose of deceiving him; he followed, brandishing his whip, and prepared to strike. One bound brought him within my clutch. Sir, I had no weapons but my hands and feet, but they were sufficient. I caught him by the hair, dashed him on his face to the ground, and then planting my knees strongly upon his shoulders, I tore his head back till the joints of the neck began to give way. Fortunately for him, the struggle had been overheard, and assistance arrived just in time to save his worthless life.

“ It was in consequence of that act that a new mode of restraint was exercised upon me. An iron collar was rivetted round my neck, to which was attached a massive chain, only twelve inches in length. This was again made fast to a ring in a strong iron pillar, so formed as that it could

slide upwards or downwards; the pillar itself being built into the wall, and of the height of six feet. Round my body another iron girdle of vast strength was soldered, about two inches in width, attached to which were two circular projections, one on each side, for the purpose of pinioning and restraining my arms. To keep the girdle in its place again, other bars crossed my shoulders, and were rivetted to it both before and behind; whilst a couple of links connecting the collar with the shoulder-straps, and a couple of chains fastening the back-bars to the pillar, all power of moving head, hands, and arms, was taken away from me. Thus was I kept for four whole years. I could lie down, it is true, because my trough was placed close to the wall, and the ring in the pillar being made to slide, permitted me to stoop or stand upright. But when I did lie, it was only on my back, the sharp points in the girdle effectually hindering me from resting on my sides. Nor were the miscreants contented with this. They chained my right leg to the trough, in order, as they said, to guard against violence from kicking. Standing and lying were accordingly the only changes of posture: I could not walk, for the chain which held me to the wall measured no more than twelve inches. My garments rotted from my back, and were replaced by a blanket; my food was half-dressed lumps of beef without salt, and potatoes; and then for my amusement — music, I had music — but it was the music of damned spirits — the howls and execrations of the furious — the laugh and shriek of the idiot: — these were the only sounds to which I listened by day and by night, till my beard had grown to my chest, and the nails of my fingers were like the talons of an eagle.

“ Thus was it till a change took place in the arrangement of the asylum. How it came about, I know not; but after enduring this treatment for a series of years, I was one day set at liberty, and furnished with proper clothing. Whether my mind was ever in a state of chaos, I cannot tell. There are moments when I believe it. There are others when I believe it not; perhaps it may be the case still.

“ I was set free as one cured. They told me that my

wife died from accidentally falling upon the fender, and that my grief for her decease turned my brain. Poor fools! they knew not that it was I who killed her.

“ My affairs had, during the period of my confinement, in some degree recovered themselves; but I was still an embarrassed man. To help me out of my embarrassments, an appointment in India was procured for me. There I have spent the last ten years, and with the mode of my return you are acquainted.”

Thus ended a tale as wild and extravagant as any which I ever perused. The impression left upon my own mind was, that the poor gentleman laboured under a derangement of intellect when he compiled it. I believe it is no uncommon matter for insane persons to fancy themselves stained with a thousand crimes which they never perpetrated, and the victims of a thousand evils which they never endured; and I am strongly disposed to hold that opinion in the case of my shipwrecked guest.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SMUGGLERS.

AMONG all the youths that attended Divine service at the church of St. Alphage, there was none, at least in my day, to be compared, either in point of manly beauty or rustic accomplishments, with Will Brockman. Will was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. His father, who, to use the colloquial phraseology of this coast, had followed the sea from his childhood, perished one stormy night, in a vain though gallant attempt to bring assistance to a vessel in distress; and Will, who was then an infant, formed from that hour the only solace of a kind-hearted and amiable mother. The elder Brockman had, it appeared, been successful in his speculations. Whether

these were always such as to defy scrutiny, or whether, in common with the rest of his townsmen, he deemed it no act of dishonesty to defraud the revenue as often as circumstances would allow, I cannot tell. All that I know is, that at his death he left his widow in possession of a comfortable dwelling, situated on the extreme edge of my parish — of a sum in ready money, the amount of which no one accurately knew — of the whole and sole property in a barge and a pinnace — together with a couple of shares in a neat lugger, famous for its fast sailing, and called the Dreadnought. Possessed of this fortune, Mrs. Brockman naturally became an object of desire to such of her late husband's companions as were bachelors. The father of her boy had not been in his grave a year, before she was importuned on all hands to change her condition ; but to such proposals she turned a deaf ear, and transferring to her son all the love she ever felt for her husband, she continued in her widowed state up to the hour of her decease.

At the period of which I now write, Will had attained his three-and-twentieth year ; in height he measured rather more than six feet. His form, though apparently slender, was well knit and put together : his step was light and free, and gave notice of a surpassing degree of agility and vigour ; no man along the coast could pull a better oar, or more skilfully manage a rudder or a sail, when the wind was high and the sea rough. Will's hair was of a raven blackness, and hung about his temples and forehead in thick short curls ; his eye was of the hue of the sloe when it is fully ripe ; his complexion was a clear olive, slightly tinged with vermilion ; and his skin, notwithstanding a frequent exposure to the elements, as well in summer as in winter, still retained the purity and delicacy of its texture. Yet he was not critically beautiful. His was a countenance which pleased more because of its general expression of good-humour and high courage, than that the features were strictly regular ; for his nose was perhaps too long, and his mouth rather too wide. But then his teeth were pieces of the brightest and most polished ivory, and there was a beam in his eye, and a lightening

up of every feature when he smiled, which few maidens could watch with indifference. Such was Will Brockman when first I saw him, about four years after my arrival in the parish ; and I must say, that when he stood in the churchyard, in his jacket and trowsers of fine blue cloth, his white stockings and well-cleaned shoes, I could not wonder at the degree of honest pride with which his widowed mother regarded him.

The events of his short life, previous to the commencement of our acquaintance, may be related in few words.

Like other youths brought up by the seaside, Will early exhibited a predilection for a maritime life ; and as Mrs. Brockman appeared to consider the coasting-trade, and the business of a dredger, as of all others the most perilous, she determined to send her son into the service of a company of merchants, whose ships navigated between London and the Baltic. At the age of thirteen he accordingly entered upon his apprenticeship. This expiring in four years, he was taken, when seventeen years old, as an able seaman on board the Neptune, where his attention to his duties, and his general activity and intelligence, soon recommended him for favour and promotion. He had hardly reached his twentieth year, when he received the appointment of second mate : his preferment to the rank of first mate occurred the year after ; and when he and I met for the first time, he was on leave of absence of an indefinite extent, waiting till the brig Britannia should be fitted out for service, of which he was to be put in command. Right joyous had the widow's heart been many days before he made his appearance, at the prospect of once more having her boy under her roof, safe and sound from the perils of the deep. No fewer than five years had elapsed since her arms last embraced him ; and now he was to return to them loaded with honours, and what was of far more weight in her eyes, worthy to be honoured by all good men. Happy woman was she, when, at a late hour on Saturday night, her brave and handsome son burst into her parlour ; and proud was her bearing when she entered the house of God, leaning upon his stalwart arm, on the morning after.

There dwelt in the parish at this time a family of the name of Petley, of whom, from the father down to the youngest child, no one thought well. The old man was by trade a market-gardener ; but he paid so little attention to the cultivation of his land, that it would have been matter of surprise how he contrived to live, had not his neighbours been pretty well assured that he looked to it but little for a subsistence. He was a widower. His domestic circle consisted of three sons and a daughter, the eldest about thirty, the youngest, Harriet, hardly nineteen. The boys professed to be fishermen. They owned a boat among them, with which they made frequent voyages, no one cared to enquire whither ; but if these voyages were made in search of fish, they were generally far from being successful. The fact, indeed, was, that fishing constituted a mere excuse for the prosecution of another, and a more perilous vocation. They were smugglers, daring, intrepid, unprincipled smugglers — men who were known to carry arms about their persons whenever they set out upon an adventure, and who professed, and professed truly, not to set their own lives, or the lives of others, at a pin's value. They were men of violence from their youth up, dissolute in their habits, proud and bold in their deportment, and what, in the eyes of their neighbours at least, was worst of all, they were men without one particle of honour. No one herded with them, no one dared to trust them. They stood perfectly alone, for they had on various occasions betrayed a companion in illicit transactions, and were universally shunned in consequence.

Of the daughter, Harriet, it grieves me to speak in the terms which truth requires. Never have my eyes rested upon a female face or form more perfectly beautiful. Her brown hair hung in glossy ringlets over her neck, and parted upon a forehead purer and whiter than the purest alabaster, in which every blue vein could be distinctly traced, like streaks in the polished marble. Her eye of dark hazel could languish or laugh, as suited the humour of the moment, with equal effect ; her little mouth spoke volumes, as the smile or the sneer curled it ; her figure, neither tall nor short, was a piece of the most exquisite

symmetry. Yet, with all these outward charms, Harriet was a bad girl; and she was not the less bad, that she was absolutely chaste. Cold, calculating, and hypocritical, she had been taught from her childhood to square every action, and to fashion every look according to the dictates of interest. All the lads in the parish admired her, and almost all had, for a time, dangled after her. But they gradually ceased to court one, who favoured their addresses only so far as she found them pliable; and who made no other use of her power over them, than to entangle them into a ruinous connection with her brothers.

Young Brockman had been so long absent, that of the character of this family he knew nothing. The sons had all been his schoolfellows: one was about his own age; and when they last parted no such stigma was known to attach to them. It was therefore but natural that he should meet their advances with the cordiality of other lads, and freely accept their invitation to come and partake of the produce of the farm. This was given after Divine service, on the very first Sunday which he spent amongst us; and coming, as it did, from the ruby lips of Harriet, no one could feel surprise that it was not declined; for with the precipitancy of his years, Will's admiration grew at once into passion, and before he had exchanged two sentences with his old acquaintance, he became her devoted slave.

From that unlucky hour, Will became a constant visiter at the house of John Petley. His mother, from whom the state of his feelings could not long remain a secret, did her best to break off the connection. She took, I believe, the injudicious course which most mothers take, when their sons or daughters chance to form an improper attachment; that is to say, she never neglected any legitimate opportunity of speaking slightly of Harriet, nor greatly scrupled to invent one, when it occurred not of its own accord. But her plans proved as fruitless as such plans generally prove; and the more she railed at the object of his attentions, the more devotedly and warmly attached to that object he became. Matters went, indeed, so far at last, that she absolutely longed for the arrival of the com-

munication which was again to separate her from the only being upon earth whom she truly loved ; so firmly was she convinced, that her son's intercourse with the Petleys could end in no good, and would probably lead to his ruin.

Nor had much time elapsed before the consequences of his misplaced attachment began to appear in the habits and behaviour of the young Brockman. Whole days were now spent at Petley's house, and some of the lowest and worst characters along the coast were his companions. Many a time his mother sat up, in expectation of his return, till long past midnight ; and when he did return was shocked to find him in a state of outrageous inebriety. His money, too, began to run short : cards, of which the good woman entertained a grievous horror, became his favourite diversion ; and a rumour gradually gained ground that much of it was lost at play. When Sunday morning came round, he had always some excuse ready, why he should not accompany her to church ; his head ached, or he had received a communication from his employers, which must be answered by that day's post ; in a word, Will Brockman was an altered man. The very expression of his countenance was changed, and even his style of dress was no longer what it used to be. The effect of all this was, to cause the widow's heart, of late so light, to sink within her ; her days were accordingly devoted to useless complaining, and her nights to watchfulness and terror.

In the mean while, a thousand stories were abroad respecting her son. His letter of appointment, it was reported, had arrived ; but he had rejected the situation, at the suggestion of Harriet and her brothers. He had been frequently seen, of late, at the dead of night on the beach ; and more than once he was known to have been absent from home for twenty-four hours successively. The Dreadnought, which had hitherto been navigated by a stranger, was called in ; and who was to command her, or in what service she was hereafter to be employed, no one knew. Men whispered and smiled, women looked grave, and lamented ; and all felt persuaded, that Will Brockman

was entangled in a net from which he would never free himself. Not that the good folks on the coast of Kent look with an evil eye upon an ordinary smuggler,—very far from it: I believe that not a few of the leading families in that part of the kingdom owe their rise entirely to what is called *free trade*; but the party with which Will had connected himself, or was supposed to have connected himself, were so notoriously bad, that their very brother smugglers dared not trust them. Even of the little honour which belongs to thieves, they were known to be devoid; and hence Brockman's ruin was predicted, not so much on account of the danger necessarily attendant upon his pursuits, as because it was surmised, that his new associates would deliver him over to the officers of Government, on the very first opportunity which should promise to make it worth their while.

Of all this his poor mother was duly informed. Her fears were accordingly excited beyond endurance, and the more, that she knew not how to proceed in order to save him. The effect of her personal remonstrances had been to drive him almost entirely from his home. The spell of the syren was over him, and to her he fled for comfort and support when the reproaches and tears of a kind parent stung too deeply. This the latter saw; and, determined to risk every thing for his preservation, she fell upon a remedy so desperate as only to be justified by the desperate state of his circumstances. She resolved to become herself an informer—she made up her mind to instruct the Excise officers when and where they might arrest the Petleys in their illicit proceedings, and she delayed it from day to day, only in the hope, the remote and uncertain hope, of finding an opportunity to do so when Will might be absent from their meetings; but that opportunity came not—day and night they were together, and the poor woman, worked up to a pitch of frenzy, at last gave information of an intended landing of smuggled goods, in which she had somehow discovered that Will was to take part. The goods were, indeed, to be brought over in the *Dreadnought*, which her son was to steer; yet, such was her horror of the proceedings in which he had embarked, and such the

conviction, that if she did not extricate him by a desperate chance like the present, he would undoubtedly fall a victim to the interests of his more crafty comrades, that without hesitation she despatched an anonymous letter to the Custom-house, in which the plans of the smugglers were, as far as she knew them, communicated. The letter was not cast aside because it bore no signature ; and what the consequences of it were, it shall be the business of the following chapter to detail.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SMUGGLERS.

It was now the month of August ; I had retired to bed one night at my usual hour, but, partly from the effect of delicate health, and partly because my thoughts were still too apt to wander back into past scenes, I felt no inclination to sleep. After vainly tossing about for some time, I rose, and, opening the window, looked out. The air was soft and mild, and the moon, in her third quarter, shed a faint and silvery light over external objects. My little church, with its neat churchyard and white fences, appeared to peculiar advantage beneath her rays : the sides of the green hills, and the bosom of the green valley before me, glittered in the dewdrops, and the sheep either lay in groups here and there, or, rousing at intervals by ones and twos, sent forth a short bleating, as if in search of some strayed companions. The roar of the waves, as they broke upon the distant shingle, came upon me like notes of the sweetest music. Of the sea itself I saw nothing, for the hill on the right of the vicarage completely shuts it out ; but its sound floated up upon the breeze, even more audibly and more harmoniously than was usual. In all still nights we hear that sound, the most delightful, perhaps, of any

which inanimate nature produces ; but to-night it was more constant, and more exquisitely soothing, than I had ever heard it. The consequence was, that I felt more than ordinarily affected by it. The images which had occupied my mind before I rose were melancholy, and painfully so : they lost much of their agonising character after I seated myself beside the open window. " Why should I complain ? " said I : " it is doubtless far better thus, than it would have been had my wishes been accomplished. She is at rest — perhaps she is a blessed spirit, inhabiting that bright planet which is sailing over head, and looking down with pity upon me because I am still tied to the earth. At all events, it was the will of Him who knows what is best for us, to remove her ; and to that will I submit."

Such was the train of my thoughts, and such the calm and holy state into which I was fast falling, when a considerable commotion at the base of the hill on the right hand attracted my attention. A deep shadow was over the spot, which hindered me from seeing any thing : but I heard the tread of men's feet, and the noise of sheep starting from their lairs ; and the latter soon ran out, as if scared, into the moonlight. I kept my eye steadily fixed upon the obscure corner, which I knew to be the gorge of a ravine or gully in the hill side, and listened with an anxiety quite disproportionate to the apparent cause, for any other sounds which might proceed from it. Nor did I long listen in vain. The ravine was but a very short distance from the paddock fence ; and as the slight air that stirred blew inwards, I had no difficulty in catching the substance of the following dialogue, though it was conducted with apparent caution, and in no higher tone than a whisper.

" Is it the time yet ? " said one voice.

" Not quite, I think," replied another.

" It was one o'clock they said, was it not ? "

" Yes, and it cannot be far from that now — it struck twelve before we left the town."

" Hush ! " whispered the first speaker, " did you not hear something ? "

There was a silence of several seconds after this, but the

alarm appeared to be groundless, and the conversation was renewed

“ A great pity ! a fine lad, but grown devilish wild. Well, well, it will be a good haul for us—but will they fight, think ye ? ”

“ Can't say. I have got my bull-dogs though, and curse me if I don't use them. There they come, by Jove !—let us mount ! ”

At this moment, another sound caught my ear, as of persons approaching the summit of the hill from the opposite side, and walking with difficulty. I looked up, and the figures of three men, each bearing a burden upon his back, stood between me and the moon. They paused for a moment, and as far as I could judge from their motions looked anxiously round, then throwing down their loads upon the ground, they seated themselves beside them. Having continued thus for about five minutes, they again resumed their burdens, and began to descend. They had proceeded about half-way, when two men sprang from the shadowy ravine, by the edge of which they were walking, and made towards them. Instantly their sacks were cast from them, and the three figures fled in different directions, unpursued, however, by the assailants, who occupied themselves in gathering together the plunder. I now saw how the case stood. Without doubt the three were smugglers, and the two, officers of the revenue ; and the matter being one in which I was not anxious to be involved, I gently closed my window and retired to bed.

I had dropped into a doze, but how long I had lain thus I know not, when sleep was suddenly dispelled by the report of fire-arms. A shout followed, and then a loud shriek, as if from one in pain or deadly peril. I leaped out of bed again, and looking towards the place where the seizure was effected, I saw a group of three persons, one lying at length upon the ground, and two standing over him—a fourth man was farther up the hill, and was descending. Though they were too far removed for me to distinguish their words, it was evident that the last-mentioned person no sooner joined the rest, than a violent altercation began. What the subject of it might be, I could not tell ; but it

ended at length in their lifting the form which lay upon the ground, and casting it over the ravine. A horrible conviction now flashed across my mind. Murder had been committed—the murder, no doubt, of an exciseman, and these were the persons who had shed his blood. I felt a chill creep through my veins, and drew in my head to recover ; when I looked out again, the figures had all disappeared.

It will easily be imagined, that the night passed by without any refreshing sleep visiting my pillow. I lay wide awake, indeed, till daybreak, a prey to the most agonising and fearful surmises. There was no positive ground for the suspicion ; at least nothing had occurred capable of creating more than suspicion ; yet I could not divest myself of the persuasion, that young Brockman was somehow or other implicated in the business. Connected with this idea, also, was the recollection of the measure so frequently threatened by his mother ; and these combined, served to conjure up phantoms more hideous and alarming than any which had ever before taken possession of my brain. As the best and only means of dispelling them, I resolved at last to disbelieve the evidence of my own senses ; and by a positive effort succeeded in doubting whether the whole scene might not have been, after all, a mere creation of my own fancy.

Such a doubt could not, however, be permitted to continue unsolved. Daylight having at length arrived, I hastily dressed myself, and proceeded towards the spot where I had seen, or fancied that I had seen, the deed of violence done. There were abundant confirmations there of my worst fears. The grass was torn, as if by the hands and heels of men struggling, and in various places it was dyed with blood. There was a sprinkling of the same foul stream as far as the edge of the precipice, and there it ended. The gully in question measures about one hundred and fifty feet in depth ; it is as nearly perpendicular as can be, and a narrow foot-path, or rather a sheep-track, winds just under its ridge. At the bottom stands a ruined cottage, with a heap of loose stones, all overgrown with nettles and other rank weeds. I could perceive that they had

been lately disturbed, for the weeds were trodden down, and of the stones a more than usual quantity were laid bare; and the thought immediately occurred, that there they had deposited the body: I could not suffer the fact to continue undecided, so I descended the hill again, and made for the ruin.

I had no difficulty in reaching the parallel of the high ground from which I had looked down, for a horrible mark guided me. There were clots and dashes of blood along the entire face of the ravine, and at its base a pool had coagulated where the body had doubtless rested from its fall. I pursued a sort of track among the nettles, which conducted from this point as far as the corner of the dilapidated gable, where it ended. Here it was manifest that a number of stones had lately been removed; and on rolling back several of them again, a horrible spectacle met my eyes. A dead man lay beneath them. His throat was cut from ear to ear, and a knife, such as sailors generally carry, lay beside him. It was covered with gore, both handle and blade, and it was marked upon the former with the initials W. B. "O God!" cried I, aloud, "then Will Brockman is the murderer!"

The exclamation was hardly uttered, when I found myself suddenly surrounded by a concourse of people, among whom were several peace-officers, and a magistrate. The agitation necessarily produced by being caught under circumstances so extraordinary, having passed away, I repeated to the latter all that I had heard and seen on the preceding night; and having likewise communicated my suspicions respecting the perpetrators of the deed, constables were immediately despatched to secure the parties named. In the mean while, the body was removed to the vestry, to await the issue of an inquest; and the magistrate returned with me to the Vicarage, where we spent the time in no very enviable state of feeling, till the officers with their prisoners should arrive.

Nearly two hours elapsed before the latter event occurred. They came, however, at last, bringing with them the three brothers and their companion; nor could the most careless spectator fail to observe the striking contrast which the

appearance and manner of these unhappy persons presented.

In the demeanour of the first were exhibited hardly any symptoms of alarm, certainly none of confusion or dismay. An occasional flush would, indeed, pass over their countenances as the examination proceeded; but, with this exception, theirs was the expression of men either absolutely innocent, or to a terrible degree callous and hardened. Not such was the expression of Brockman's face. Misery, the deepest and the darkest, was pictured there. He was deadly pale; his eye was wild and bloodshot, and either rested steadily upon the floor, or wandered in seeming unconsciousness round the room. Nor was the difference in their dress less remarkable. The brothers had been arrested in bed. They rose, coolly and calmly put on clean apparel, and acted in every way as if they were utterly ignorant of all cause for their arrest. Brockman had been taken upon the beach. He wore the same garments which he must have worn on the preceding night, and they, as well as his hands, were red with blood. When the officers overtook him, he was pacing backwards and forwards, more like one who meditates self-destruction than escape; and he now stood before us as manifestly stamped with the crime of which he was accused as external appearances could stamp him. Even I could not but acknowledge to myself that he must be the murderer.

The magistrate, having seated himself in due form beside the table, proceeded to take the depositions of such as appeared in any respect acquainted with the circumstances of the case. For my own part, I could only repeat what I had previously communicated, avowing, at the same time, my ignorance of the persons of those concerned; and the next individual examined brought not the matter greatly more home to the prisoners. This witness proved to be the companion of the murdered man. He deposed to the receipt of an anonymous communication, in consequence of which he and his companion had acted; and described minutely the fact of their ambush, and consequent seizure. The goods seized were, however, too bulky to be removed without farther assistance, when it

became necessary for one to go in search of such assistance, whilst the other kept guard over the prize ; and the former duty falling to his share, he left the deceased to discharge the latter. The only thing which at all bore upon the charge was his assertion, that, being on his way to Folkstone, he met, on the opposite side of the hill, a man whom he recognised as the elder Petley, but who merely wished him a good night, and passed on.

Witness farther deposed, that

He might have been absent from his companion about an hour ; for that the inhabitants of Folkstone being asleep, he found it difficult to procure the necessary aid. Having procured it, however, he hastened back, and discovered, to his dismay, that neither his brother officer nor the smuggled goods were in the place where he had left them. He then went on to state, that, alarmed at so unexpected an occurrence, he and his party began to inspect the ground for marks of violence, which it prognosticated. In this search a pistol was found, which appeared to have been lately discharged, and which, on examination, he could not recognise as having belonged to his companion. Next, a quantity of blood was discovered, as well as the trace as if a body had been dragged along the grass to the edge of the cliff. Being now fully satisfied that a deed of violence had been committed, they agreed to give information to the nearest magistrate, and accordingly proceeded to the house of his worship, who promptly rendered them all the assistance in his power, and to whom the rest of the proceedings were known.

The testimony of the last witness being taken down, and signed, it was fully corroborated by the evidence of certain persons who accompanied him from Folkstone for the purpose of securing the captured goods. No more, therefore, was necessary to make out a case against the prisoners, than to identify the weapons found upon the spot as their property. With respect to the knife, no proof could be more distinct. Many persons swore to their having observed it in the possession of Brockman, and the letters engraved upon the haft rendered their assertions additionally credible ; but of the connection of the pistol with

the three brothers, the proof was not, perhaps, so decisive. The four prisoners were, however, known to be on an intimate footing: they had been seen together on the night previous to the murder, when they set sail for the coast of France, with the avowed intention of bringing over a cargo of contraband articles, and no one could testify to the time of their return. Such was the chain of evidence against them, and upon it the magistrate conceived that he was bound to detain them.

There remained yet one source of information, of which no use had been made, namely, the anonymous letter. His worship, having ascertained that the officer was in possession of that letter, desired that it might be given up to him, as a probable means of throwing additional light on the mysterious affair. This was done, and on his handing it to me, under the idea that I, perhaps, might know something of the characters, I discovered at the first glance a perfect confirmation of all my fears. The handwriting was that of Mrs. Brockman, and the billet itself ran thus:—"One who is anxious to save an infatuated youth from ruin begs to inform the commissioners, that about midnight on the fifteenth of this month a boat will land below Folkstone, loaded with silks and lace. It is surmised that the boat's crew consists of four persons, and that the goods will be conveyed across the hill to the house of John Petley."

My very breath forsook me when I had finished the perusal of this note, and I looked at Brockman with even more of deep commiseration than I had previously experienced. His guilt I dared not excuse: but he seemed at the moment like Hercules in the *Trachinæ* of Sophocles, about to perish by the well-intended stratagem of her who loved him above all created beings. Whether he entertained any suspicion of the fact, I know not, for he paid no regard whatever to passing events. Not even when, like the rest, he was called upon to deny or confess his crime, did he utter one word; for whilst they were protesting their innocence, he stood speechless. A clear case was accordingly adjudged to be made out against him, and a case little less clear against his companions, for whose committal

a warrant was made out ; and they were delivered over to the constables to be removed to prison.

The magistrate had just signed the deed, when the door burst open, and the unfortunate mother of Brockman rushed into the parlour. Her scream was so shrill and so appalling, that one who stood at the far-end of the glen might have heard it. "Oh, what have I done?" cried she; "and what have you done, my unfortunate boy? Why stand you here, my son, and what blood is that upon your face?—He is innocent, sir," continued she wildly, turning to the magistrate, "quite innocent. He commit murder! he whom I reared so gently, and who was ever so gentle to me, ever, ever till—Oh, but we will not refer to that! It is done now—it is all over—the connection is broken off, and he will go back to be again the comfort of his widowed mother. Will you not, William, will you not return with me, my boy? Come, come," cried she, running up to him, and seizing him by the hand.

Brockman groaned audibly. It was the first sound which he had uttered since he was brought into the house, and it came from the very bottom of his heart. "I cannot go with you now, my mother," said he; "I must go elsewhere—to prison, and then to death."

"To prison, and to death!" shrieked she: "to prison, say you?—to prison, and to death too!—you? No, no, it cannot be. It was not for that I did it; it was not against you that I informed; it was against them; these bloody, heartless, godless monsters—these, who have betrayed you! O may a mother's curse blight and wither them!"

"Hush, hush, my mother," replied the criminal; "curse no one,—or if you curse at all, curse me. Now I am ready," added he, turning to the constable.

Both the magistrate and myself were too much affected by this scene to be able to interrupt it, nor was it without evident emotion that the very constable proceeded to put on the handcuffs. In effecting this, it was seen, for the first time, that Brockman's right hand was severely wounded. A deep gash, or stab, was upon its palm, from which blood still continued to flow. "How came that wound

there?" asked I, full of hope that the young man's answer might give a favourable turn to his case. But he answered not. He held up his wrists for the manacles, as if no such question had been put, and seemed to surrender himself wholly to despair. It was not so with his companions. They protested vehemently that no case had been made out against them, and that they were sacrificed to the prejudices of their neighbours; but the magistrate continuing of a different persuasion, they too were compelled to submit.

"You shall not remove him!" cried the unhappy mother, wildly rushing between the party and the door. "Friends, neighbours, oh, help, help! they will murder my boy, and his blood will be upon my head! Mr. Williams, will you not save him? He is innocent—innocent as the child unborn.—O God, I am forsaken, thou hast forsaken the widow in her afflictions!—Oh, save him, save him!"

Though exceedingly reluctant to use violence towards one whom all sincerely pitied, the officers were at length obliged to remove her forcibly from her position. In vain she struggled and shrieked to be set free. The procession moved on, and the unhappy parent, overcome by the violence of her emotions, ceased for a time to be conscious of her misery.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SMUGGLERS.

As may readily be imagined, the events recorded in the last chapter created a powerful sensation among all classes of people in the neighbourhood. Little else, indeed, was talked of for several days after the arrest of the prisoners; and all united in sentiments of commiseration, as well for Brockman, who was universally esteemed to have fallen a victim to the wiles of his associates, as for his ill-fated

mother. Nor was the latter less deserving of pity than the former. Her grief knew no bounds ; and the reflection that all had been brought about, in a great measure, through her own rashness, infused a degree of bitterness into her sorrow, not necessarily an ingredient there.

The crime having been committed beyond the jurisdiction of the Cinque Ports, no choice was left to the magistrate except to forward the guilty associates to Maidstone. Thither they were accordingly sent, to await the arrival of the circuit court ; and thither, at the earnest entreaty of Mrs. Brockman, I repaired shortly after, with the design of offering such consolation to her son as he might be capable of receiving, and enquiring, at a moment of calmness, into the real state of the case. For though appearances were so strongly against him, a belief was every where prevalent, that of the more heinous crime he must be innocent ; at all events, as it was pretty clear that one of the parties would be admitted to give evidence, in order fully to convict the rest, something, at least, would be gained, could he be prevailed upon to stand forward in that capacity.

With these plans in my head, I proceeded at the hour of four one morning to take my place in the stage. It was still quite dark, consequently I could make nothing farther of my fellow-passengers, except to discover, by means of the sense of touch, that they were three in number. A female sat next me, and two men opposite. For the first five or ten minutes, no one spoke a word ; but at the end of that time, a dialogue began between the two men, in which I could not but take a very lively interest. It struck me, at the time, as having reference to the business on which I was engaged, and I found afterwards that my surmises had not been ill-founded.

“ We must not lose heart,” said he whose knees rubbed against mine ; “ all will yet be well. It is a bad business, no doubt, but where is the use of being down-hearted ? ”

“ It all comes of your infernal stupidity,” was the reply. “ You knew what was going to happen, and you might have hindered it. What had you to do sending such fellows about it, and sending them, too, so d — d exact to

their time? Were the boys but out of the scrape, I should be right glad the fool got paid off for his meddling."

"Nay," rejoined the speaker, "it was no fault of mine. I had not the choice of the men, nor the direction of their movements. It was rather the fault of that hot-headed fellow Ned — he is so confounded ready with his hands."

"Well, well—we need not quarrel about it; the thing is to get them off if we can.—We may depend upon you, I suppose?"

"Certainly, provided we succeed in muzzling the young one."

"Never fear for that; leave that to us."

The conversation ended here, and was not resumed; for one of the speakers happening to put a question to me, which I answered, the tone of my voice appeared to produce a strong effect upon the whole party. A private signal passed between them; and the female, as well as the more remote of the two men, wrapped themselves closely up, and were silent. When day dawned, therefore, I could not discover a feature of their faces; and those of the third person, though not so well concealed, were not sufficiently familiar to be recognised.

We reached Maidstone in such time as to allow my paying a short visit to my parishioner that day. I found him, as I had expected to find him, utterly and fearfully dejected. For his life, he protested that he had no regard; but his character was gone for ever, and the distress of his poor mother affected him not less than any part of his misfortunes. At first, indeed, his manner was that of a man thoroughly reckless. He would hardly enter upon the subject of the murder at all; and he positively refused to come forward, should such a measure be proposed, as a witness against his associates.

"No, sir," said he, "my name is black enough already, but never shall it be said that those who were my companions suffered through my treachery."

Of course, I did my best to overcome this absurd resolution, but my efforts were fruitless, and the hour of locking up being at hand, I was compelled to desist.

In returning along the passage, I was startled by the ap-

pearance of old Petley and his daughter, as they issued from one of the cells. The whole truth now flashed upon me. The voice which had sounded so familiar in my ears, during the progress of my journey hither, was that of the smuggler, and the caution with which my fellow-travellers had concealed their features was explained. Not that there either was or could be the slightest impropriety in their using every fair and legitimate means for the deliverance of their own relatives from trouble: but I knew them too well not to be aware, that they would not confine themselves to fair means; and I had seen too many proofs of the girl's absolute control over Brockman, not to apprehend, that it might be so managed as to cause his destruction. I accordingly returned to my inn, more than ever alarmed for the fate of the young man.

Nor were my fears groundless. I visited him again on the day following, only to find him more than ever fixed in his unwise determination. The syren had cast her spell over him; and a resolution, grounded upon false notions of honour, received tenfold strength from her persuasive blandishments.

"All will be well," said he. "They cannot, and I will not, disclose any thing; and without some declaration on our parts, what evidence is against us? And should the contrary happen, my mind is firmly made up; I will never become an informer."

It was vain to reason farther with one so completely infatuated, so I quitted the place with a heavy heart.

Of the manner in which he conducted himself during the fortnight which intervened between my last visit and the arrival of the judges, I know nothing. His mother, I learned, who spent the interval in a lodging at Maidstone, failed, as I had failed, in inducing him to save his life by speaking what he knew; and the official offer made by the sheriff was rejected. Not even when assured that one of the brothers stood ready to accept the mercy which he despised could he be persuaded to alter his mind; and hence, when I returned, as I was obliged to return, to give testimony on his trial, his prospects were not in the most remote degree ameliorated. On the contrary, though much

of the fierce and desperate character which marked his former demeanour had departed, yet on the single point of becoming king's evidence he was still as resolute as before, praying "that Heaven would abandon him in his hour of greatest need, whenever he abandoned that determination." This was readily accounted for. Not a day passed by without his receiving a visit from Harriet, and not an interview occurred, during which he was not reminded of his promise, and urged to keep it.

At length the period of the assizes came round ; and the judges having gone in procession to hear Divine service opened the court in proper form for the conduct of public business.—The first day, as usually happens, was spent chiefly in the arrangement of preliminary matters: the juries were called together, the charge delivered, and bills of indictment brought forward. On the second day, the cause of the smugglers came on. It is probably needless to observe, that a trial for murder, under any circumstances, never fails to excite a great degree of attention ; but in the case to be tried to-day there were features of more than ordinary atrocity, and the interest taken in it by the public was fully evinced by the multitudes which surrounded the court-house from an early hour in the morning. No sooner were the doors opened, than every bench and corner was crowded to suffocation, whilst all who filled them bore upon their countenances an expression of the deepest and most painful anxiety. For a rumour of Will's behaviour had, by some means or other, got abroad, and hence all descriptions of people appeared to interest their feelings in his behalf ; indeed, there were not wanting several respectable persons, who volunteered such advice and assistance as they had it in their power to offer. At the suggestion of one of these, Mrs. Brockman had taken care, in addition to the lawyers employed for the prisoners generally, to engage a counsel expressly for her son, whose reputation stood high, and who certainly merited, in the present instance, all the praise which could be heaped upon him.

Such was the state of affairs, when, in obedience to a message from the court, I entered the hall, and took my place among the gentlemen of the bar. For the first mi-

nute or two after I was seated, my brain swam round, and my eyes danced in their sockets, so that I could distinguish nothing with accuracy. A dense mass of objects floated before me,—and a hum, like that of bees on a summer's evening, rang in my ears; but I saw no separate man, nor heard any separate or articulate sound. By and by, however, my self-command returned, and I looked towards the dock:—it was a terrible vision. There stood the widow's son, handcuffed, and bound with chains, between two of his ferocious comrades. Apart from the rest stood the third, not chained, however, like them; but, as it seemed, ready to step from the dock to the witness-box. I closed my eyes involuntarily, and, I fear, cursed him in my heart.

And now, silence being proclaimed, the murmur of conversation ceased, and you might have heard a pin drop to the ground, whilst the proper officer proceeded to read the indictment. It accused Zachariah Petley, Thomas Petley, Edward Petley, and William Brockman, of having, during the night of the 15th of August last past, at a certain place within the parish of St. Alphage, in the county of Kent, feloniously, and with malice prepense, killed and slain Robert Sharp, an officer of his majesty's Customs, when in the performance of his duty. A second count charged the prisoners with an attempt to defraud the revenue by running and importing contraband goods. All against the peace of his majesty the king.

“Zachariah Petley,” continued the officer, “are you guilty, or not guilty?”

“Not guilty, my lord.”

“Thomas Petley, are you guilty, or not guilty?”

“Not guilty.”

“Edward Petley, are you guilty?”

“Not guilty, my lord.”

“William Brockman, are you guilty, or not guilty?”

“Guilty of the second count, but not guilty of the first.”

“Not guilty of the first!” shrieked a female voice from one of the galleries. “Not guilty of murder; hear ye that, my lord! My boy is not guilty,—oh, let him go, let him go!”

Not a sound was in the court, save the voice of the speaker ; and so perfectly electrified were all present by the tone in which these words were uttered, that no one sought to interrupt her. I looked up towards the place from whence the shriek came, and there stood the miserable widow in the very front of the gallery, with hands clasped, and arms uplifted, staring upon the spot occupied by her son. Her dress was all disordered : her cap, pushed partly off her head, permitted her hair, now slightly tinged with grey, to hang wild about her shoulders ; and her large dark eyes were motionless, as if they had no power to move, and all earthly objects, except one, were shut out from them. The judge had, however, by this time recovered from his surprise. " My good woman," said he, " you must keep silence ; and I advise you to withdraw."

" I will, I will," cried she ; " but hear ye not his declaration ? and I will swear to its truth, and so will Mr. Williams."

" This must not be," rejoined the judge. " Constables, do your duty, and keep order in the court." But even the constables were tender to her : they only besought her to be quiet. She sat down, and the business proceeded.

" By the lenity of the court, and at the request of the Board of Excise," said the counsel for the prosecution, " Thomas Petley is permitted to give evidence in this case. We therefore withdraw our plea against him." The judge hereupon charged the jury ; and a verdict of not guilty on both counts being returned, the approver quitted the dock.

It were needless to go minutely through the several parts of the trial, and to repeat my own evidence, or that of the rest, who knew no more to-day than they had known when the prisoners were first committed. The counsel for the defence did what men could do to puzzle and confound us. He whom we had retained for Brockman, in particular, exercised a degree of ingenuity, which perfectly astonished me ; and he put several questions to myself with the design of eliciting from my replies that Brockman, at all events, could not be implicated in the more serious offence.

" I think you mentioned, sir," said he, " that, after the shots were fired, and the shriek uttered, you saw only two

men beside the body, whilst one was descending the hill towards the group—was he who was descending a tall man, or a little man ?”

“ As far as I could judge, a tall man.”

“ Now, look at the three prisoners at the bar, and at the witness who has lately quitted it, and tell me which of them comes nearest in height to the recollection you have of that man.”

I looked round. Brockman was full two inches taller than any of them ; yet I dared not swear that it was he. I hesitated for a moment.

“ We do not wish you to say which of these persons was really the man ; for as yet, we take it for granted that he is not present : but, supposing these to be the people implicated, which should you imagine to have been that man ?”

To the question thus put, an objection was raised by the counsel on the opposite side ; but the objection was over-ruled. “ As you now address me,” answered I, “ I should say that William Brockman’s height corresponds most nearly with that of the person alluded to.”

“ God bless you, sir !” again exclaimed the unhappy mother ; but she was immediately silenced. The rest of the evidence being now disposed of, Thomas Petley mounted the witness-box, and was solemnly sworn. He promised to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and prayed God to help him as he kept that promise ; he gave a minute and circumstantial detail, of which the following may be taken as an accurate abbreviation :—

He admitted that they were all four engaged in a smuggling expedition. He related the circumstance of the seizure as it had been described by the exciseman and myself ; and of the flight of those who carried the goods. These were, his brother Edward, William Brockman, and himself. “ As to Zachariah,” said he, “ we left him in charge of the boat, and he never joined us till all was over.” When the witness uttered this, Brockman turned round in the dock, and stared him full in the face. A sort of flush passed over his cheeks, but he was no ways farther embarrassed, and went on. “ Though we fled at first in

different directions, we all three met in a hollow about a stone's throw to the right, and here entered into a consultation as to what was to be done. 'Done,' cried Brockman, who had drunk rather too freely, 'what should be done? You have pistols, I have a knife; there are three to two;—let us recover the goods.' To this we objected; but he snatched a pistol from my belt, and swore if we feared to join him he would go alone. He set off accordingly: we followed, with the sole view of preventing fatal consequences; but before we could overtake him he and the deceased had exchanged shots. The deceased was wounded and fled; but Brockman pursued him, seized him like a tiger, threw him, and just as we reached him, had succeeded in cutting his throat. I wrested the knife from his grasp, and in the struggle wounded him. We were all about the body, uncertain how to dispose of it, when my brother arrived. He mentioned having met the other exciseman, and assured us all Folkstone would be afoot directly; so we cast the body from the cliff, and then we thought of escaping. But it seemed better to hide it first. We accordingly descended the glen, and buried it under the stones where it was found."

Whilst this person's evidence was delivered, men seemed to hold their very breath with anxiety; now that it came to a close, a long sob or sigh ran through the court. A fearful stillness followed it, and every eye was turned upon Brockman. The unfortunate youth, up to this moment, had hung down his head, as if in shame; he now raised it proudly, and looked calmly and resolutely round. "My lord," said he slowly, and with great firmness, "the last witness has uttered a tissue of lies. I have sworn not to betray the guilty, but I am not he."

"Prisoner, you must be silent," replied the judge; "you are in the hands of counsel."

The cross-examination which the approver endured was indeed enough to cause an ordinary person, even when speaking the truth, to fall into a thousand contradictions. He was asked how the knife came into the grave, but he could not tell; he was questioned as to the reason why Brockman, if so desperate a character, wore no pistols of

his own? For that he could not account. But in the main points of his story no contrariety appeared; and though required to tell it again and again, he invariably told it in the same words. It was well got up; no doubt it had been well prepared beforehand. Our counsel at length sat down in despair, leaving the case to the jury.

And now the judge summed up. He went over the chief heads of evidence with the strictest impartiality, charging the jury as that evidence required. He entreated them, if they had any doubts upon their minds, to give the prisoners the full benefit of these doubts; "but the testimony of the last witness," continued his lordship, "is so clear, and so decided, that, in my opinion, you have but one duty to perform. It is a painful one; but the laws of God and of your country require it. And now you may withdraw to consider the verdict."

The jury did not withdraw, but consulted together for perhaps ten minutes in their box. During that interval, the court was as still, except when its stillness was interrupted by their whispers, as if life had departed from all within it. Once, and once only, the chain upon Brockman's legs rattled, as he resumed his former position; and the sound went to my heart like that of his death-knell. I looked at him. He was pale, pale as a corpse, but it was not the paleness of guilt; for not a nerve shook, nor did a muscle involuntarily quiver. At last the foreman addressed the judge, and told him that they had made up their minds.

"And what is your verdict, gentlemen of the jury?"

"That Zachariah Petley and Edward Petlev are not guilty on the first count, but guilty on the second; that William Brockman is guilty on both."

"He is not guilty!" again shrieked out his mother, as she wildly rose from her seat. "Oh, mercy, mercy, my lord judge! spare the life of the widow's son — her guiltless, excellent son! Oh, mercy, mercy!" She could utter no more. Her senses forsook her, and she was carried in that state from the court.

Brockman heard the verdict unmoved. He made a spring forward when his mother fainted, as if to support her, and

seemed to curse the chains which kept him back ; but he recovered his self-command again, as soon as she had been borne out, and calmly awaited his sentence. For myself, I started up, and, heedless of forms, implored the judge to spare him, pledging my credit that he could not be guilty, and that his bare assertion was infinitely more to be relied upon than the oath of the person on whose testimony he had been convicted. The judge, who was a mild man, heard me out, but he could not receive my testimony. " You may employ these arguments," said he, " in a petition to the throne, which I shall certainly forward, if you present it. But I must tell you plainly, that I see no grounds on which any petition can be got up ; far less can it be expected to avail in saving the life of a man convicted, as the prisoner has been convicted, of murder."

I could do no more, so I sat down in a state of utter despondency, to watch the conclusion of the scene. " Zachariah and Edward Petley," said his lordship, addressing himself to the dock, " you have both been convicted of violating the laws of your country, by defrauding his majesty's revenue. What makes the crime in your case more heinous is, that you appear to have carried fire-arms about your persons when engaged in your nefarious occupation ; and in what way those arms were meant to be used is hardly to be considered a question. The immediate consequence of your being armed, indeed, has been, that the life of a fellow-creature has been sacrificed ; and though he died not immediately by your hands, you can hardly be acquitted by your own consciences of some share in the blame attaching to his murder. Taking all these matters into consideration, the sentence of the court is, that you, Zachariah, be transported beyond seas for the term of seven years, whilst you, Edward, be transported for the term of your natural life.—And now, William Brockman," continued the judge, whilst at the same time he put on the black cap, " a more distressing task awaits me with respect to you. Of your character previous to this business the court knows nothing, and can know nothing officially ; but it has been said of you, that the time is not very remote when you were accounted a credit to yourself and to your

connections. I would to God you had always continued such ; for then the painful duty would not have been imposed upon me, of passing upon you the last dreadful sentence which the law awards. In your case, the sentence of the court is, that you be taken from the place where you stand to the gaol, and from thence to the place of execution, and that you be hanged by the neck till you be dead, and your body given for dissection ; and may God have mercy on your soul ! I can hold out to you no hope of mercy from man, and therefore advise you to make your peace with Heaven. But as your friends seem anxious to petition the throne in your favour, I will appoint as distant a day for your execution as is consistent with propriety. You shall suffer on Wednesday next."

Whilst others sat as if frozen with horror, Brockman alone seemed calm and unruffled. " My lord," said he, " I thank you for your good-will, but I have no hope that it will avail me. Indeed, I hardly desire it. My character is blasted, and I have no wish to survive it ; but I am innocent—innocent of the crime laid to my charge. I have been led astray by a misplaced passion, and betrayed by false friends. The man who did the deed stands here," laying his hand upon the shoulder of Edward Petley, who absolutely shrank beneath his touch. " And there," pointing to Thomas, " is he who aided him. This wound," holding up his right hand, " I received in striving to protect the man, whom one brother had smitten down, from the fury of the other ; and as to the knife found in the grave, it is thus accounted for. We exchanged knives whilst at sea ; and here is that for which I bartered mine. But it matters not, I shall suffer ; and as I hope to be forgiven when I stand before the throne of my Maker, so do I freely forgive my murderers."

It is impossible to describe the effect produced by this speech, and by the holding up of a seaman's knife in the hand of the prisoner, bearing the initials E. P. " He is innocent !" exclaimed the bar, one and all ; " the man is sacrificed."

" Silence, gentlemen," cried the judge ; " let the pri

soners be removed." They were removed accordingly, and I stayed not long behind them.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SMUGGLERS.

I HURRIED back to my apartment at the inn in a state of mind little removed from insanity, and paced backwards and forwards for a while, totally unable to compose or collect my thoughts. There was a singing in my ears, as if twenty tea-kettles had been boiling round me, and an overwhelming consciousness of some dreadful event impending weighed like a dead load upon my spirits. I had seen and heard fearful things. The widow's scream still rang through the air, and her maniac form, as she called aloud for mercy, was before me. Then came the stern yet humane deportment of the judge, his deep and sonorous voice, as he prayed God to have mercy on the young man's soul; and last of all, the image of Brockman himself crossed my mind's eye, bringing back with it a perfect consciousness of all that had occurred, and of the necessity which existed for immediate and momentous exertion.

Having regained my self-command, I despatched a messenger for Mr. Pleader, in whose judgment I could not but feel the deepest confidence, and of whose disposition to serve his client no doubt could be entertained. He obeyed the summons instantly; and taking precisely the same view of the case which had been taken by myself, he began to consider it, in all its bearings, with a degree of dispassionate acumen for which I had justly given him credit. Like myself, he saw clearly that Brockman was the victim of a conspiracy; and as soon as he had been made acquainted with the particulars of my first journey to Maidstone, he decided at once that there were other and more weighty parties to that conspiracy than the family of the Petleys.

“ Who is the third passenger of whom you speak ? ” asked he. “ Do you know him ? Can you tell us where to find him ? ”

I was on the point of answering in the negative, when, accidentally looking through the window, I beheld the very person in conversation with the constable of my own parish, on the opposite side of the way. “ There he is ! ” cried I.

“ And there he must not remain,” exclaimed the lawyer, putting on his hat, and hurrying down stairs. I followed immediately ; and, as good fortune would have it, we reached the object of our search before he had parted from his companion.

“ One word with you, sir,” said I, addressing myself to him.

“ With me, sir ! ” replied the fellow, reddening ; “ I know not what business you can have with me. I am in a hurry, and cannot wait.”

“ But you must wait,” exclaimed the barrister. “ There is a serious charge against you ; and from this spot you stir not, except in the custody of an officer. Constable, do your duty, and secure that man.”

“ Secure me ! ” replied the other ; “ let me see the man that will secure me, without a magistrate’s warrant or authority. That I will not resist, but till that be produced, lay hands on me at your peril.” The fellow, as he uttered these words, thrust his hand into his bosom, and pulled out a pistol. The officer hung back, a crowd began to assemble, and in spite of the efforts of Mr. Pleader and myself to hinder it, he mixed himself with the mob and disappeared. There was nothing now for it except to obtain a regular warrant ; and as the constable professed to be acquainted with his place of abode, and knew his name, we had every reason to hope that he might yet be secured. He was, it appeared, a person of considerable consequence in the custom-house at Dover : “ his name was Joseph Sly, and unless the world belie him,” added the officer, “ a greater rogue is nowhere to be met with.”

A warrant was soon procured, on my making oath, that I had reason to suspect the individual named in it of nefarious practices against the revenue laws. Armed with

this, the constable set off, determined, as he assured us, to overcome all resistance ; and I, by way of whiling away the time which might be expected to elapse before he should return, determined to pay a visit both to Mrs. Brockman and her son. The former I found in a state of the most pitiable distress. Fit after fit had come upon her so fast, after her removal out of court, that her medical attendant altogether despaired of her recovery ; and though these had happily ceased, they gave place only to a stupor, such as hardly permitted her to recognise, far less open her mind to any one. Under these circumstances, I considered it altogether needless to protract my stay beside her. From her lodgings I accordingly hastened to the gaol ; and though it wanted but half an hour of the ordinary time of locking up, the turnkey, aware how deeply I was interested in the fate of the prisoner, hesitated not to admit me. I repaired to the condemned cell. It was on the ground floor ; a narrow recess, resembling a vault in a churchyard, more than a place of confinement for a living man. The only light admitted was through the door, — an iron grating, over which a strong wooden shutter, perforated to admit the air, could be fastened as soon as night set in. There sat the unfortunate youth upon a stone bench — the only bed allowed him. Yet he was less cast down, far less apparently desperate than when I found him the inhabitant of a less comfortless dungeon, in expectation of the day of trial. He held out his manacled hand to me, and eagerly enquired after his mother. “ She is better,” said I, “ and I trust will do well. But how are you, Brockman ? How have the awful events of the day affected you ? ”

“ As they ought to affect me, I humbly hope,” replied he ; “ I know that I have but few days to live, and I am fully conscious that, though no murderer, I shall deserve my fate on account of my conduct to my mother. For her, Mr. Williams, I feel most deeply.” Here his voice faltered, and the tear struggled to escape from his eye. “ Oh, who will comfort her, who will console her, who will wipe away from her memory the shame and agony of such a death as mine ? You will befriend her, sir, you will be kind to her, and give her your countenance, I am aware ;

but she will not survive it. Mother and son will perish together, for her heart is too tender not to break."

"I would not have you encourage false hopes," replied I, forgetting, in the impulse of the moment, the resolution which I had formed, not to communicate aught to the prisoner till something more decisive had transpired. "I would not have you encourage false hopes, very far from it. I would, on the contrary, advise you to prepare for the worst. But your friends are actively exerting themselves in your favour; your speech in court has made a strong impression, and the agitation of the Petleys was remarked by all. You may yet be liberated, and I pray that you shall."

Brockman shook his head, though the bright glance of his eye showed that even this address had renewed the desire of life.

"To say that I would not rejoice, were your exertions crowned with success," said he, "would be to say an untruth. I am but young to die, and to die by the hands of a common executioner — ugh! — it is a horrible idea. But I fear you only flatter yourselves: you excite no hope in me; for what ground have you to go upon? Was not the evidence direct and conclusive?"

"Yes, but there are other matters, of which we will not now speak. This conspiracy, whose existence you would not credit, is seen through by the world at large, and it will, I trust, be brought to light."

"Oh, talk not of the past," cried he; "I have, indeed, been played upon, bitterly, cruelly deceived. You were right, sir; Harriet is a devil. But I forgive her, as I forgive her brothers; and may they be forgiven elsewhere!"

The arrival of the turnkey here put a stop to farther conversation. I accordingly shook hands with Brockman, and having promised to call again on the morrow, I followed my conductor. On our way to the outer gate of the prison, we passed another cell, something similar to that in which my young friend was immured, but a degree less gloomy. It was inhabited, and a deep groan which came through the holes in the shutter indicated that its tenant was ill at ease in mind or body, or both.

“ Who is confined there ? ” said I.

“ One of your friend’s associates,” replied the gaoler ; “ he that is to be transported for life. He is in a strange taking, sir. He has not ceased to shake as if he had the ague ever since they were brought back from court ; and the doctor who has seen him knows not what to make of him. He says, if the fellow be not better to-morrow, he must be removed to a warmer place ; but for my part, I think this too good for him.”

We had by this time reached the gate, and the locks, bolts, and chains being one by one removed, the massy portal grated harshly on its hinges, and I again found myself in the street. It is unnecessary to give a minute detail of the proceedings of the next five days, either within or without the walls of the prison. The constable, who had promised so fair as to the arrest of Sly, found, as many others find, that it is easier to make a promise than to perform it—Joseph effectually eluded the search. For myself, I paid frequent visits both to Mrs. Brockman and her son, the former of whom slowly recovered, chiefly, I believe, because we deemed it right to put the best face upon affairs, and to flatter her with hopes which we ourselves scarcely encouraged. With respect to the latter, though for the first day or two he talked much of the possible result of the petition, and said something of his own intentions in case its prayer should be attended to ; yet when the third and the fourth passed on, and no intelligence reached him, his hopes gradually declined, till they may be said to have become utterly extinct. He now anxiously desired to see his mother. She was still too weak to be moved, and of this I informed him, warning him, at the same time, that we had kept the nature of his sentence a secret from her ; but when now the evening of Monday had arrived, and no pardon or reprieve came with it, I deemed it incumbent on me to fulfil his wishes at all hazards. Still we resolved to conceal the truth. It was accordingly agreed between us, that she should be told of a probable commutation of the sentence of death to that of transportation for life ; and having become somewhat of an adept in the art of deceiving, I agreed to convey the

communication. For this purpose, I repaired to her lodging early on the Tuesday morning, and finding her so far convalescent as to be able to sit up in her chair, I entered at once upon the business of my message.

The good woman expected something, from the unusually early hour of my arrival.

"What news bring you, Mr. Williams?" said she; "you are the bearer of some intelligence, I am certain. Oh, God grant that it may be favourable!"

"Not unfavourable, my friend," replied I; "at least not so bad as we had a right to expect. You must make up your mind, I fear, to be separated from your son for a time, but the separation will not be eternal."

"Then he does not suffer!" cried she wildly yet joyfully, and clasping her hands together: "oh, thank Heaven! thank Heaven! What matters transportation? what boots it where we live? For I will accompany him, Mr. Williams. Yes, I will go in the same ship, or if that be not allowed, in the next that sails, and we will build a cottage among the woods and wilds of New South Wales, and smile when we think of England, and all the cares and troubles we endured there. They tell me it is a glorious country, and a glorious climate; and were it not so, what shall I care for climate or country as long as I am with my boy?"

It was with much difficulty that I could refrain from weeping aloud, when I beheld the unfortunate woman thus rejoicing in a lie; but I did restrain myself, and went on to propose that she should visit her son this day in prison.

"Goes he so soon?" exclaimed she; "surely they will not send him off to-morrow; but no matter; I am ready, and perhaps I ought not to desire his longer stay here, since he must abide in a dungeon. Go on, I will follow you."

Mrs. Brockman rose as she spoke; but her weakness was such that she almost immediately fell back upon the sofa. "I cannot walk yet," said she faintly; "you must have me carried, and glad, glad shall I be to bear the fatigue, even if it be such." I accordingly procured four stout porters, and having caused her to be well covered up,

she was removed, without suffering any serious inconvenience, to the prison.

I shall not attempt to describe the meeting, far less the parting, although I was present at both. They were such as will not bear a delineation in words. The latter, indeed, was on Will's part so solemn, that I trembled lest his mother should surmise the truth; but it occurred not to her: so just is the observation, that we believe what we desire, even if the grounds of belief be on the contrary side of the question. She remained with him about two hours, and having promised not to come again till the day after the morrow, she was borne back to her apartment.

Whilst I and my two friends were thus employed, Mr. Pleader,* and the other gentlemen, who took so lively an interest in our affairs, were straining every nerve to procure information, and to substantiate their claim to an exercise of the royal mercy. As yet, however, all their efforts had failed. The Petleys, probably conscious that public suspicion was roused, had fled the country; of Sly no tidings were procured, except that it appeared, on examining his papers, that he had defrauded the revenue to a large amount, and for a long series of years. No doubt, his fears suggested to him that this was the ground of his arrest, for the real nature of the charge against him had never been communicated. Be that, however, as it may, no trace of him could be discovered, and hence all idea of saving Brockman was abandoned, not by me only, but by the rest. Of this I thought it my duty to inform him. He received the intelligence with fortitude, — with great fortitude, but not without a pang; for there is a vast difference between the expression of an indifference to life when death appears remote, and the feeling of that indifference when it is actually near at hand. He strove, however, by every means which religion and reason could suggest, to reconcile himself to a fate apparently irremediable. I prayed with him, I administered to him the sacrament, and, at his own earnest request, I spent the entire night of Tuesday in his cell. From the moment of Mrs. Brockman's departure, indeed, I shut myself up with

him altogether; and painful as this duty was, there were not wanting numerous circumstances which gave to it a degree of even pleasurable interest, such as I could not have anticipated. The fact I believe to be, that all violent excitement is pleasing while it lasts; in the excitement to which I was now subjected there was no want of violence; and hence, as well as from contemplating the effect of conscious innocence upon a religious mind, I cannot pronounce the night spent in a condemned cell at Maidstone the most determinately miserable which it has been my lot to spend. Tired nature, however, gave way at last. Having solemnly commended ourselves to the protection of the Deity, we lay down upon a mattress with which the gaoler had humanely supplied us, and I was not less surprised than delighted to perceive, that long before my thoughts had attained any degree of composure, my companion was fast asleep. I followed his example as quickly as I could, and slept also.

How long we had lain in a state of unconsciousness I cannot tell, but the early rays of the sun were just beginning to shine through the gratings of the dungeon, when the rattling of chains, and the drawing back of bolts, disturbed us. I thought Brockman's hand shook a little when he extended it towards me, and I could perceive a sort of involuntary contraction of the eyebrow, such as indicated a severe internal struggle between courage and natural weakness. His breath was suspended too, till the door creaked upon its hinges, from the expectation, no doubt, that it would open to admit the executioner. But instead of the executioner, the sheriff entered, and there was an expression in his countenance not usually exhibited by the bearer of deadly tidings. We both stared at him in silence.

"Young man," said he, stepping up to Brockman, "it gives me sincere satisfaction to inform you, that his majesty has been pleased to order a delay in the execution of your sentence, till certain matters connected with the offence of which you stand convicted shall have been more accurately investigated."

The blood rushed all at once to Brockman's cheeks,

and then receded again. He gasped for breath, and but that I held his arm would have fallen to the ground.

"How is this?" cried I, beyond measure overjoyed; "what fortunate occurrence has brought this about? Have you succeeded in apprehending the fugitive, or what has been done?"

"Not so," answered the sheriff, with a smile: "we have failed on all hands; but there is a Providence which preserves the innocent, and it has wonderfully interfered in favour of this youth. As I see that he is calm, the whole story may be told at once. His innocence has been clearly proved, by the confession of one of his associates, and here is the royal pardon, with which an express has just arrived."

I will not attempt to describe the scene which followed, or repeat the many congratulatory and admonitory adages to which Will was compelled to listen, not only from the sheriff, but from the chaplain, and even from the gaoler. Let me rather detail at once the means by which an event so unlooked for and joyful was brought about; and for this a few words will suffice.

I have already mentioned, that on a former occasion I was startled by the sound of a heavy groaning, which proceeded from a cell near that of the condemned man to whom I had been paying a visit, and where, as the gaoler informed me, Edward Petley was confined. The illness with which that unhappy person was afflicted seized him in the dock, and never left him after. It seemed as if the hand of his victim when laid upon his shoulder had been filled with some deadly poison; for the shivering which came over him at the time, and to which all within the court were eye-witnesses, ceased not to agitate his frame to the last. He was supported back to prison in a violent fit of the ague, and it soon became manifest that his life was in danger

For some days he bore his illness in stubborn silence; but as the danger increased, remorse began to rack his mind, and strange expressions to escape his lips. It was on the morning of the Tuesday, on the very day preceding the execution, that, after a severe contest, he desired to

see the chaplain, and to him made a full confession of his own guilt, and a full declaration of Will's innocence. The story which Will had told was, it appeared, accurately correct. He, the dying man, shot the exciseman, whilst his brother cut his throat, having wounded Brockman in the hand when attempting to wrest the knife from him. Nor was this the only piece of intelligence which he conveyed. He exposed a series of frauds and crimes, in which Joseph Sly had taken an active part; and the whole being carefully noted down and read over to him, he signed it as his dying declaration. With grounds so clear to act upon, there was no difficulty whatever in obtaining the royal pardon, the arrival of which had been thus long delayed only by the absence from town of the Secretary of State for the Home Department.

Little now remains for me to add. Brockman, as a matter of course, was set at liberty; and his mental sufferings during the period of his imprisonment, especially since sentence of death was passed upon him, being considered as a sufficient punishment of his offence against the revenue, all charges from that quarter were dropped. From his mother the real peril of his case was, however, carefully concealed till many weeks after her return in the country; nor was she even then made acquainted with it, till to keep it longer a secret would have been of no avail; for the good woman's constitution never recovered the injury which many weeks of acute agitation inflicted upon it. She lived, indeed, to see her son not only restored to his former respectable condition in life, but put in command of the very vessel which he had all along been meant to command; and she died at last blessing God for his mercies here, and humbly trusting to be admitted as a participator in his still greater mercies hereafter.

As to the Petleys, the younger of the two breathed his last a few hours after his confession had been signed, and was buried in the churchyard of Maidstone. His bones were not removed to pollute the cemetery of his native parish, and no stone was erected to his memory. Of the others the fate is uncertain. Zachariah, it is true, underwent his sentence, and is doubtless herding, at this day,

with beings as wicked as himself ; but of the father, the sister, and Tom, no account has reached us. Neither is any thing accurately known of the destiny of Joseph Sly. About six months after these events, I read, indeed, in one of the London papers, that one Josiah Turpin, *alias* Joseph Sly, had suffered the punishment due to burglary under aggravated circumstances ; but whether the person alluded to was my former travelling companion I had no opportunity to learn.

Of Will Brockman I never heard any thing but what was favourable, from the moment of his liberation. His good sense soon taught him to shake off the remains of an attachment so misplaced as that with which he had bound himself to Harriet Petley ; nor has he, as far as I know, permitted any other to arise in its room. The direction of his trading voyages, which are effected between London and Hamburgh, do not permit him to pay frequent visits to St. Alphage ; but whenever he comes, he fails not to bring presents of rare and valuable articles to me and to my household. Of course, a cover is always laid for him at our table, and it not unfrequently happens, that we refer back, in our conversations over our wine, to past events. On such he always touches with becoming seriousness and solemnity, and never fails to thank God that he is no longer a slave to the habits, or exposed to the risks, which invariably accompany the career of THE SMUGGLER.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SUICIDE.

ABOUT a quarter of an hour's walk from the Vicarage, or perhaps something less, there is a lonely cottage, remarkable for the beauty of its situation, and for the air of faded elegance and gentility which surrounds it, but which, in

spite of these advantages, has stood untenanted during the last five years, and bids fair so to continue for many years to come. It is built at the extremity of one of the numerous glens with which this part of the country abounds, close beside a rivulet of clear water, and immediately under a high green hill. The front wall of that cottage was in former times entirely hidden by a light wooden trellis, up which a vine was trained with singular care ; but the fastenings have long ago given way, the very wood has in many places rotted, and the vine itself now trails, in melancholy neglect, upon the ground. In like manner, the western gable gives support to a beautiful pear-tree, whose branches have all run wild, and of which it is reported, that though it regularly produces, season after season, an abundant crop of blossom, that blossom has never come to perfection since the house ceased to be inhabited. There are two lattices, one on each side of the entrance, a small sash-window in either gable, and the frame of another in the rear of the cottage, facing the hill, and admitting light into the kitchen. The roof is composed of thatch, and projects considerably over the walls on every side, and both door and windows are painted green.

Three sides of this cottage are surrounded by a garden, now gone sadly to waste, but still retaining marks of its former neatness and regularity. It is fenced in by a hawthorn hedge, in which are two small swing-gates, both terminating a gravel walk, which runs parallel with the front of the house. Of these, one directly overlooks the stream, just where it reaches the bottom of the glen, and, from a rapid torrent, settles into a quiet pool, and where a rustic bridge is thrown across, from the opposite extremity of which a footpath leads round the base of the hill towards the church ; the other conducts to no particular object, but opens merely upon the green valley. There is a lawn in this garden, in which beds and baskets for flowers have been carefully cut ; but the grass has grown rank and long, and the flowers are choked up with kootch, nettles, and other noxious weeds. So is it with the trim walks, which are now hardly to be distinguished from the soil ; and, above all, the fragments of broken glass scattered here

and there, as the wind has swept them from the now empty leads, give to the place an appearance of utter neglect, such as cannot be looked upon without pain. The only things, indeed, about this cottage, which do not seem as if they required the hand of man to prune them, are a few common shrubs in the front, and a single tall walnut-tree behind. The former grow luxuriantly; the latter continues to overshadow the thatched roof, as it has done for ages, although a honeysuckle bower, placed beneath its shelter, has fallen absolutely to ruin. As no view can be obtained, either from the cottage or its environs, of any other human habitation, as the very church is concealed by a curve in the hills, over which its tower is too humble to appear, it requires no very great exertion of fancy to imagine, when you are standing there, that from the world, as it is called, you are wholly shut out, and that you have nothing farther to do with the turmoil and bustle, and evil passions, which torment your less fortunate fellow-creatures.

Of the interior of this cottage, a few words will suffice to convey a correct picture. It contains two rooms, one on each side of a narrow passage, with a kitchen on the ground floor; above stairs there are likewise two bedrooms, and a dark closet. All these apartments are covered with the remains of a neat paper, into which the damp has sorely eaten, and which, in consequence, hangs down in many fragments from the wall. The wood, once purely white, has become yellow, and the dry-rot has made considerable progress in it; the stoves, covered with rust, are falling gradually from their places as the plaster peels off, and the bricks separate which support them: in a word, the entire cottage, both within and without, with all that belongs to it or surrounds it, cannot fail to impress a strange visitant with sensations more than ordinarily gloomy; for it looks as if here, more than elsewhere, an evil genius presided, causing few years to do the work of many, and bringing over it the influence of decay and desolation, even more quickly than that influence usually prevails over the deserted abodes of men.

I never heard that the cottage in question had any particular name, but during a space of four-and-twenty years

it was occupied by two persons, who may be said to have lived entirely for each other, and who now sleep soundly side by side in our village churchyard. Should any way-faring man happen to visit that modest cemetery, and desire, as it is possible he may, to stand upon their graves, I will tell him where to look for them. There are no monuments placed over them; not so much as a wooden railing, or a bunch of wild flowers, distinguishes theirs from other graves: but they have a mark of their own not to be mistaken. As the beings who tenant them were recluses in their life, even so in death they have not thrown off the character. Their graves are dug at the very outskirts of the churchyard, close behind the northern fence, in that quarter which superstition still hinders the peasantry from filling, as they fill other quarters, with the bodies of their relations; and they are, consequently, far apart from other graves. The rankness of the grass, too, which waves above them, might of itself be sufficient to point them out, for no one willingly treads upon them, far less rests there for a moment.

In this spot, beneath two common green mounds, repose the former inhabitants of the cottage; a son, who, though to others an object of pitiable loathing, was, to his mother's eyes, dearer than the light of heaven; and a mother, whom sin, and its attendant sorrow, brought to an untimely end, by means which no right-minded person can contemplate without horror. She perished by her own desperate hand, as if existence were a burden too heavy to be borne, after she had been deprived of one who, during life, was an object of continual care and anxiety, and who was totally incapable of estimating her fondness, far less of returning it, as a mother's fondness is usually returned by an only child. Their story is not a long, nor, I fear, at least in certain of its particulars, a very uncommon one, so I will relate it, premising, that to the truth of some of its details my own observation can testify; whilst, for a knowledge of the rest, I am indebted to a combination of circumstances, of which it is not necessary to enter into any explanation.

On a certain day in the beginning of autumn, in the

year 17—, there drew up at the principal inn in Folkstone a postchaise, from which a lady and a gentleman, the former carrying an infant in her arms, alighted. The lady was extremely beautiful, and dressed in the first style of fashion: the gentleman had the air of a man of rank, and appeared several years older than his fair companion. They gave no account of themselves, nor could the postilion who drove them convey any farther intelligence, than that they came that day from Ashford, and, as far as he could learn, on the day previous from London. It was, of course, surmised that they preferred this to the ordinary coach road; that they were on their way to Dover, and from thence to the Continent; nor was the conjecture the less feasible, that they travelled wholly unattended by servants, either male or female. They were accordingly received as strangers, and treated as such.

The behaviour of the gentleman, however, speedily showed that he at least was not an absolute stranger to these parts, though what the nature of his connection with them might be, or how formed, no one ever discovered. Having seen the lady settled in the best apartment which the hotel could furnish, he desired the waiter to conduct him to the house of Mr. —, at that time the only attorney in the place, and steward to most of the aristocracy who dwelt near. His visit to the attorney lasted about half an hour, after which he returned to the inn, and remained there during the rest of the day.

No orders being issued, as night drew on, respecting horses or a carriage for the following morning, and the gentleman requiring a bedroom for himself, though as near to that of the lady as circumstances would allow, the whole family, from the landlord down to the waiter, and from the waiter to the boots, began to wonder in what relation the parties stood towards each other, and of what nature the business could be which brought them to this secluded part of the world. There was, moreover, in their respective manners, the one towards the other, a great deal well calculated to excite the curiosity, if not the suspicion, of vulgar minds. It was remarked by the men who carried in dinner, and waited upon them during the progress of the meal

that no familiar conversation, indeed that very little conversation of any kind, passed between them. The gentleman preserved a cold and even austere deportment towards the lady; the lady, on the other hand, shrank back, apparently in alarm, from his slightest notice; she sighed frequently, eat little or nothing, and devoted the whole of her attention to her babe, a child apparently about three months old. But the spectacle which passed under the eye of the chambermaid was even more remarkable than this. Having entered their apartment somewhat abruptly, she beheld the lady on her knees before the gentleman, with clasped hands, and cheeks suffused with tears, whilst he was hurrying away from her, if not in anger, at all events in a frame of mind not to be worked upon by entreaty. Indeed, the wary Abigail had been for some time previous an eavesdropper to a conversation of no very tender kind, and it was solely to satisfy herself that she had not mistaken its purport, that she carried in bed-room candles long before they had been rung for. All these circumstances tended, as may be imagined, not only to keep alive curiosity, but to stir up a deeper feeling throughout the various members of mine host's family, who were then too little accustomed to entertain well-dressed travellers not to desire an acquaintance with the names and family circumstances of the few who chanced to put up at the sign of the Black Horse. As the reader is not, perhaps, aware of the mode adopted for the attainment of such information, it may be worth while to state how it was customarily managed at the head inn in Folkstone.

In case you travel in your own carriage, and with servants of your own, things are easily brought to bear; a pot of beer, or a glass of brandy, secures the communicativeness of the footman. Should the vehicle be a post-chaise, and your only attendant the post-boy, he is pumped to the uttermost; and when found to know nothing, your chamber is carefully examined for a card, the back of a letter or a direction-plate upon your portmanteau. In the present instance, all these means were adopted without success; and, finally, the linen left out for use was closely inspected, under the idea that it might possibly bear a name, and certainly

a cipher: but neither was there.^o The gentleman's night-cap, the lady's *robe de chambre*, and the child's bib, were alike unmarked. The conclusion drawn from these various premises was a very natural, and, as it chanced, a very just one, that things could not be altogether as they ought to be, and that a degree of mystery hung over the strangers such as none of his majesty's honest lieges ought, under any circumstances, to maintain.

The suspicious curiosity entertained by the innkeeper and his household began before long to extend itself, not without cause, over a wider circle. No sooner had the strange gentleman quitted Mr. ——'s office, than the tenant of the cottage above described was sent for, and desired to remove his family to some other habitation without delay. The arguments employed to induce compliance with this request, of whatever nature they might be, proved successful; and the very next morning a worthy shepherd, with his wife and five children, migrated from the parish of St. Alphage, into that immediately adjoining. Workmen were instantly hired, and employed upon both house and premises. The former, instead of a common labourer's hut, was converted, as speedily as the combined exertions of masons, carpenters, and thatchers could convert it, into an abode fit for the residence of a small but genteel family; whilst the latter underwent just so much of change, as to render them not out of character with the novel pretensions of the habitation to which they were attached. In completing these arrangements, however, notwithstanding the diligence of the workmen, and the strict superintendency of their ostensible employer, a full fortnight was expended, during the whole of which time the lady and gentleman continued to live at the inn. But they lived in absolute seclusion. The lady, indeed, never once crossed the threshold: the gentleman held converse with no one except the attorney; and even with him he was known to have conversed only twice.

The repairs of the cottage being at length completed, the artificers received their wages, and were dismissed; a sufficient time was then allowed for the walls to become tolerably dry, after which the principal upholsterer in

Folkstone was directed to supply the domicile with every article of necessary furniture, not of the first or most expensive quality, but such as might suit the wishes of persons accustomed to move in a respectable sphere of life, though not desirous of seeing company, or entertaining strangers. These orders were likewise obeyed; and, finally, a female servant, an elderly woman of good character, was hired, and sent on to get the house in readiness against the arrival of those by whom it was destined to be occupied. Another week passed on ere the latter arrangements were complete, and the strange lady and gentleman continued their sojourn during that period also at the inn.

At length the landlord's bill was ordered, and though not trifling in amount, it was discharged without a single observation, and a post-chaise was desired to be in readiness. In retiring to give the necessary directions, mine host, whether by accident or design, left the door ajar; when the following brief dialogue was overheard by an individual, who happened — of course without premeditation — to be standing in the passage.

“And whither must I go next?” asked the lady in a tone of deep anguish.

“To a place far better than your conduct deserves,” was the reply; “to a secluded spot, where you will find both leisure and opportunity to look back upon your past misdeeds, and to make your peace with Heaven.” The preceding sentence was uttered with firmness, perhaps with harshness; but a pause of several seconds ensued, and the speaker went on in a strain very different. “Eliza, I little thought it would ever have come to this; — I little thought that I should live to say that you had dishonoured me, and that I had abandoned you. Did my confidence in you deserve it? Fool that I was, to fancy any woman trustworthy, or any man not a villain! But it is done; and the bitterness of death is passed. Farewell, Eliza! even now, with all your guilt upon your head, I love you. Yours was the only image that made a home for itself in my heart, nor shall any other displace it. I shall return to mix with crowds, whilst you are alone; but mine will be the harder fate of the two. God! has it come to this?”

The speaker might, perhaps, have proceeded, but he was interrupted here by a long, loud, hysteric shriek from his miserable auditor. That was a sound to which no human being could listen, without instantly rushing to ascertain from whence it came, and how the being was situated who gave it utterance. In a moment the apartment was filled, and the lady was seen prostrate upon the floor, not, indeed, in a state of insensibility, but in one infinitely less enviable. On raising her up, she beheld no one, except the gentleman who had brought her hither, and from whom, it appeared, she was so soon to be separated. "Stay, stay, Edmund!" she exclaimed, whilst her tearless eyes were extended to their fullest stretch, and her hair, shaken loose from its fastenings, streamed in beautiful, but disordered masses, over her neck and shoulders. "Stay, stay but for a moment. One word, only one word—hear it, hear it—it is the last I shall ever utter to you!—Oh, not yet, leave me not yet—not alone—quite alone. You do not know—you—cold and forbidding as you are—even you will pity——" At this moment the infant, which had hitherto lain asleep upon the sofa, awoke, and uttered a cry. Its voice acted like an electric shock both upon the gentleman and the lady. The former, whose emotions had become so violent as to render abortive all attempts at concealment or suppression, recovered in a moment his self-command; and, in a voice of stern authority, desired the intruders to quit the apartment. The latter flew to the spot where the child lay, and snatching it up in her arms, pressed her lips to its face, more like one acting under the influence of derangement than a sane person. "It is enough, madam," cried he; "the fit of foolish softness is over. To your carriage." These words were heard as the door was closing.

What followed, no one can tell. The strangers remained together for several minutes, conversing in a low tone, and during the continuance of the conversation the gentleman was heard to pace the room backwards and forwards; but when the waiter entered to announce that the carriage was ready, no traces of the late scene could be discerned on either of their countenances. The settled severity, which, except for a minute or two, had shaded his features since

his arrival, was again there; and she was pale, and melancholy, and timid, as she had ever been. They walked down stairs, she bearing the infant, and entered the chaise in silence; the door was closed, and the post-boy directed to drive to the cottage. There the lady, with her charge, was set down, and her trunks given up to the care of the female servant. She turned round just as the last step was slammed to, but the baby was in her arms, and the hand which she held out, apparently without being conscious of the motion, was not accepted. The gentleman threw himself back in the carriage, and called to the postilion to go on. "Where, sir?" was the reply.—"To London—to London, by the nearest way; and drive as if you drove for your life." The boy obeyed. The horses' heads were instantly turned, he cracked his whip, and a scream, as if from one utterly deserted and forlorn,—such a scream as the mariner gives when he stands upon a parting wreck, and sees the last boat push off,—was scarcely heard amid the noise of the wheels. The carriage flew rather than rolled through the village, and the individual who occupied it was never afterwards seen in this part of the country.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SUICIDE.

I WILL not continue my tale, as it has begun, under the cloak of mystery, or in enigmas, but inform the reader at once who the wretched female was that became thus unexpectedly one of my parishioners, as well as what were the circumstances which led her, in the bloom of youth and beauty, to shut herself up in so retired a spot as the parish of St. Alphage.

Eliza Thornton was the only child of a London merchant, whose wealth was reputed to be great, whose credit was great in proportion, and who, whilst he devoted a

certain number of hours every morning to the duties of trade at his counting-house in the city, returned to dinner, and to spend the rest of the evening, at the west end of the town. Mr. Thornton mixed, and was entitled to mix, as well from his birth as from his personal accomplishments, not, perhaps, in the very *haut ton*, but in that respectable circle, which, in point of intelligence and real good-breeding, comes not behind any class of English society. His friends belonged chiefly to his own profession: there were intermixed among them a sprinkling of almost all other professions; and not a few of the members of the Lower House, as well as here and there a member of the Upper, might frequently be seen at his hospitable board. Wherever he was known, he was respected for sound judgment, great intelligence, and indisputable honour.

Having lost his wife a few years after the birth of Eliza, Mr. Thornton unfortunately did, what too many men involved in business are apt to do—he left the education of his daughter entirely to the management of strangers; he brought into his family a fashionable Swiss governess, whose recommendations from one or two ladies with whom she had lived were unimpeachable; he hired the best masters which London could afford to instruct his child in the accompaniments of music, drawing, and painting; he spared no expense in order to perfect her in a knowledge of the French, Italian, and other indispensable tongues; and, having done all this, he fancied he had done enough. Not that he was regardless, utterly regardless, of his daughter's moral welfare, for a better-hearted and better-principled man lived not; but his own time was so fully occupied, his business was so extensive, and its details of so complicated a nature, that he could not avoid committing the management in this, as well as other respects, to mercenaries. The consequence was, that the girl grew up to be an accomplished and elegant female—gay, sprightly, and even amiable, in her natural dispositions; but as completely wanting in solid principle, in that principle which alone can guide a young woman safely through life, as if she had been brought up at the court of a German potentate, and early initiated into all its mysteries.

Eliza Thornton made her *début*, or, as it is otherwise termed, came out, the very day after she had completed her eighteenth year. Favoured by nature in no ordinary degree, and possessed of talents far beyond the common standard, it is no wonder that she instantly became an object of attention to the other sex. Into whatever saloon or drawing-room she entered, a murmur of delighted applause failed not to greet her arrival; and her chair, as soon as she occupied one, was instantly surrounded by a host of fashionable youths. Eliza played divinely, and her voice was rich, clear, and powerful, like that of the thrush in the beginning of autumn, or the nightingale's in a serene moonlight night in the month of May. She was listened to in breathless silence; and the admiration experienced or pretended was too deep to vent itself, as soon as the notes had ceased, in a burst of applause. For a second or two all were usually mute, as if they continued to drink in the silver tones of her voice, or were listening to catch the echo of these tones from distant waters. Attention and approbation so marked, and so continual, was too much for a mind formed like that of Eliza Thornton: her natural timidity quickly passed away; and she became, ere the expiration of a single season, one of the most determined flirts and dauntless coquettes about town.

In spite, however, of this change in her manners, her extreme beauty and undeniable accomplishments continued to command for her the attentions, not of the thoughtless part of the other sex alone, but of several men of undoubted respectability and unquestionable integrity. The reputed wealth of her father, indeed, failed not to bring round her multitudes of those contemptible beings, whose fortune, for the most part, is carried about upon their persons, and whose talents wholly unfit them for any other means of bettering their fortunes, than by cheating some rich or silly female into a marriage; but all her admirers were not of that class. Among others, she was addressed by a Mr. Montague, an old and intimate friend of her father, a merchant; and, which in her eyes was of more consequence, a member of the House of Commons. Mr. Montague was too rich, and too generally respected, to be

dismissed, as she had dismissed her other lovers, by a single absolute refusal. She neither encouraged nor rejected his suit; but, under the guidance of Mademoiselle Fleuret,—now advanced from the rank of governess to that of bosom friend,—she kept him as a sort of set-off against other suitors, and a last resort in case her hopes of a title should fail. For in Eliza's ideas of matrimony, it was by no means necessary to consult the feelings of the heart, or to enquire whether or not the temper and habits of the man with whom she was to spend her life at all accorded with her own. She had been too long the pupil of Mademoiselle Fleuret to take any such old-fashioned matters into consideration. "Marry for an establishment, my dear," was her friend's continual advice. "Nobody now-a-days not born and bred five hundred miles from town, so much as expects to love her husband. You must look to him for a house, carriages, and servants; and having these, I will answer for it, that lovers will not be wanting." So the guardian of her youth advised, and so Eliza resolved to act; but she was as yet too young, and too happy in a single state, to rush into matrimony with a man for whom she cared not two farthings.

Nor is it, perhaps, to be wondered at, that Eliza Thornton could not love Mr. Montague, at least at first sight. True, he was wealthy; he moved in the first circles; his manners were those of a gentleman, and his person was not disagreeable: but then he was full twenty years older than herself; and there was a degree of gravity about him such as she could not altogether relish. Eliza, volatile and thoughtless as she was, respected Mr. Montague, as all persons did with whom he came into contact; but she could not conceal from herself, that with this respect a degree of fear was mixed up, not certainly desirable in the feelings of a wife towards her husband.

Things had continued in this state for several months, and the season was drawing to a close, when Eliza was astonished by receiving, one morning before she had quitted her dressing-room, a message from her father, who desired to see her without delay. She obeyed the summons, and descending, found Mr. Thornton pacing backwards

and forwards through the breakfast parlour, in a state of evident agitation. As soon as she entered he made an effort to appear cheerful, and placing a chair, requested her to be seated; he then drew his own close to hers, and taking her hand, addressed her as follows:—

“Eliza, I have seen with extreme satisfaction the attentions which you have long received from my valued friend Mr. Montague, and I am happy to say, that he has commissioned me to make you a positive offer of his hand and fortune. All that he desires in return is a direct answer, either in the affirmative or negative; because, as he justly observes, though his love for you be not less ardent than the love of younger men, still it is not consistent with his notions of decorum and propriety to continue longer in the state of unmeaning incertitude, in which your behaviour places him. Now, my love, though you must be quite aware that I desire nothing so much as your happiness—and though I do assure you that, let your decision be what it may, you shall never be subjected to remonstrance or reproach from me—there are certain circumstances which I think it my duty to lay fairly before you, and which will, perhaps, induce you not to cast away so favourable an opportunity of settling yourself in life. I am all but a ruined man. Speculations in which I embarked under every prospect of success have failed me; and though for a little while longer I may be able to keep up appearances, there is not the shadow of a hope that my house, furniture, indeed every thing belonging to me, will not, in a very short time, be brought to the hammer.”

Eliza, at this intelligence, started from her seat: she looked perfectly aghast; and her father mistaking the import of that look, instantly added, “Nay, my child, do not imagine that your father could act so dishonourably as to keep this matter a secret from the intended husband of his child. Mr. Montague knows all—it was, indeed, at the close of that very conversation in which I made him acquainted with the real state of my affairs, that he generously laid himself and his princely revenues at your feet. So go, Eliza; I do not press you to determine in a moment how you are to act; go and consult Mademoiselle

Fleuret ; and as soon as you have come to a determination let me know its tendency."

Eliza departed without offering one syllable in reply, and flew, as fast as the excitation of her nerves would allow, to the apartment of her friend. Into the arms of that trusty confident she immediately threw herself, and, without assigning any cause for the circumstance, burst into a fit of excessive weeping. As might be expected, a behaviour so extraordinary, and so unusual, startled even the cold-blooded Swiss into something like feeling; and, in a tone of real alarm, she besought her pupil to be composed, and to open to her the cause of her griefs. It was not, however, for some time, and till after repeated efforts, that Eliza could so far command herself, as to lay before her dear Fleuret the circumstances of her case; but at length the information was communicated, and the question naturally put how she was to act. "Act!" exclaimed the ex-governess; "how should you act, my dear? Your father, you say, is ruined, and here is a rich, worthy man anxious to have you without one sixpence of fortune; would you not be the silliest creature on earth to refuse him?"

"But then I do not, and I never can, love him; nay more, I dread his great correctness, and I am chilled by his rigidity."

"Pugh, nonsense! how often have I told you that love may do very well for the daughter of a country parson, but is wholly unlooked for in a married woman of fashion. Accept the excellent man's offer immediately; and when we remove to Mr. Montague's mansion, trust me that Mrs. Montague shall be behind no countess in the land in any thing necessary to constitute the lady of high breeding."

"But, dear Fleuret, I have seen another man, whom I think I could marry and love too, and who swears that he adores me. Can I accept Mr. Montague under these circumstances?"

"Is your friend rich?"

"No; he is an officer in the guards, without any fortune except his commission."

“ Then think no more of him for the present : marry Mr. Montague as fast as ever you can, and when that is over, we shall see what can be done with the handsome soldier.”

Such were the lessons inculcated into the mind of Eliza Thornton, by a woman whom her father had selected out of a hundred to direct her education, and who came under his roof, bearing the highest and most unqualified testimonials from more than one family of rank. Whether there are many Mademoiselles Fleurets within the bounds of Great Britain, I take it not upon me to determine ; but this I cannot avoid observing, that a correct knowledge of the foreign idioms and pronunciation must be very highly valued in certain circles, since it prompts parents so frequently to pass by multitudes of their own modest countrywomen, and to assign to foreign adventurers the most sacred trust which nature has committed to them, and which they can possibly commit to others. In the instance before us, an act of indiscretion so glaring was unfortunately too surely followed by its natural consequences ; and the only child of a doting father grew up to be an elegant and unprincipled woman.

Against arguments so cogent as those above detailed, what could Eliza Thornton oppose ? She yielded to them ; and made her father happy by employing him on so agreeable an errand, as to be the bearer to his friend Montague of her permission to advance his suit in his own proper person. That suit was granted ; and the ordinary preliminaries having been gone through, — a stipulation having been made and acceded to, that Mrs. Montague should not be compelled to part with her inestimable friend Mademoiselle Fleuret, — a handsome jointure being settled upon the bride, in case her husband should die before her, and a large allowance, under the denomination of pin-money, granted, — the day which was to make him the happiest of men, and her one of the wealthiest of women about town, was fixed. In three weeks from the date of her father's communication she consented to be removed from the shelter of his roof to that of her husband's.

But though Eliza entered thus readily into the schemes and wishes of her advisers, it would be doing injustice to her feelings were the reader to suppose, that she was either happy, or even comfortable. The reverse was the case: Eliza did love, and, as her wedding-day drew nearer, loved passionately, a man whom she was in the constant habit of meeting, and who, in external appearance at least, and in point of age, was better adapted to catch the affections of such a girl, than the more estimable, but less elegant, object of her choice. The Honourable Captain Cecil occupied all her thoughts, even at those moments when her lips moved in conversation with her intended husband. Nor was he an object of greater interest to her, than she, in outward appearance at least, was an object of interest to him; vows of unalterable attachment were interchanged between them so late as the very week previous to her wedding, and even at the altar these vows were neither cancelled nor forgotten.

Nothing could be more splendid than the dress of the bride, or more angelic than her whole appearance, when, at the hour of nine in the morning of the 10th of June, 17—, she was led into St. George's church by the Right Hon. Lord Maryport, and by him committed to the care of Edmund Montague, Esq. At the door of the building stood Mr. Montague's chariot, with four splendid bays, caparisoned in the newest fashion, the postilions and footmen decorated with favours, and all things indicative of joy and festivity. Into it, as soon as the ceremony was ended, was Eliza handed by her now happy husband; and dear Fleuret being already seated, in a moment the vehicle was in motion. The bride, it is reported, looked pale: but of that fact little opportunity was given to judge; for the horses dashed over the stones: Hyde Park turnpike was quickly left behind; and long before evening the happy couple were immured in the shades of Elton Grove, a beautiful seat of Mr. Montague's, in the county of Oxford. There the honey-moon was spent in that state of felicity which is said usually to attend honey-moons; and the young lady almost learned to believe, that she had con-

sulted not only prudence, but her own permanent comfort, in giving her hand to a man so amiable and so rational as Mr. Montague.

It is by no means improbable, that had Mademoiselle Fleuret been directed to seek another home, and Mr. Montague found more leisure to devote himself to the society of his young and volatile wife, that the distressing event which ruined the peace of both, and sent one, at least, into perpetual exile from the world, would never have happened. Of this, however, it is not easy to speak. Eliza's principles were not of such a nature: no care, indeed, had been taken so to mould them, as to render her proof against strong temptation, under whatever form it might come in her way. As long as she remained in seclusion, and whilst seclusion was a novelty to her, no one could be more satisfied with her lot, or more correct and estimable in her general behaviour. But the season devoted to seclusion rapidly passed away; and business again requiring Mr. Montague's presence in town, Eliza, as in duty bound, resolved to accompany him, even though town would be emptied of all its brightest attractions. Having resided six weeks at Elton, the party once more quitted it, and took up their residence in a house on Blackheath, which Mr. Montague was in the habit of occupying at this season of the year.

Two events occurred, just at this period, either of which was of itself sufficient to endanger the virtue of Mrs. Montague, and against both of which but slender hope could be encouraged that her virtue would hold out. Her father, Mr. Thornton, failed, as he had expected to fail, and the members of the mercantile world being all linked together by ties more close than are seen by ordinary observers, in his failure not a few of the most respectable houses in town were involved. Among others. Mr. Montague's was so far affected, that though, to use a phrase in trade, it weathered the storm, that was not done without extreme anxiety, and an unusual degree of attention on the part of the different shareholders. Mr. Montague, in particular, was compelled to devote the entire

day, and in many instances a good part of the night, to business. Rising at a very early hour, he departed every morning for London long before his wife made her appearance; and he seldom returned till both body and mind were so thoroughly jaded, as to require immediate refreshment in sleep. For three months it may, therefore, be said, that of her husband Eliza saw nothing; and as she never loved him from the first, it is not, perhaps, very surprising that habits, such as those now assumed by him, tended in no degree to excite that passion. On the contrary, she soon began to feel, that Montague was not formed by nature for her, nor she for Montague.

At this unfortunate juncture, it so happened, that, in crossing the heath one evening, she was accosted by her old lover, Captain Cecil. The captain, it appeared, was then on a visit to his aunt, whose house stood at no great distance from Montague's villa; and nothing could be more natural than for him to desire a renewal of that acquaintance, which in former times had constituted his chief and purest source of happiness. Alas, poor Eliza! She was not so totally lost as to be unconscious that an acquaintance formed as theirs had been, and continued to the latest moment it innocently could be continued, ought not, under existing circumstances, to be renewed. On the contrary, she earnestly besought the captain in pity to both, and to herself in particular, to see her no more. But he was urgent in his entreaties; he spoke of past events as of a dream too bright and too glorious to endure; he assured her, that to passion he was no longer a slave, that she was to him no more than a sister. He talked as if the tie which once subsisted between them had wholly changed its nature; and that it was an insult to her own purity, and to his honour, to regard their intercourse as perilous. These were specious and alluring arguments, and they were earnestly backed up by other and similar reasonings on the part of Mademoiselle Fleuret. "What did she fear? surely she was not alarmed lest her husband should become jealous? and surely it was too much in that husband to expect, that, whilst he denied her his own society alto-

gether, she was voluntarily to shut herself out from the society of all other men besides? As far as she was concerned, were she in Eliza's place, she knew what she would do; and, what was more, unless Mrs. Montague consented to enliven their *têtes-à-têtes* by an occasional visit from some third person, she positively would not consent to live longer under her roof. She was already half dead of *ennui*."

In an evil hour Eliza gave ear to the entreaties of the one, and to the expostulations of the other. Captain Cecil was admitted into the family on a footing of familiarity. He soon made himself agreeable to Mr. Montague, who assured his wife, that he now could leave home with an easier mind, seeing that she had consented not to live any longer in absolute retirement; and to Eliza, it is needless to add, that he speedily became as dear as ever. The consequences were exactly such as might be expected: he was a villain, and she ceased to be virtuous.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SUICIDE.

TIME passed, and in its passage produced those changes in human society which it usually produces. Mr. Thornton, broken in spirit, soon sank under his reverses, and was committed to the grave; whilst Mr. Montague, after the expiration of two years, during which he had treated his wife with the most unbounded liberality and kindness, received with extreme delight the communication that she expected, in the course of a few months, to present him with a pledge of their love. Nothing could be more unwearied than his attention to her during this most enlivening period of a young wife's existence. She never expressed a wish which he did not hasten to gratify; and as she happened to take a prodigious fancy to Windsor

Forest (Captain Cecil's battalion chanced at this time to be quartered at Windsor.) he hired an elegant cottage for her not far from the Castle, whither he hurried down, every day, at as early an hour as his business would allow him to leave town. Thus matters proceeded; till at length Eliza's days were accomplished, and she was delivered of a son.

At first, that is, for four-and-twenty hours after, she was pronounced by the medical attendants to be in as fair a way towards a recovery as could be wished; but at the expiration of that period a change greatly for the worse occurred. She was taken with a violent fever. This continuing unabated for two days, her life was wholly despaired of; and it was judged proper, by the physician who saw her, that the fact should not be concealed either from Mr. Montague or herself. The former received the intelligence as a man of strong mind generally receives information of a calamity more terrible than any which could befall him: the latter listened to the declaration of the medical man like a person entranced. She gazed wildly in the face of the speaker; and after a moment or two of silence, during which the colour rushed to her cheeks, she raised herself, in spite of the fever, upon her elbow, and exclaimed, "Die! say you that I must die?—Oh, no, no, I cannot die—I am not fit to die—I will not die—I am too guilty, too wicked to die. Where is Edmund?—where are you Montague? Come hither," and stretching out her attenuated hand towards him,—"come hither, that I may tell you how unworthy I have been of you. That child which you hold in your arms is not yours. No; it is Cecil's—Cecil's child. Put it away! It is none of yours. You are dishonoured, and I——" Here her feelings overcame her, and she fainted.

So devotedly attached was Mr. Montague to his wife, that he would have willingly persuaded himself, nay, he did for the moment persuade himself, that the horrible confession to which he had just listened was the offspring, not of remorse, but of a diseased and darkened imagination. It had, however, been made in the presence of many witnesses, and could not, perhaps, be wholly disregarded. He

did put aside the child, which, at the moment, happened to be asleep in his arms, and having waited till he saw Eliza restored to her senses, he quitted the apartment in no very enviable frame of mind. On entering the drawing-room, the first person that met him was Captain Cecil. "How is Mrs. Montague?" cried the latter, advancing to meet him.

"She is ill, Cecil, very ill; she is beside herself, in a state of high delirium. She has this moment stated to me a circumstance, which, could I believe it to be other than the creation of a disordered fancy, would lead me to blow your brains out before you left this room. She has accused herself and you of a crime which I need not name, and for which you at least, were you guilty of it, should answer with your life."

It were absurd to deny, that, in spite of his determination to think no more seriously of the incoherent rhapsodies of his wife, Montague accompanied this speech with a look which seemed to pierce into the innermost recesses of his guest's mind. Captain Cecil could not bear that glance. He changed colour, stammered out some unmeaning observation about the effect of disease upon the delicate nerves of a female, and attempted, in rather an abrupt manner, to quit the apartment; but Mr. Montague placed his back against the door.

"Not so, Captain Cecil," said he sternly, and yet calmly. "I am the last man in the world to harbour a groundless suspicion; but I feel it to be due, both to you and myself, that you pass not hence till I be furnished with some surer proof, either of the truth or falsehood of that unfortunate woman's confession. If you be innocent, as I trust and believe you are, you will not, of course, object to my using the privilege of a husband, and examining my wife's scrutoire in your presence: if you be guilty, here you shall remain, till your guilt be made manifest to the world, and receive its chastisement."

For a moment Captain Cecil shrank back; but, recovering himself immediately, he demanded to know whether it were Mr. Montague's intention to detain him a prisoner against his inclination; "because, if that be the case," continued he,

“painful as it may be to break an old tie of friendship, I must endeavour to force my way from this, as I would from any other place of illegal restraint.”

The probability is, that a quarrel thus begun, would, at the moment, have been carried to extremities, had not the physician at the instant entered the room. Being still unwilling to commit himself, Mr. Montague so far subdued his anger as to allow the captain to pass ; but he whispered to him at the same time, that he expected to find him at his quarters, should circumstances render it desirable or necessary to look for him.

The medical man remained not long, and said but little as to the state of his patient's senses ; nor was Mr. Montague by any means relieved by that little. He rather waved than answered directly to the questions which were put to him on that subject.

As soon, therefore, as he had departed, the husband resolved to satisfy himself at once—at all events, to seek for satisfaction in the contents of his wife's writing-desk ; nor was it necessary that the search should be very minute, in order to convince him of a fact, of which, above all others, he least desired to be convinced. Her desk, work-tables, and drawers, were full of letters from Cecil ; many of them couched in a language not to be mistaken ; and Montague became, in one moment, the most wretched of human beings.

As was but natural, his first impulse drove him to seek immediate revenge for his wrongs. For this purpose, he seized his pistols, and hurried off towards Cecil's lodgings, fully determined to dip his hands in the blood of the man who had dishonoured him. But the villain, who had been sufficiently bold to inflict an injury, possessed not, as it appeared, courage enough to meet the man whom he had injured : he was nowhere to be found. It was said that he had taken the road to London : thither Montague followed, but here all trace of him was lost ; and the unfortunate husband of a still more unfortunate wife was, in consequence, spared the misery which would have certainly ensued, had an opportunity been afforded him of giving way to a feeling too powerful, under such circumstances, to be repressed, whilst the cause of its excitation is recent. He accordingly

gave up the pursuit, and for a time things went on, or seemed to go on, as if no such discovery had been made.

Contrary to all expectation, and now almost in opposition to her own wishes, Mrs. Montague's illness took a favourable turn, and she recovered. But she recovered only to feel that her guilt was known to her husband,—that all honourable persons had deserted her,—and that even her kind Mademoiselle Fleuret had turned her back upon her, and was now loud in the condemnation of one so faithless to a doting husband. Nor did her punishment end here. As long as her health continued precarious, or even delicate, she was permitted to continue an inhabitant of the cottage at Windsor ; but, at the expiration of three months from her confinement, she received, from her husband's solicitor, an intimation, that that favour was no longer to be granted to her. She wrote to Mr. Montague ; and, in the bitterness of humiliation and remorse, implored him to dispose of her as he would, and offered to remove to any spot where her presence might no longer sully the air which he breathed. The letter produced a powerful effect upon the mind of the unhappy man. It tempted him not, it is true, to forgive her offence, and to receive her back again to his house and his bosom,—for Mr. Montague, with all his good qualities, was too much a man of the world to dream for one instant of that,—but it determined him not to prosecute the suit for a divorce, which he was preparing to commence, or cast her helpless and unaided upon the world.

An intimate friend of his happening to be by when the letter was delivered, he put it into his hands, and requested his advice as to the best method of disposing of her ; and, at the suggestion of that friend, he resolved to settle her in some remote part of the empire, and to allow her, whilst she continued there, enough to support her—not, indeed, in splendour, but in comfort. That friend was the proprietor of the cottage described in the first of these pages. He offered it to Mr. Montague, as one well adapted to such a purpose : the offer was accepted, and thither the lady was brought. Why Mr. Montague himself became her conductor, it is hard to say. Perhaps he was only desirous to see that the home allotted to her was such as she might

not abhor ; or, perhaps some feeling of latent fondness—something of that deep-rooted affection, which not even the sins or errors of its object are able wholly to efface—directed him. Be this, however, as it may, he himself conducted her from Windsor ; and, with the degree of privacy and under the circumstances detailed above, conveyed her into Kent.

My tale is almost told, for what remains of it may be related in very few words. The lady inhabited the cottage for four-and-twenty years ; seeing no one, visited by no one, and apparently caring for no human being besides her son. Yet was the boy an object of care and anxiety to her to the last. As if Heaven itself had resolved to shower its severest judgments upon the adulteress, the offspring of her guilty intercourse became not as other children are,—he was an idiot. Deaf and dumb from his birth, the only sounds which he was ever known to utter were, when in pain, a sharp and ear-cutting cry, — when pleased, and in health, a sort of burr or hum, like that which the cockchafer emits as it passes your ear in the summer twilight. Nor was this all. Of his limbs he never obtained any perfect use ; indeed, he was totally unable to walk, even after he had attained to manhood, without assistance. Yet was the mother wrapped up in her child. She led him forth in the warm sunny days, and, placing him beside the rivulet, appeared to forget her own sorrows in the light of his unmeaning smile. No music was so sweet to her ear as his burr, burr, when the balmy breezes passed over him. Indeed, if ever mother lived for a child, and for it alone, Eliza Montague may be said to have lived for her idiot-boy.

Thus was it with them, whilst he grew from the infant to the lad, and from the lad to the man. But the frame in which his feeble mind was deposited proved not less feeble than the mind itself. He was not formed for length of days ; and, ere his youth had passed, decay laid her finger over him. He drooped and faded year by year, month by month, and at last day by day. Nor did his mother intermit those attentions by his sick-bed, which she so faithfully bestowed upon him whilst in health. No one

approached his couch except herself and the medical attendant. The most painful and loathsome offices she discharged towards him with her own hands; and as the catastrophe drew near, she shut herself up in the apartment beside him, never quitting it either by night or by day. But all her care, and all the skill of the faculty, availed not, — the idiot died.

From that hour a change not more striking than alarming occurred in her whole deportment. Hitherto she had never seemed to forget that she once filled a station in society above that which she filled then; and her dress was always such as it might have been had she continued to fill that station. Her manner, too, though strongly tinged with melancholy, partook in no degree of fierceness or desperation; on the contrary, it was, towards her female domestic, and the medical gentleman who visited her son, gentle in the extreme. But now she was an altered woman. She desired that a grave might be dug for her boy in a spot as far removed from other graves as possible; and gave particular directions, that when she followed, her corpse should be laid beside his. She even attended his funeral, and listened to the service from beginning to end without shedding a tear. Nor was she ever seen to weep after. A full year she inhabited the cottage alone, having dismissed her servant, and living, no one knew how. At times she might be seen in the honeysuckle bower, or leaning over the railing of the rustic fence, but she wandered not beyond the bounds of her garden; nay, had not some of the villagers occasionally visited her, fetching milk, and butter, and other necessaries for her use, she might, and in all probability she would, have perished of hunger or neglect.

One morning, the person who was most frequently in the habit of supplying her with these articles, and to whom she was generally indebted for the lighting of her fire, arrived as usual at the door, and knocked for admittance. No notice being taken of the signal, she lifted the latch, but the door was fastened. On looking up, she saw, likewise, that the shutters remained closed, and, as she readily confessed, her heart misgave her. She knocked again, however, more

loudly, and called the lady by her assumed name, but all to no purpose. Her fears having now obtained complete mastery over her, she hurried back to the village, and communicated the state of the case to her neighbours. Upon this it was determined to force the door, in case a renewed effort to make themselves heard should fail; and the constable was accordingly summoned to form one of the party, by whom that service should be performed. Nor was the last resource unneeded. Having knocked and hallooed to no purpose for a considerable length of time, the door was at length burst open, and the villagers, with the constable at their head, rushed into the house. On the lower flat, all things remained in the order in which she had evidently left them on the night before. The next thing to be done was to search the upper story, which was immediately set about; and the very first step taken in the prosecution of that search brought the truth to light. The ill-fated lady hung suspended by the neck from a beam in the roof of her apartment.

Thus died Eliza Montague, once the brightest ornament of a fashionable circle; the adored child of a doting father, and the no less beloved wife of an affectionate husband; but the victim of an injudicious education, false friends, and a wayward and corrupted heart. The verdict pronounced upon her was, as the state of the case required, insanity; and she was laid, unlamented and unnoticed, in the humble grave marked out by herself, beside her idiot boy.

VOLUME THE SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

THE MISER.

I HAD been an inhabitant of St. Alphage rather more than two years when it was announced to me one Saturday afternoon, as I sat at dinner, that the clerk of Holy Cross, the parish immediately adjoining my own, desired to see me. The man was immediately admitted; and in a blunt and somewhat abrupt tone informed me, that Mr. Davies the curate, being unable to discharge his own duty on the morrow, would be much obliged if I would assist him. Now of this Mr. Davies, though a countryman of my own, and a person of long standing in the diocese and neighbourhood, I had never, to my surprise, seen any thing. He had neither visited nor taken other notice of me since I came; and I confess that I found it difficult, on the instant, to repress a feeling of something like indignation, that he should thus unceremoniously call upon me for professional help. Nevertheless, as the case was urgent, being explained to be one of sudden indisposition, I did not hesitate as to the course to be adopted, but met the clerk's demand with an assurance, that, provided he could so distribute the hours as not to clash with the order of my own services, I would take care that his church should not be shut up. The man readily undertook to manage this matter, and we parted.

Having entered into this arrangement, I not unnaturally began to make enquiries concerning the condition and circumstances of the man whom I had undertaken to serve. I found that he was a noted character in the county, having been for eight-and-twenty years curate of Holy Cross, during a large portion of which he had held, along with

his curacy, a valuable living in the Marsh; and that throughout the whole of that extended period he had never been known to be absent a single hour from home. Every one whom I questioned on the subject admitted him to be remarkably attentive to his public duties: he was allowed to be in the habit of visiting the sick, catechising the children, and instructing his people generally, with the utmost care; and there had never, as far as I could learn, been so much as a whisper raised against the strict morality and integrity of his private dealings. Yet his habits were not such as to obtain for him the love, they scarcely commanded the respect, of those among whom he resided. Shy and reserved to the last degree, he not only avoided all social intercourse with his neighbours, but treated every advance made to form his acquaintance with rudeness. Penurious, too, and niggardly, he denied himself all the comforts, and could scarcely be said to indulge in the necessaries, of life; for his apparel was not merely shabby, but mean, and his style of living, it was whispered, was such as the poorest pauper in the workhouse needed not to envy. His sole domestic was an old Welsh woman, whom he brought with him when he came, and who performed every office about his person, which he was either unable or unwilling to perform himself. She was his housekeeper, laundress, cook, and scullion; yet the manner of the one towards the other resembled more that of a parent towards a child, than of a menial servant towards her master. As to their more private proceedings, — the tenor of their social existence, — no one could tell what it was, because no one, even by chance, ever surprised them at a meal. It was given out, indeed, that they ate and drank at the same table, which was seldom spread with more expensive viands than potatoes and water; but of this no one could speak accurately, because no one enjoyed an opportunity of judging. All that could be asserted with confidence on the subject was, that Mr. Davies ran no scores with butcher, baker, grocer, or brewer; and hence, the produce of his little garden, which he kept in order with his own hands, was believed to contribute mainly to their support.

A description such as the preceding, whilst it very sa-

tisfactorily accounted for the total absence of all previous friendly communication between us, excited, as may be imagined, no little curiosity on my part to learn something farther of an individual so eccentric. In spite of the reported incivility of his behaviour to those who had already exhibited a disposition to pay him attention, I determined, as soon as the service of the day should end, to wait upon him ; and I flattered myself that the peculiarity of the circumstances, under which my visit was made, would at least secure for me admission. I kept to my resolution ; and, as the event proved, I had not miscalculated my grounds of action.

It was on a gusty day in February, when the lengthened daylight renders the sense of cold more acute, that I walked over to Holy Cross, according to my engagement, and performed the evening service. There was a tolerably large and a very attentive congregation, every member of which showed some mark of respect as I passed through the churchyard ; but there was one person in particular, whom I observed lingering beside the stile, as if waiting till I should approach, with the design of addressing me. The loiterer was an old woman, apparently about seventy years of age ; short in stature, and very thin ; with a sharp and care-worn countenance, dark eyes, grey or rather grizzled hair, and a sallow complexion. She was dressed in a full-flowing, long-waisted stuff gown, red stockings, and high-heeled shoes, with long wash-leather gloves that reached to her elbows, and a ruffled chemise ; whilst a silk cloak, that had once been black, was thrown over her shoulders, and a bonnet of the same materials, and apparently of the same antiquity, covered her head. Her appearance altogether was very striking, and her manner and address (for I was not deceived in my suspicion that she waited to address me) were not less so.

“ Mr. Davies desires me to thank you,” said she, with a strong Welsh accent, “ for the favour you have done him, and is sorry he cannot ask you to stay and dine ; but he is too ill himself to eat, and will not trouble you to call upon him. He has commissioned me, however, to satisfy you for your trouble, if you will tell me how much there is to pay.”

She thrust her hand into her pocket as she spoke, and had already extracted a leathern bag ere I could arrest the movement. "Nay, my good woman," said I, motioning to her at the same time to put up her purse, "you don't suppose that I expect payment? I am very happy in being able to serve Mr. Davies, but I am no jobber in clerical duties."

The old woman looked the picture of astonishment at this speech. "Well, I am sure," said she, "it is very kind in you; but Mr. Davies will never, I am positive, submit to accept a favour at the hands of any man. Besides you do yourself wrong, sir: 'the labourer is worthy of his hire.'"

"Very true," replied I, "the labourer is, indeed, worthy of his hire: but the only hire which brother ought to think of offering to brother is good-will; and I shall consider myself amply remunerated, if I secure that recompense from Mr. Davies. It was my intention to wait upon him, and I would gladly do so, provided it be not disagreeable."

"No, sure, it is never disagreeable to Mr. Davies to see his friends; but — but — are you determined not to take the money?"

"Quite determined on that head," answered I, smiling, "and equally so to see Mr. Davies, if I can."

"Well, now, this is strange," said the old woman, apparently speaking to herself, "not to take a guinea when it is offered, and honestly earned! Of course, he expects something to eat and drink, and he ought to have it too. But —"

"My good woman," said I, interrupting her, for I guessed to what her soliloquy tended, "I do not desire any refreshment; I never eat or drink at this hour, and will not therefore take advantage of your hospitality. My wish is simply to become acquainted with a neighbour, who has a double claim upon my services, as a brother-clergyman, and as a countryman."

"Are you from Denbighshire?" asked my new acquaintance, with a tone of deep feeling, and an instantaneous glistening of the eye.

"No," replied I; "but I am from Caernarvon."

“ Ah, well, it is the neighbouring county,” said she, still labouring under manifest excitement, “ and a glorious county it is; but not so beautiful as Denbigh. There is no place in Caernarvon to be named with fair Llanrwst — nor in all the world besides; but what matters it? Lack-a-day! the stranger holds it now; and the ancient race are driven out, like the swallow in the autumn — not like the swallow, to return again in spring-time. — Well, well, I think he will not refuse to see you; I am sure he ought not.”

There was something very affecting in the energy of manner with which the old woman gave utterance to these few but mournful words: they were spoken in a tone which implied plainly enough that they came from the heart; and I felt that a being who could thus express herself was no fit subject either of ill-natured ridicule or idle curiosity. A similar revolution took place, I knew not why, in my ideas respecting her master. The desire of seeing and holding a few moments' conversation with an eccentric, which had alone actuated me in seeking the promised interview, now gave place to other and more worthy sentiments; and I followed my conductress in a far more Christian frame of mind than actuated me when our conversation began.

“ You will find him but ill lodged, and ill tended,” said she, as we proceeded onwards, “ for sickness is hard to bear; and I am not so able as I once was to see to matters: but you will find that, like his forefathers, he has the spirit of a gentleman, that will not bend to fortune, let her beat upon it as she will. It was not thus that *he* ought to have received *you*. But times are changed; and money, not blood, now makes the man.”

We had by this time reached the Parsonage-house, an inelegant and rude pile, made up of shreds and patches apparently stuck together, without order, regularity, or taste, as the convenience of each new incumbent dictated. It was a large two-storied building, and bore about it manifest proofs that of late, at least, it had been only partially inhabited. The window-shutters were closed in almost every chamber, the glass in numerous panes was supplanted

by wood, and the frame-works exhibited symptoms of having held little intercourse with paint or putty during the last dozen years. The garden, however, was neat and orderly,—as neat, at least, as an enclosed plot of ground can be, which is devoted exclusively to the cultivation of esculents; for it could boast neither of flowers nor ornamental shrubs, and the very walks were pared down to the narrowest limits: a portion of this we traversed; and turning away from the front entrance, over which the spiders had long drawn a mantle, we walked round to the back of the house. The old woman now took a key from her pocket, and opening a door, ushered me into a sort of wash-house. It was bare in the roof to the tiles, wholly unprovided with implements of convenience, and struck a chill to the heart by its dreary and comfortless appearance. We made no pause here, however; but passing on through what was doubtlessly intended for a kitchen, but which, like the wash-house, seemed to have remained unoccupied for half a century, we proceeded, by a long dark lobby, towards a room which my guide denominated the parlour, but which, to my eye, appeared to partake at least as much of the character of a vestibule as of a living apartment. It was a low-roofed, gloomy chamber, some eighteen or twenty feet long, by fourteen in width, and totally destitute of every article of furniture, beyond three old oak chairs, and a deal table. Not a shred of carpet covered the floor: there was no fender in front of the empty grate, but in its room a part of the broken ring of a cart-wheel, of which another part supplied the place of a poker. A horn ink-stand, with the stump of a pen sticking in it, three deal shelves suspended from a nail in the wall, and covered with a few ragged books and dirty papers,—these, with a solitary iron pot standing upon the brick hearth, completed the garnishing of the chamber, in which my aged guide requested me to sit down and wait till she should inform her master of my arrival.

I sat down as she requested, not without a painful sense of the degradation to which parsimonious habits reduce their slave; for every thing about me was dreary and dispiriting. The paper hung here and there in strips from

the wall, here and there it was fastened up with pins, or rudely connected by bands of canvass pasted across; and the ceiling, black and dingy, seemed ready to fall every moment at one or other of the cracks which, in great numbers, ran through it. The absence of fire, too, was keenly felt; for the performance of the church-service had heated me; and the extreme chill of such a room struck the more forcibly in consequence of previous exertion. Happily, however, I was not left long to ruminate over the probable effects of such a change. In less than five minutes after she quitted me, the old woman returned; and, begging me to follow, led the way to her master's chamber.

We mounted a wooden stair, and traversed a wooden landing-place, both of them, like the parlour below, uncontaminated by the presence of any covering. At the extremity of the latter a door stood ajar, and the female, pushing it open, pronounced my name in a loud voice, and formally introduced me to her master. I advanced, and beheld seated, or rather reclining, in an old-fashioned, high-backed chair, with pillows placed behind and on each side of him, the individual concerning whom so strange an account had reached me. He was a tall thin man, apparently about fifty years of age, exceedingly pale, with a sunken cheek, and a hollow eye, but bearing about him traces of very considerable beauty, upon which care or sickness, or both, had made deep inroads. His dress was a clean, thread-bare, white flannel night-gown, which wrapped him entirely round: upon his head he wore a woollen nightcap, likewise perfectly clean; and the coverings of his pillows, together with the counterpane on the bed, were all white as the skill of the bleacher could make them. Yet, in spite of so much attention to cleanliness, the bed-room, not less than the parlour, bore witness to the penurious disposition of its occupant; for it was as dreary and ill-assorted a dormitory as I had ever entered, even in the cottages of the poorest of my own parishioners. A truckle bedstead, without posts or curtains, occupied one extremity, in front of which a bit of sacking was substituted for a rug. A large trunk supplied the place of a chest of drawers: there was but one chair in addition to that occupied by the curate,

the rush bottom of which had given way ; and a solitary small table seemed to do the triple duty of toilet, writing-desk, and dinner-board. A few sticks were burning in the fire-place, for the purpose, as it seemed, of cooking, rather than to give warmth ; for a moderate-sized saucepan simmered over them ; and the supply of spare fuel was so scanty, as to denote that it would not be needed after the contents of the vessel should have been sufficiently subjected to the process of boiling. I was very much shocked, as well as greatly astonished, at the desolate aspect of the chamber ; yet was there something in the air of its occupant calculated to excite other feelings besides those of disgust and contempt.

Mr. Davies made an effort to rise as I entered ; but his strength was not adequate to carry him through, and he immediately fell back again.

“ I am too feeble to do the honours as I ought,” said he with a bitter smile : “ I must therefore request you to take a seat,—that is, if you can find one.”

I sat down accordingly on the edge of the broken chair, and Mr. Davies continued.

“ My housekeeper informs me that you have declined the remuneration which is legally your due, and that you required a personal introduction to me as the price of your services. I am sorry for it : first, because I do not love to lay myself under an obligation to a stranger ; and, next, because I never wish to see a stranger within my doors. If you have any business to discuss, say on ; if not, take my thanks, and let our interview be as brief as possible.”

I was not a little perplexed, as may well be imagined, by such an opening to our dialogue, not knowing very well how to meet it, or what to say in reply. How I did express myself, indeed, I have forgotten ; but before Mr. Davies could offer any rejoinder, the old housekeeper, greatly to my relief, took part in the conversation.

“ Nay, now, honey dear ! didn't you promise to meet this gentleman as a friend ? Didn't I tell you that he came from Caernarvonshire ?—that he was in some degree a countryman, and that he deserved civiller treatment at your hands than a mere Saxon ? It arn't like you to

say a rude thing to any one, and least of all to a Welshman."

"I beg pardon," said I, "if I have inadvertently done that which is disagreeable to you. I was told of your illness, and considered it no more than an act of common civility as well as of duty, to enquire after you."

"Well, and could not that be done abroad? Could not Margery tell you all that you needed to know, or had any right to pry into? Besides, it is not your coming here that offends me. You see that I am poor—very poor,—that I live meanly and fare hardly: but there is nothing disgraceful in that; and I care not if all the world knew it. But your refusal to be paid for your services wounds my pride. Tell me how I may clear scores with you, and then, perhaps, we shall better understand one another."

"By doing the same friendly act for me, should I hereafter stand in need of it, which I have just done for you."

"Be it so," replied he: "I take you at your word; and though I do not wish your illness, I shall be glad to hear that business or amusement may have taken you hence, as soon as my health is sufficiently re-established to permit my fulfilling my part of the contract. And now, good evening to you,—the day wears apace,—and you probably desire to reach home ere it be dark."

"But the gentleman will take a little refreshment," interposed Margery. "I will fetch up a—hem,—hem."

"Fetch up, old woman!" interrupted her master, "what can you fetch up? Here are a few potatoes and a morsel of pork on the fire, Mr. Williams; and the water of our well is excellent: if you feel disposed to partake of my humble fare, you are welcome."

"La, now, honey dear," said Margery, "how can you joke so? My master loves to make things out worse than they are. We have better fare than that to offer, as you may believe sir."

"My good Margery," replied Mr. Davies, in a tone of mingled kindness and irony, "if I love to make things appear worse, you love a hundred times more to make them appear better. Mr. Williams has, I doubt not, learned

from a variety of sources how I live ; and has honoured me with a visit, that he might have the satisfaction of conversing a moment or two with the Miser."

" You do me wrong, sir," replied I, " and scarcely do yourself justice. Whatever idle tales I may have heard made little impression upon me ; and of the epithet which you have just bestowed upon yourself, I do not believe you deserving. Causes there may be for your present mode of existence ; but I cannot think that the unworthy thirst of accumulation is numbered among them."

" I thank you for your kind opinion," said the sick man, a slight flush passing over his cheek as he spoke, and an expression of melancholy pleasure darting from his eye. " I know not upon what grounds you have formed it ; but perhaps—no matter, no matter."

I perceived that I had struck a chord, which vibrated to the heart of my new acquaintance ; and that, by so doing, I had produced an impression in my own favour, of which I hastened to take advantage. " You are not, I fear," said I, " likely to regain your strength immediately ; and I am sure that any premature effort to resume the course of your duties would inevitably throw you back. I trust, therefore, that you will permit me, in virtue of our compact just concluded, to supply your place for a few Sundays longer."

" It is not pleasant," replied he, " to take advantage of the good-nature of one, whom I see no chance of being able to recompense as he deserves ; but if I feel really unfit for the exertion next Sunday, your offer shall be accepted with thanks."

" And you will permit me to come and see you again," continued I, rising as I spoke.

He looked earnestly at me, as if he would have pierced into my very thoughts, and read there the motive which dictated this proposal. • The examination was not, as it seemed, in my disfavour ; for, holding out his long, thin hand, and grasping mine, he said in a softened tone,—

" Certainly, I will always be glad to see a man who can look on such a sight as this, and yet believe, that one surrounded by all the external marks of penuriousness and

squalor can yet be free from the debasing propensities of a miser."

"Now, God bless thee for a good soul and a true Christian!" said the old woman, as she conducted me down stairs, and led me through lobby, kitchen, and wash-house. "This will do my poor master more good than all the stuff in the doctor's shop, of which I cannot persuade him to swallow a mouthful. You will be sure to come again, — and come before Sunday, if possible, that the impression made may not have time to grow faint, and his old humours return."

I promised faithfully to be at the back-door on the day after the morrow; and wishing my conductress good evening, I bent my steps homewards, full of "strange thoughts and fitful fancies."

CHAPTER II.

THE MISER.

I NEED scarcely say that the effects produced upon me by the occurrences of this eventful day were of a nature too complex and too strange to be soon or easily effaced. The voice, manner, air, and general address of my neighbour curate haunted me like a passion; and I could not divest myself of the persuasion, that, singular as his habits were, they were not the offspring of mere avarice. I would not permit myself to believe that deep feeling — and of deep feeling Davies was clearly possessed — could possibly exist in the heart of him whose soul was bartered away to Mammon; yet I was as little able to reconcile to my own notions of what a man owes to himself, and to his position in society, the unaccountably sordid mode of existence of which I had so lately been an eye-witness. In few words, both Davies and his propensities were to me a riddle,

which not all my efforts—and I made many—were competent to read, and the reading of which I at last, though somewhat reluctantly, left to be made out by time and circumstances.

But though I soon ceased to speculate on the causes of Mr. Davies's conduct, I was by no means unmindful of my engagement with his housekeeper, nor careless in keeping it. On the contrary, I set out at an early hour after breakfast on the Tuesday, reached Holy Cross Parsonage long before noon, and received from the kind-hearted old woman a cordial and flattering welcome.

“Now, I am as glad to see you,” said she, familiarly seizing my hand, “as if you came with a thousand pounds in your pocket, all for the use of my beloved master. I don't know what there was about you, but let me tell you, as a thing of which you have great cause to be proud, that he talked of you, over and over again, after you went away; and that he longs to shake you by the hand just as much as I did. Heaven's blessing be upon you! Walk up, walk up. You will find him much as you left him on Sunday evening, only a small thought better,—praise be to Heaven for the same!”

So saying, she once more guided me through the cheerless kitchen and passage; and walking before to show the way led me up-stairs, and ushered me again into Mr. Davies's chamber.

I found the curate, as to health, pretty nearly in the same state in which he was when our acquaintance began, and in dress, position, and appearance, in no respect altered. In his manner, however, a marked change was visible. He made no effort on this occasion to rise, and affected nothing of that haughty and austere deportment with which he saw fit to open our conference on a previous occasion; but, holding out his hand, bade me hearty welcome, and expressed himself delighted to see me. I was greatly pleased, as may be imagined, at finding that this time, at least, my presence was not regarded as an intrusion; and our conversation went on easily, almost gaily, for a season, and on general topics.

All this tended, in no slight degree, at once to whet my

curiosity, and to give an additional intensity to the interest which I had already taken in the poor man's fate. I saw, however, at a glance, that any abrupt or sudden advance on my part towards familiar and intimate communication, so far from leading to the result which I desired, would produce an effect directly the reverse. Davies was evidently a person of acute sensibility, perhaps of morbid feeling, which the slightest approach to prying would alarm; and in whom an antipathy once excited, were it even for a moment, would not be easily allayed. Such a man's confidence was not to be gained by appearing to court it; far less by adventuring upon leading questions touching himself; and hence I felt, that however pure the motives might be which impelled me to enquire into his history, no such enquiry could be hazarded if I desired our acquaintance to last. A variety of minute circumstances, likewise, led me to conjecture, that offers of friendship, or of kind and neighbourly attentions, if made at all, must be made to him with peculiar caution. I judged that he was either too poor, or too mercenary, to afford himself the kind of diet which his delicate health required; yet I could not venture to propose sending from my own house any one of the many little comforts which we could easily furnish, and which to the sick in general are extremely acceptable. I was vexed at all this, not so much because it kept me still in the dark with respect to points on which I ardently desired to be enlightened, as because I was satisfied that Davies already suffered, and would continue to suffer, from his own perverseness. Nevertheless, as there was really no help for the matter, I determined to give way to circumstances, should I find that the old housekeeper was as insensible to my friendly advances as her master.

I sat with Davies on this occasion upwards of an hour, during which he showed himself in the light of a well-informed, gentlemanly, and accomplished person. It was very evident, moreover, that our gratification was mutual; for when I wished him good day, he begged to know, of his own accord, when he might expect a repetition of my call. Of course, I assured him that no great while would elapse ere we met again; and we parted, as men usually

do when they have each unexpectedly found, where they least expected to find him, a companion suited to their tastes.

"It grieves me," said I to the old woman, as I passed the wash-house threshold, "to see Mr. Davies so poorly supplied with comforts in his illness. Not that I doubt his ability to procure them," continued I, for I observed a storm gathering over the Welshwoman's brows, who treated every allusion to poverty as the grossest insult; "but I know from experience how careless bachelors become in these respects, and how naturally their house-keepers slide into their humours, and adopt their prejudices. Now, though a bachelor myself, there are ladies in my family who have never permitted me to fall into these vagaries; and they would gladly supply my good neighbour with jellies and such like, would he but accept these acts of friendship at their hands."

The cloud which had begun to collect on Margery's brow, though it assumed a lighter cast, did not absolutely disperse. "I am glad for his sake," said she sharply, "that your proposal was not made in his presence. I know that he loves your society, and I hope that he will love it yet more; but I am as sure as mortal can be of any thing, that if he once heard you talk of sending him food, drink, or clothing, he would never speak to you again. Your company and conversation may prove of vital service to him; but as you desire to number him among your friends, say nothing more of his poor style of living, nor dream of bettering it."

I was satisfied that the old woman spoke the truth; so I walked away, determined to let things take their course, for better or for worse.

Mr. Davies's illness continued with little abatement for three weeks, during which period I performed all his duties, and spent a portion of every other day in his company. No man could show more unequivocally, by his general manner, that he felt himself obliged; yet was there at all times a restraint upon his language, which hindered him from saying so in terms one whit more exaggerated than might have been used on the commonest occasion. It seemed as if two principles struggled the one

against the other,—generosity and pride; the first of which prompted him to make no secret of his true sentiments, whilst the last hindered him from ever embodying them in words. But I was not covetous of praise. It was enough for me to experience the consciousness of doing as I would be done by; whilst the fact of being welcomed by one who had admitted no one throughout twenty years to his confidence supplied more legitimate ground for self-congratulation than would have been furnished by professions the most voluminous and the most fulsome.

At the end of the above-mentioned period, Davies so far recovered, as to resume once more the tenor of his professional life. I of course saw less of him, for a season after this, than I had done in his illness, for he never came to me; and after calling several times, without inducing him to return the visits, I ceased to go to him. But an accidental circumstance brought us again, as it were, to each other's knowledge; and from that day the renewed intimacy continued without farther interruption.

It chanced one day, somewhere about six months after my last call at Holy Cross, that business or amusement induced me to stroll down towards Folkstone. I saw, as I descended the hill, a figure moving towards me, of which, even at a distance, I could not fail to receive an impression that it was familiar, and which, to say the truth, if once seen, it would have been a hard matter to forget. It was that of a very tall, thin man, arrayed in a suit of thread-bare, brown-black, the cut of which, in all its parts, gave indication that it must have been fabricated at least a quarter of a century ago. The coat was long-waisted and single-breasted, with broad skirts, huge horn buttons, and a small turn-back collar, that reached on each side to the tip of the ear. The waistcoat was likewise very long, with huge pockets, and what are called flaps at the bottom; whilst the breeches, which barely turned the knee, and were fastened with bright silver buckles, were composed of a sort of stocking net, that literally glittered in the sun. A pair of grey worsted stockings, and stout shoes, ornamented with broad brass clasps, completed the costume of the pedestrian, who marched stoutly along with an oaken

cudgel in one hand, and a paper parcel carefully wrapped up in the other.

As the stranger walked quickly, and I was not tardy in my movements, we soon confronted one another ; and I found,—not to my surprise, for I had already recognised him,—that it was no other than Mr. Davies. He had not, however, as it appeared, anticipated the meeting ; for he scarcely paused to exchange the usual salutations ere he proceeded to account for what, in the case of any person besides, would have been a very natural occurrence.

“ I do not often visit Folkstone,” said he ; “ but the truth is, poor Margery is ill, and I have been down to procure for her a few luxuries, which our meagre larder cannot furnish. You will not, I am sure, blame me if I hurry on, for there is no one at home to nurse her ; and, God bless her ! she is of more value in my eyes than all the race of men besides.”

So saying, he wished me good morning, and posted on.

A new trait in this singular man's character was now developed. Penurious towards himself even in sickness, and too proud to receive as a gift what he was too parsimonious to purchase, it seemed as if he grudged no expense so long as it promised to ameliorate the sufferings of his domestic ; whilst his personal attendance was as freely bestowed upon her, as it would have been upon a father or a mother. What a tissue of inconsistencies was here ! The true miser may not indeed endure to spend his money, however essential to his own welfare a little expenditure may be ; but if he be unwilling to do so in his own case, he is a thousand times more unwilling to do it in the case of another. The true miser, moreover, however reluctant to purchase, is usually abundantly ready to accept, no matter from what quarter the present may come, or of what nature it may be ; whereas this man would have spurned a gift, let it be offered by whom it might, even at the moment when his own wants must have pressed most heavily upon him. “ Yet, who knows,” thought I to myself, “ it may be that the same whim may actuate him here, which actuates him in his other proceedings. It is very possible that, for Margery's use, he may receive the con-

fections, which even to propose for himself would have been treason ; and if so, a door may at last be opened to confidence and intimacy between us." The more I pondered upon this idea, the more plausible it appeared ; and I no sooner reached home, than I prepared to act up to it.

I was soon supplied, according to my own wish, with a shape of blanc-mange, and a cup of jelly ; both of which I placed next morning in a little basket, and set out with it to Holy Cross. On reaching the well-known back-door, I knocked once or twice without receiving an answer ; after which, trusting to the purity of my own motives, I lifted the latch and entered. There was a melancholy silence every where. I traversed wash-house, kitchen, and lobby, without meeting a human being or catching a sound : I looked into the parlour, but it was empty ; and I advanced half-way up the stairs ere the slightest indication met me, that the house was not utterly deserted by its inmates. Then, indeed, a low and indistinct murmur, such as the wind emits when sweeping through the hollow of a rock, came upon me ; and I pressed forward with a painful conviction on my mind, that it was the voice of one in sorrow.

I soon gained the landing-place ; but instead of advancing towards the chamber occupied by Davies himself, I turned to the right, whither a half-open door invited me. I looked in, and beheld a small bed-room, fitted up, not expensively indeed, but with great attention to comfort ; well carpeted, well papered, and stocked with an adequate supply of every necessary piece of furniture. At the side of the bed, the curtains of which were in part drawn back, Davies was kneeling. His face, which was buried between his hands, rested on the coverlid, and he poured forth that low and plaintive moaning which had struck so coldly to my heart whilst mounting the stairs. Heaven knows, it was no impertinent or idle curiosity which compelled me to stand for several moments, a mute spectator of the scene before me ; but my feelings were so powerfully wrought upon that I could not stir, had I even possessed sufficient clearness of judgment to determine whether it behoved me to retire or go forward.

I do not know whether an involuntary movement of mine, or a passing current of air, shook the chamber-door; but at the end of perhaps a couple of minutes it creaked upon its hinges, and Davies, catching the sound, raised his head, and looked around. There were no tears upon his cheek, but the expression of his countenance was that of a man utterly forlorn, to whom fortune had done her last injury, and who felt that there was nothing more for him to suffer. It was not, however, the sort of forlornness which despair produces; very far from it,—for there was neither wildness nor stern defiance in his glance, but a calm and holy sorrow, such as the Christian need not seek to disguise, because it brings forcibly the idea of perfect resignation along with it. Our eyes instantly met. What the language might be which mine spoke, I do not know; probably there was a good deal of confusion in it, inasmuch as I was conscious of being surprised in a situation liable to misconstruction, and, but that it occurred accidentally, scarcely to be defended. But however this might be, Davies neither by look nor gesture exhibited the faintest symptoms of indignation, or even displeasure. On the contrary, he rose without permitting a muscle to quiver, or a shade upon his pale cheek to change; and holding out his hand, begged of me to enter.

“You have come at a melancholy moment,” said he with a full, unbroken, yet sorrowful voice; “but you are welcome. Poor old Margery has just paid the debt which all are doomed, sooner or later, to pay, and has not left her fellow for truth, fidelity, and strong affection, behind.”

I was greatly shocked by this intelligence; so much so, indeed, that for an instant I could not command words to reply to it. It was a consummation, the possible occurrence of which I had not anticipated; and its announcement came upon me, in consequence, with the full violence of evil tidings abruptly and unexpectedly communicated. At last, I recovered so far as to express, what I really felt, my deep sorrow at the event, and to enquire into the nature of the disease which had ended thus fatally.

“The faithful creature,” replied Davies, “never, I believe, recovered the fatigue of waiting upon me. I could

not persuade her to go to bed for a single night during my protracted illness ; and the want of natural rest is a privation not easily to be borne by a young, far less by an old person. She held up, indeed, for a short space after I was able to go about again, though even then it was easy to perceive that her feeble frame had overworked itself ; but on the evening of the very day when you last did me the favour to call, Margery yielded to her malady, which has gradually, but surely, gained upon her ever since. Well, it was the will of Heaven that the kind creature should not live to see her fondest vision realised, and to that will she submitted as she ought."

I now cast a glance towards the bed, upon which lay the still warm corpse of the housekeeper. There was a mild and placid expression in the countenance, seeming to imply, that the last thought which animated the senseless clay had been a happy one ; and whilst the eyes were closed, the lips were slightly parted, as if the spirit had passed from them in prayer. I observed, likewise, that no comfort, which it was within the reach of money to purchase, or affection to bestow, had been denied to her. She reclined upon a soft down bed, the entire furniture of which was composed of the finest materials. Beside her stood a table, on which were arranged every imaginable species of innocent luxury, calculated to stimulate the appetite, or please the fancy of an invalid ; whilst a number of phials and boxes furnished abundant evidence, that nothing which medical skill could suggest for her recovery had been withheld. Yet all availed not ; and he who had recently struggled through a serious indisposition, destitute of those accommodations which he freely afforded to a menial, saw that menial perish in spite of all his efforts to save her.

Little conversation, besides what has been detailed above, passed between Davies and myself on the present occasion. It was no fit time for enquiring farther into the state of his affairs than he himself chose voluntarily to explain ; and I returned home as ignorant as I was when I set out, touching the nature of the tie which bound him and his aged domestic so closely together. But the frank and open manner in which he had met me, even at a moment of

acute suffering, induced me to nourish a hope, that matters might ultimately assume a different character ; and the events of every successive day gave to that anticipation an increased degree of plausibility.

I visited Davies, as well from a sense of duty as from inclination, repeatedly, during the interval which elapsed between the death and burial of Margery ; and I found him on all occasions pleased and gratified at my coming. He did not hesitate to tell me, that, in losing his house-keeper, he had lost the only human being in whose happiness he was really interested ; yet he never gave way to any unmanly lamentations, far less uttered a syllable of repining or complaint. On the contrary, he made the necessary preparations for her funeral with the same calmness that he would have exhibited had she been to him no more than an ordinary servant ; and whilst he desired that every thing should be done with decency, he took care that there was no unnecessary waste. Finally, on the Sunday succeeding her decease, the body of the Welshwoman was committed to the earth, Davies following as chief mourner, and I reading the funeral service.

Margery died in the month of April ; and from that date, up to the Michaelmas following, Davies continued to spend his time after the same fashion which he followed whilst she was alive. He hired no other permanent domestic, it is true ; that is to say, he took none into his family, nor, except to wash his linen, did he make use of the regular services of any one ; but an old woman came occasionally, perhaps twice or thrice a week, to make his bed, and to sweep out the dust which might have accumulated both in his parlour and chamber. As to his food, of whatever materials composed, he cooked it entirely himself ; and his shoes, when cleaned, as well as his clothes, when brushed at all, were brushed and cleaned with his own hands. In one respect, however, his habits did undergo a change. To my great satisfaction, not less than to my surprise, he strolled over frequently to St. Alphage ; and whatever anxious thoughts might oppress him when he arrived, they never failed to disperse under the influence of friendly conversation. Yet, strange to say, though

taking undisguised delight in the society of my family, I could never prevail upon him to eat or drink amongst us. Not only did he steadily refuse my invitation to join us at our meals; but even the casual refreshment of a crust of bread, or a glass of wine, he rejected: indeed, the production of the one or the other, nay, the very intimation that it was about to be produced, always caused him to quit the house. For a time, we did our best to overcome these eccentricities; but, finding that we were not likely to succeed, and that a too steady perseverance in the attempt would probably drive him from us altogether, we latterly permitted him to indulge his own inclinations.

In this manner things went on till the day before Michaelmas-day; the oddities of man, by being brought continually before us, ceasing in a great degree to excite wonder; when a revolution in his affairs took place, certainly as little looked for on our parts, as a change in the great and fundamental laws by which visible nature is governed. He had intermitted his calls for about a week, and a casual indisposition keeping me at home, I had not been able to seek him in his own dwelling; when, as we sat round the fire in the dusk of the evening, the parlour door was thrown open, and the servant announced, in an audible voice, Mr. Davies. I rose to bid him welcome; but on casting my eyes round, they fell upon an object which completely rivetted me to the spot. Davies undeniably stood before me, with a pleased yet a sickly smile on his lips, but so thoroughly changed, in respect to dress, air, and appearances, that I could with difficulty bring myself to believe that it was he. The suit of old-fashioned rusty black was thrown aside, and its place supplied by one made after the most approved modern cut, perfectly new, and of the finest materials. The dingy shovel-hat had given way to a handsome beaver; and the thick brass-buckled brogues, and grey worsted stockings, were supplanted by silken hose, and shoes such as might be worn in any drawing-room. It will not be wondered at, if I hesitated whether to believe the evidence of my own senses, and that I hung back with the awkward stare of a man who knows not how to act. But Davies made haste

to relieve me from the unpleasant predicament in which I stood. Advancing into the middle of the room, with an easy gait, he grasped my passive hand, and, after cordially shaking it, said,—

“ I am by no means surprised that you should doubt the reality of the vision brought thus abruptly before you. You have hitherto seen in me only the miserable miser, who set the opinions of the world at defiance, and pursued his own sordid course through evil report and through good. I cannot blame you for hesitating to believe that I could ever appear in a different character. The time, however, has come, when I am enabled to explain to you the mystery of my conduct. I thank God, that the object of an entire life is attained ; and I will now, with your permission, give you the history of myself, were it only to justify you in your own eyes for having, at our first acquaintance, ventured to express an opinion, to the truth of which outward appearances, at least, afforded no support.”

There was no lack of willingness on our parts, as may easily be imagined, to become listeners to a tale which we had long and ardently desired to hear. After expressing, therefore, with perfect sincerity, our lively satisfaction that any piece of good fortune should have befallen him, we gathered round him in a circle, whilst he proceeded in the following terms.

CHAPTER III.

THE MISER.

“ I NEED not inform you that I am a native of Wales, for to that my accent, doubtless, bears testimony ; and poor Margery has, I believe, already led you to gather, that I first saw the light in Denbighshire. The case is so.

I am the son of a gentleman who once owned a property of no great money value, perhaps, but of considerable extent, in that county; which descended to him in lineal succession from times long anterior to the Conquest, and was held by the surest and best of all tenures,—that of prescription and the sword. I was born in the house of Llanrwst: I spent the first fifteen years of my life in wandering over its bare hills, fishing in its rapid rivers, following the roe among its woods, and shooting the black-cock over its moors; and it will not, therefore, surprise you to be told, that the compass of the round world contains not a spot so dear to my imagination.

“The family of which I am now the representative has, from the remotest periods, been remarkable for the rashness and headstrong improvidence of its chiefs. In ancient times, no feud or warlike movement occurred, in which a Davies failed, sooner or later, to take part; and in times more recent, they contrived, with singular ingenuity, to be involved in every sedition or rebellion which has agitated our country.

“As evil fortune would have it, too, my ancestors invariably happened to espouse the losing side in all their enterprises. They were staunch Cavaliers in the days of the commonwealth, and suffered, like others of the same party, from the rapacious exactions of the Roundheads. At the Revolution, they refused to transfer their allegiance to the new dynasty, and fought, and bled, and endured other pains of unsuccessful rebellion. My great-grandfather held a command in James’s army in Ireland: the army was defeated, and he himself narrowly escaped being hanged; whilst, by order of government, his house was burned down, his cattle driven off, and his lands laid waste. Unawed by the fate of his predecessor, my grandfather no sooner heard of Charles Edward’s advance into England, than he went off, with a few followers, to join him. He, too, was in hiding for many months; and though his life was eventually spared, the estate was confiscated. But better times came. The government felt itself sufficiently strong to act with clemency to its opponents; and Llanrwst, restored to its legitimate owner,

came down, in due course, though grievously encumbered, to my father.

“ The consequence of these numerous accidents was, in a pecuniary point of view, exceedingly distressing. Never possessed of much ready cash, our family now found themselves under the cruel necessity of mortgaging a portion of the estate to enable them to retake possession of the remainder ; and the building of a new house, on a scale far more costly than needed to have been adopted, plunged us deeper and deeper into difficulties. To rescue himself from them, my father, who possessed no talent for business, put himself into the hands of an agent, and became, like many other Welsh landholders, a dealer, on a large scale, in cattle. But this expedient proved as little beneficial in the end as the warlike operations of his ancestors. The man who conducted the details of business for him grew rich, and purchased an estate ; whilst my poor father was reduced, if not to real, at all events, to nominal bankruptcy.

“ In the mean while, with the improvidence which he inherited from the founder of his race, the good man thought fit to marry. His choice was perfectly unobjectionable in most respects, for he united himself to a very amiable and a very beautiful woman, whose blood was as pure as that of any stock in the principality, and whose principles were not less pure than her blood ; but, unfortunately, she was the seventh daughter of a poor country gentleman, and possessed not a shilling. Still they were exceedingly happy in each other’s society for some years after their marriage, during which she brought him three sons, of whom I was the youngest ; indeed, as long as he could drive off, by temporary expedients, a threatened calamity, no matter how grievous, my father was not a man to permit care to feed upon his vitals. But the canker, though carefully concealed from others, and, as far as might be, from the eyes of the patient himself, was by this time too deep-seated ever to undergo a cure. The creditors, finding that neither principal nor interest was forthcoming, talked of instituting legal proceedings ; and it became but too apparent, that the estate of Llanrwst must before long be advertised for sale.

‘ It was on a beautiful evening in June, when the leaves were in full leaf, and nature wore on flood and field her gayest livery, that two men, mounted on indifferent ponies, and shabbily dressed in drab riding-coats, were seen slowly winding up the avenue, and approaching the placé. You must know that the house stands at the base of a tall green hill, exquisitely studded with hazel and birch-trees to the summit, which, falling back, as it were, in the centre, constitutes of itself three sides of a magnificent amphitheatre. The fourth side is more level, stretching down in a rich meadow towards the Clwyd, which winds and chafes through one of the most glorious and fertile valleys of which the kingdom of England can boast. Through this meadow ran the avenue, formed by a double row of beeches, and extending perhaps a quarter of a mile from Llanrwst to the high road. Now it was no unusual sight to witness the approach of absolute strangers in this direction, because the Vale of Clwyd is much visited by tourists, and my father’s door was never closed against the traveller who chose to claim his hospitality. No one, therefore, would have viewed the advance even of these men with distrust, notwithstanding that their demeanour bespoke them to belong to a class little given to travel for mere amusement ; but certain events had happened a week or two previously which agitated the family not a little, and the strangers were regarded as not unconnected with them. In plain language, one creditor, more importunate than the rest, had announced to my father by letter, that unless his demand were settled against a certain day, a warrant would be issued ; and the day having long gone by, it was shrewdly enough suspected, that the strangers could be no other than sheriff’s officers.

“ I was at this time within a few months of completing my sixteenth year, and my brothers were, the eldest by three years, the younger by a year and a half, my seniors. We were not ignorant that my father’s affairs were embarrassed ; indeed it would have been a hard task to conceal that fact from any member of the family ; but till he spoke out now in the bitterness of alarm, we had not entertained a suspicion that the evil had gone so far. Our feelings on

the occasion may be imagined, but they cannot possibly be described.

“ ‘ Arrest you, my father !’ we exclaimed in a breath. ‘ Who will dare to arrest you in your own house, surrounded by your own servants, and with your sons here to protect you ? By heavens, if the scoundrels lay but a finger upon you, or speak one insolent word to you or our mother, they shall sleep more soundly to-night than they bargained for ; but it will be in the bed of the Clwyd.’

“ We ran out ere my father had time to answer, and the alarm spreading to the servants’ hall, and from thence to the outhouses, in five minutes’ time there were a dozen men armed with guns, pitchforks, and scythes, ready to defend the approaches against any numbers. It was to no purpose that my father entreated us to hear reason, and pointed out the absolute madness of attempting to resist the execution of a legal process. We could see no madness in the matter ; and hence, whilst he betook himself to the woods, in imitation of his more warlike ancestors, we deliberately drew up our band at the head of the avenue in battle-array. Leaving the people there under the command of the gardener, my brothers and I went forward, for the purpose of ascertaining the cause of an intrusion which we were prepared at all events to resent.

“ The strangers had not been inattentive observers of our movements ; and they now halted about half-way between the house and the high road, as if irresolute how to act. They did not, however, retire, but waited our approach ; and in answer to our question, put in no very courteous terms, they replied, by stating the simple truth as it was. ‘ They were extremely sorry ; it was a very unpleasant business, quite as disagreeable to them as it could be to us : but they were not to blame, and hoped that we would not interrupt or misuse them in the execution of their duty.’— ‘ We have a warrant,’ continued one of them.

“ ‘ A warrant !’ exclaimed my brother, ‘ and against whom ?’

“ ‘ Against Morgan Davies, Esq., for debt, at the suit of Messrs. Clutchem and Holdit, attorneys-at-law, Chester,

to the execution of which we trust that no opposition will be made, as a peaceable course will be best for all parties.'

" ' I give you five minutes to consider,' replied my brother, deliberately pulling out his watch, ' whether you will withdraw in sound skins, and carry back to your cheating employers a message of defiance, or be content to dangle by the neck upon that tree, or be rolled over the rock into the pool below. Your cursed warrants are of no value here, and you may say so to those who signed them.'

" ' I beg you to consider, young gentleman,' replied the individual who spoke before, ' that the style in which you are talking is a very dangerous one. The law is not now to be resisted with impunity; and if you compel us to go back without our prisoner, you may shortly receive a visit from those who will be likely to carry you all in a heap, where your quarters wo'n't be to your liking.'

" ' Do you bandy words with me, caitiff?' exclaimed my brother, furious with rage, at the same time making a grasp at the officer's bridle. This was the signal for our support to advance: they rushed forward, yelling like so many mountain-cats; but the officers, with great judgment, declined to abide the result. Snatching his reins hastily upwards, the spokesman contrived to elude his assailant's gripe, at the same moment that he wheeled his pony round upon its haunches; and his companion following the example, they set off at full speed down the avenue. Though we had thus repulsed them, we retained sufficiently the use of our reason to know, that any farther act of violence could not fail to bring about the worst consequences: so we contented ourselves, after discharging a volley of stones, to follow them with hooting and laughter as far as the gate; and leaving one to watch there against their return, we retraced our steps triumphantly to the hall.

" So far we were doubtless victorious; but my father, who was keenly alive to the results likely to ensue, by no means participated in our triumph. ' You have done more towards effecting the ruin of your house,' said he, in an agony of grief and despair, ' than any one since the forty-five could have done. I will go instantly to Chester, give myself up into the hands of Clutchem and Holdit, and en-

deavour, if I can, to avert some of the consequences of your rashness ; but the very least that can happen will be a heavy fine, the payment of which will leave us no alternative but to sell the lands.' It was in vain that we strove to reason him out of this determination. He set out next morning, accompanied by my two brothers, to throw himself on the mercy of men who knew not the meaning of the word ; and he never revisited the house of his fathers again.

“ Ten days might have elapsed, after the occurrence of these adventures, when a body of dragoons, headed by three men in ordinary dresses, arrived at Llanrwst. To have attempted opposition to such a force would, under any circumstances, have been madness ; and those were absent whose fiery spirits and strong arms rendered them best qualified to take the lead in scenes of peril. My mother, therefore, issued positive orders that no hostile movement should be made ; and the troopers, who marched with great caution, sending out their scouts before them, and otherwise feeling their way, gained the lawn without an effort being made to arrest or impede them. Even now, however, either for ostentation-sake, or because resistance was still apprehended, they carried on their approaches in warlike fashion. The three civilians, with five dragoons dismounted, two others riding round, at the same time, to the back of the house, and, while the remaining three took charge of the horses, the first mentioned body marched with carabines loaded and primed towards the door. It was not even closed against them ; upon which a sentinel halting to keep up the communication, the other seven moved briskly into the hall.

“ All these evolutions took place under the eyes both of my mother and myself, who watched them with feelings equally strong, perhaps, but somewhat different in kind. As to my poor mother, fear was with her the predominant passion, — fear lest insult or injury should be offered to herself and her son, mixed with a vague apprehension of evil already wrought to her absent kindred. For myself, indignation and rage were the only sentiments of which I have now any recollection ; and the display of these was

not checked without a violent struggle. But when I looked to my mother, and saw her pale and breathless, when I felt her lean upon me for support, and heard her beseech me, as I valued her peace, not to notice, even by an angry word, any insolence on the part of these intruders, — I determined to master my passion ; and, desperate as the effort was, I succeeded. We sat down side by side in the drawing-room, and awaited in silence the course which events should take.

“ We had not waited in this position many moments, when, the door being cautiously opened, first a trooper, and then the identical officer who had acted a principal part on a former occasion, entered. They were followed, on a given signal, by the rest ; and the man of law, advancing into the middle of the room, addressed himself, in a tone half-supercilious, half-soothing, to my mother, —

“ ‘ Very sorry, ma’am, extremely sorry indeed, to be obliged to adopt these measures ; but the fault is entirely your own. I said when I was here last that no good would come of resistance ; and what has been the consequence ? There are Mr. Davies and his sons in limbo, on a charge of deforcement and violence ; and the least that can happen to them will be transportation for fourteen years. But they would not take a plain man’s advice, and now they are reaping the fruits of their own rashness. Do you think these are times when a Welsh landowner can put arms into his people’s hands, and defy the law ? No, no — we don’t live in the days of blades and bucklers ; and that they will learn to their cost.’

“ ‘ My good friend,’ replied I, for my mother was too violently affected to speak, ‘ I trust that what you have just said is not true ; but, whether true or otherwise, it would have been more consistent with humanity had you concealed it in our present circumstances. There is no manhood in wounding the feelings of a lady, already, as you may perceive, ill able to bear up against the evils that surround her. Tell me, however, as the representative of my father in his absence, by what authority all this is done, and why our house is taken possession of by soldiers, as if it were an enemy’s castle ?’

“ ‘ Unless my memory fail me,’ replied the officer, ‘ you too, young gentleman, were engaged in opposing the execution of justice. However, I don’t want to be hard upon you ; and as we have three safe who are older, and ought therefore to have been wiser, we will not send you after them, — at least immediately. As to my authority, it is easily given. I am here by virtue of a decree of court, which has condemned Morgan Davies, Esq., to the payment of a fine of five hundred pounds, in default of which his goods and chattels are seized in the king’s name ; and these soldiers are assisting in the execution of the writ, because I know, from experience, that any other authority is scarce likely to be regarded. Does this satisfy you ?’ showing his warrant at the same time. — ‘ And now, madam,’ continued he, turning to my mother, ‘ it only remains for me to declare the plate, furniture, books, apparel, and other chattels in this house, arrested ; and to inform you, that though we will not turn you out of doors, we must quarter ourselves upon you till an inventory of the effects to be sold at the suit of the crown be taken. We have ridden some distance this morning ; and men and horses stand in need of refreshment.’

“ ‘ That will be seen to,’ replied my mother, commanding in some degree her feelings ; ‘ but surely you cannot mean that Mr. Morgan and my sons are under sentence of transportation. He took no part in the violence of which you complain ; and they, young and inexperienced, acted under the impulse of a momentary delusion, from which they are long ago recovered. They would not visit so slight an offence with so grievous a penalty.’

“ ‘ Why, no, ma’am, no,’ said the officer, ‘ I don’t mean that they would be banished, only that they deserved banishment, — that’s all. The thing, you see, is settled ; and it is to pay the fine imposed in consequence of that violence that we are here. But I have other warrants besides ; a distress from Grasper and Swindel, to the amount of 600*l.* ; a foreclosed mortgage held by Hugh Wrench, value 3400*l.* ; a — but I need not go over the whole. The truth is, ma’am, I’m very sorry, but I must say it, — the truth is, this house is no longer yours. We won’t

drive you out to-night, for it gets late ; and God forbid I should distress any one, notwithstanding your people used me but scurvily a few days ago ; but to-morrow morning you must be moving. There is no alternative, and we must do our duty.'

" ' Nay, mother,' said I, ' let us not stay a moment. I will help you to put up a few articles of dress, and we will go at once, were it to sleep in the fields.'

" ' There is no occasion for going, you see, in such a hurry,' interrupted the officer. ' I tell you, you may stay here till to-morrow ; but as to putting up any thing, that is quite out of the question. Not a stick nor a rag can be removed from this house till the king's demands and Grasper's distress be satisfied.'

" ' You would not surely deny us the privilege of securing a change of habiliments ?'

" ' I can't allow it on no account ; I must do my duty.'

" ' Come then, Llewelin,' said my mother to me, rising as she spoke, ' this is no longer our home ; let us quit it, and find shelter for our heads where we can.'

" ' Sure now !' said one of the troopers, ' you wo'n't suffer that, Master Sleek, no how ! You can't allow the poor creatures to go away without any thing to cover them but the clothes they wear ?'

" ' B—t them !' replied the officer, who could no longer keep up the farce of acting with civility. ' If I were to tie them neck and crop, and lodge them in the cellar, it would be no more than they deserve. They talk of hanging up honest men in the execution of their duty ! Things have come to a pretty pass, when a set of beggarly Welsh runts use threats to their betters, and deforce the persons of king's officers. Let them go and be d——d, or stay and be d——d, all's one to me ; only they take nothing with them, as sure as my name is Dick Sleek.'

" The tone of the fellow's voice, not less than the violence of his manner, increased my mother's anxiety to escape from a place where she no longer considered herself or me secure from personal violence. She accordingly hurried towards the door, and dragging me after her, ran, rather than walked, forth into the air. No opposition was

made to this movement, for the voice of Sleek calling angrily to let the — pass, was warranty enough to the soldiers not to interrupt our progress. But we had proceeded only a little way on our road ere a spectacle presented itself, more gratifying, perhaps, than satisfactory, under existing circumstances. About fifty able-bodied men, armed with such weapons as chance brought first to hand, appeared advancing with quick steps towards the house. They were headed by Margery,—the same affectionate creature whom we so lately followed to the grave ; and they seemed animated with the same resolution of delivering their lady and young master from thralldom, or perishing in the attempt. Alas ! it was a useless, and not altogether a safe, display of the attachment which did exist, and which I am willing to believe still exists, among the mountains,—between tenants and their landlord. It could have availed us nothing, under any circumstances ; and now was not without the hazard of involving us in still greater difficulties. Happily, however, the men, though violently excited, were not deaf to the voice of reason. They saw that we were safe—so far the first object was attained ; and as we assured them that any act of hostility committed by them towards the king's troops would be visited upon the head of my father, they consented, though not without reluctance, to disperse. They did so before the troopers, who had mounted and formed, were in a condition to act ; and, satisfied that all risk of a tumult was over, we readily accepted Margery's invitation, and accompanied her home."

CHAPTER IV.

THE MISER.

" **THOUGH** I have related my own history up to the sixteenth year of my life, I have as yet given you no farther intimation of the existence of poor Margery, than by men-

tioning her in the terms made use of a few moments ago. I am much to blame in having so done ; for if ever there existed a human being devoted to the interests of others, and careless of her own, Margery Jones was that person. The truth, indeed, is, that Margery's ancestors had held a small farm under mine from time immemorial. Each succeeding generation was accordingly in the habit of looking up to the proprietors of Llanrwst as their natural protectors ; and long after the influence of feudal tenures ceased to be acknowledged, custom—perhaps a nobler principle—maintained an ascendancy over them. Margery herself, however, acknowledged claims even more sacred than these. It chanced that she was delivered of a child much about the same time with my mother, and being an exceedingly healthy, and then a good-looking woman, she was honoured by being chosen as my nurse. She did her duty by me rigidly ; and losing her own baby soon after I was removed to her cabin, she became as warmly attached to me as if I had been bone of her bone and flesh of her flesh.

“ Margery's husband was one of those rough and lawless characters that are to be found in all parts of the world,—a determined poacher, not over-scrupulous in drawing distinctions between mine and thine, and withal totally disinclined to earn for himself a livelihood by honest industry. If he was brought once before the bench of magistrates, under accusation of various crimes, the thing occurred at least a hundred times ; and though my father, out of regard for his wife, took his part repeatedly, a case was, in the end, brought so home to him, that there was no resisting it. He was sent to the county gaol, tried for sheep-stealing, and escaped death by the hands of the executioner, only to suffer transportation for life. But though her husband was thus dealt with, and richly merited his fate, honest Margery was by no means neglected by our people ; on the contrary, she was promoted to the office of principal superintendent of the poultry-yard, was lodged in a snug cottage scarce a stone's throw from the domain, and became to all intents and purposes a member of the household. The kind creature's gratitude knew no

bounds ; and as she had never borne but one child, which died as I have stated, she transferred the whole of her affections, which were neither transient nor light, to the kindred of her benefactor.

“ It is scarcely necessary to say, that having spent the first two years of my life chiefly under Margery’s superintendence, my affection for her was hardly less lively than hers for me. She was to me, during the whole of my boyhood, a sort of second mother ; only that she never dreamed of thwarting me in any inclination, no matter how extravagant or improper. Did I covet any thing which was denied me at home, I had only to tell Margery of the circumstance, and if the treasure were to be procured by any exertion of hers, I seldom sighed in vain. In a word, the highest of all duties, in that kind soul’s estimation, was to advance the happiness of her child, and to attain that she would have esteemed the sacrifice of life itself as a thing not to be spoken about.

“ As long as affairs went smoothly with us, it would have been strange indeed had Margery failed to share our prosperity. When the horizon began to blacken, none was longer in seeing the storm as it collected, nor more sincere in lamenting its occurrence. A rumour no sooner got abroad that her master was likely to be arrested, than she gave up every thought to the devising of plans for the prevention of so great a calamity ; and reasoning about present times from the tales which were familiar to her of times of old, she considered no method more likely to bring about the attainment of her wishes, than to call in the aid of the tenants at large. For this purpose, she went over the lands, unknown to us, inciting the yeomanry to stand by their chief against the enemies which threatened him. She appealed to them as men, whose ancestors had, for ages, experienced the paternal care of the lords of Llanrwst ; and such was the wild energy of her manner, that she stirred them up to something like her own enthusiasm. Hence the facility with which the band was brought together, who, but for our opportune meeting, would have infallibly come to blows with the dragoons and whom we found it no easy matter to draw off from

risking a skirmish, for the purpose of driving the Saxons, as they termed them, from the hall of their own master.

“The evening was somewhat advanced ere our unwelcome guests came upon us; consequently the shades of night were closing round us when we reached the abode of Margery. It was a poor hovel, containing but two apartments, both of them upon the ground-floor; but, poor as it was, it offered a shelter to heads otherwise houseless, and we availed ourselves of it thankfully. Besides, it was at all times remarkably clean. True, the floors were mud, and the bedsteads a couple of boxes fixed in the wall; but then the earth was always well strewed with fresh rushes, and the bedding, if coarse, was pure as the spirit of cleanliness could make it. Moreover, Margery was the kindest and most attentive of hostesses. Lamenting sometimes the evil fortune which had reduced us to seek a night’s lodging from her,—at other times pouring forth curses upon our persecutors, and for the most part summing up with the utterance of rude expressions of the great honour done to her cottage by such a presence,—she bustled about with the greatest avidity, and set before us, in a shorter space of time than could have been calculated upon, a wholesome supper of eggs, goats’ milk, cheese, barley-bread, and butter fresh from the churn. The whole was arranged upon a cloth which would have done no discredit, either in fineness of texture or purity of colour, to the mansion of a noble, though it was the produce of her own tangling, spinning, bleaching, and all, except weaving.

“‘Now, you will eat a little bit, my lady,’ said she, ‘were it only to please poor Margery, and to keep up your heart after all that has happened this black day; and proud shall I be when the squire returns, and all is right again, to think, that my lady and my own darling young master spent one evening not uncomfortably under the roof that they gave me.’

“But Margery’s expostulations, though repeated over and over again, failed in producing the desired effect with my mother. She was sick at heart; and such a sickness as that admits of no other disposition holding with it a divided sovereignty. For myself, however, I was as yet

too young to perceive the full extent of the calamity under which my house had fallen, and I freely and even cheerfully partook of the meal which my kind nurse had provided. I slept soundly, too, in one of the snug boxes of which notice has already been taken; whilst my poor mother scarcely lay down, and never closed an eye upon the other.

“When the morrow came, it unavoidably brought with it the necessity of determining upon a question which had as yet been considered very vaguely—whither were we to go? To remain where we were could serve no good purpose; for our house was taken possession of, and its contents would shortly be sold off: whilst to abide with Margery till intelligence could be received from my father was an arrangement not to be thought of. Besides, what had become of my father, and whence was it, that though absent almost an entire fortnight, he had sent us no account either of his proceedings or prospects? Then again, to go in quest of him in a large town, with none of whose inmates we had even a slight acquaintance, appeared an undertaking too hazardous to be risked by a delicate woman and inexperienced boy. Nor was this all: our funds were at the lowest ebb; my father having taken along with him almost the whole of the little money which chanced to be in the house; and though we found it practicable enough to exist in the Vale of Clwyd upon credit, we were well aware that the same resource would not avail us in Chester. My mother wept bitterly as these melancholy reflections crowded upon her; and I and Margery wept too,—perhaps from a conviction that there was too much reason for her distress; but more decidedly, because we saw that she was unhappy.

“‘Don’t weep, my dear lady,’ said Margery, sobbing audibly all the while: ‘it’s no use taking on; and sorrow only unfits us for exertion. What matters the evil of to-day? Isn’t to-morrow coming, and don’t we read, that heaviness may last for a night, but joy cometh in the morning?’

“‘Ah, Margery,’ replied my mother, ‘upon us no such morning will ever dawn: there is an end for ever to the house of Llanrwst; but ——’

“ ‘ Now, Heaven forbid it, my lady,’ exclaimed Margery, drying up her tears, ‘ and let no one utter before me so dark a prophecy. An end to the house of Llanrwst! No! while these hands can labour, no child of that house shall lack a servant; and as long as the servant is true, the lord cannot entirely fall. Darkness may be over you now, my lady, but it must depart; and here,’ placing her hand upon my shoulder, ‘ is he, that will yet bring back the house of Llanrwst to its ancient splendour. I may not live to see it, but sure I am, that my own darling will sleep again in peaceable possession of the home of his fathers.’ ”

“ ‘ These are glowing visions of yours, Margery,’ replied my mother, smiling through her tears, ‘ and not unworthy of the days when old nurses spoke in parables, and grey-haired bards possessed the faculty of foretelling events to come; but this is not a moment to be wasted in looking so far before us. The matter at present to be decided is, — what steps shall I and Llewelin take? I would proceed instantly in quest of Mr. Davies, but that, to say truth, I have not the means; and where to raise funds for the journey I know not.’ ”

“ ‘ And shall it be said, that the lady of Llanrwst wanted for money, whilst a tenant upon the squire’s lands possessed a shilling? No!’ She hurried out of the house as she spoke, and, for a full hour and a half, my mother and I were left to enjoy each other’s conversation.

“ I retain no distinct recollection of what passed between us during the temporary absence of our hostess. I remember, indeed, that my mother was absorbed with grief, and that I used my best efforts to cheer and support her; but I remember still more vividly, that the appearance of Margery hurrying up the glen on her return was, especially to me, no slight relief. In a few moments she entered the room where we sat, and, laying a leathern bag upon the table, exclaimed, with a smile upon her countenance, —

“ ‘ Now, my lady, look there! See what your own people have sent; and if there be not enough there to pay off all scores at once, and put you in quiet possession again

of the place, there is more than sufficient to carry you to Chester, and support you there like a princess, till better times come.'

"So saying, she tore open the mouth of the purse, shed out its contents with a trembling hand, and the surface of the table was covered in a trice with a display of all the coins of the realm. Margery was not satisfied with this; she piled them up according to their order, the few guineas that were, apart from the silver, and the silver apart from the copper, and in the end pronounced, with a voice of marked triumph, 'that there were full three-and-twenty pounds, nine shillings, and seven-pence, at her lady's control.' In spite of her grief, my mother could not suppress a smile at the enthusiastic simplicity of Margery; whilst I, whose sorrows sat more lightly, laughed aloud. Honest Margery, mistaking the cause of our mirth, joined heartily in it; and thus, for a few moments, the house of mourning was literally changed into that of merriment.

" 'I didn't go round half of them,' exclaimed the simple creature: 'I hadn't time to see any except those nearest at hand; and yet you see what I have collected already. What will it be when the others know that the lady stands in need of help to recover her own?'

" 'But you know the exact amount that you have received from each, I hope,' said my mother; 'as well as the names of all that have come thus generously forward?'

" 'That I do: it is but justice to repeat them, that when the squire comes to his own again he may repay one good office by another.'

"Margery here recapitulated the names of the few tenants on whom she had called, every one of whom cheerfully handed over to her the sum-total of his ready cash; and you need scarcely be told, that the memorandum then made was neither lost nor destroyed.

"I do not know whether to say, that this mode of obtaining a supply adequate to the expenses before us was gratifying to the feelings of my mother and myself, or the reverse. In one point of view, it was abundantly humiliating to accept of pecuniary accommodation of our inferiors and dependents; in another, the readiness with

which they came forward in an hour of need went farther to satisfy us of our popularity than a thousand protestations of respect and affection, poured forth during the sunshine of good fortune. To whichever side the balance leaned, however, one thing is very certain, — that we were at once too poor, and our case too pressing, to permit of a moment's hesitation as to the acceptance of the contribution. It was received thankfully as a loan; and Margery being again sent out in quest of a vehicle to transport us, we made ready to set out, immediately on her return, for Chester. She was not many minutes absent on this occasion. A sort of covered car, drawn by a single horse, being procured, we shook the kind creature warmly by the hand; but no reasoning of ours would induce her to stay behind. 'No, she had vowed to go with her young master over the world, and nothing but force should hinder her from keeping her word.' There was no resisting an argument thus urged; so Margery, after giving up the key of her house to the friendly owner of the car, who insisted upon doing the duty of driver in person, mounted after us, and we began our journey, thus strangely attended, towards the low country.

“No circumstance worthy of repetition occurred during the progress of this journey. On the part of my mother, it was a melancholy one; for besides that her apprehensions for the safety of those most dear to her were excessive, she guessed, with too much reason, that she had turned her back upon the Vale of Clwyd for ever: on my part, hope, the love of change, and the anticipation of seeing again in a short time my father and brothers, in a great degree counterbalanced feelings of a more gloomy nature. Margery, likewise, appeared but little disposed to give way without a struggle to evil forebodings. With a freedom that exists not among English servants, but which in no instance passed the line of rigid respect, she exerted herself to chase away the dark thoughts which oppressed the mind of her mistress; and, rude as her system of condolence was, it failed not to produce an effect.

“The second day was considerably advanced, when after crossing the Dee at the bridge of Alford, Chester

with its commanding fortalice and antique ramparts, lay before us. It was now that my mother, apparently for the first time, began to consider, with the attention which they deserved, the real difficulties of her situation. Though not unacquainted with the localities of the city, which she had frequently visited, as well previous to her marriage as since, she was, nevertheless, somewhat at a loss where to establish herself; for it was not her intention to appear, in her reduced circumstances, among the friends of her earlier life, and of the meaner places of accommodation she knew nothing. Then, again, there were considerable doubts as to the means of discovering my father. It was true that the villanous tipstaff had pretty plainly insinuated, that both he and his sons were inmates of a prison; but there was something too horrible in that idea to be admitted, and, almost against conviction, she held out stoutly against it. Happily for her, the worthy man who drove our car had been in the habit of dealing largely in the palatine capital, and thence was familiarly acquainted with more than one hostelry adapted to the state of our finances; and to his guidance our treatment, at all events for the night, was in consequence committed.

“Our postilion conducted us to a poor-looking inn, in a narrow lane in the suburbs, before the door of which we alighted. The mean appearance of the place caused my mother involuntarily to shudder, for it forced upon her, in broader outline than ever, the true picture of her condition; and though the people were abundantly civil, and the little parlour into which we were ushered was not devoid of a certain air of snugness and comfort, the door was scarcely closed, when she threw herself down in an arm-chair, and wept bitterly. But the paroxysm soon passing away, she wound up her courage to the sticking-place; and having given directions that beds should be got ready, and Margery and our friendly postilion duly attended to, she drew her veil closely about her face, and putting her arm within mine, we walked abroad together.

“In spite of the afflicting circumstances under which my first visit to the ancient city was paid, it would have been unnatural had the strange aspect of every thing within

its circuit failed to strike me with wonder and amazement. The curious construction of the houses, with their projecting balconies and covering walls; the principal streets sunk so far beneath the level of the surrounding country, that to reach them it was necessary to descend a flight of steps; the pavé raised high above the lane, along which carriages were rolling; and the shops in a great degree hidden by their position from the foot passengers, — all these peculiarities operated with more than common force upon the imagination of one who had never till now beheld a place of greater importance than Denbigh. Then again, when I looked up, I saw that no rain could reach us; for the galleries from either side stretched so far across, that a person standing in one might, with perfect ease, shake hands with his friend standing in the other; whilst the crowds of people that met us were viewed with the greater wonder, because, ere we descended to the level of the promenade, not a human being could be seen.

“ We traversed the principal street unnoticed, at least unrecognised by any one, and, ascending the eminence on which the castle stands, approached its fortified entrance. The sentinel stopped us on the drawbridge, to demand our business, and would have had us insert our names in a book kept for the purpose; but, on my explaining to the officer that we were not desirous of going over the works, and that our object was to visit a prisoner, he at once dispensed with a custom which, in our case, could not have been followed without pain. He kindly invited us, moreover, to sit down in his little guard-room, whilst a man went forward to ascertain whether my father were indeed in confinement; and the messenger returning soon afterwards with an announcement that the case was so, he received instructions to conduct us to the prison.

“ I pass by the particulars of the first interview between relatives separated under circumstances so painful, and thus painfully re-united. We found the prisoners inhabiting a suite of two small apartments, which they hired from the gaoler at an exorbitant rent, and worn down in health and spirits, not more from confinement than from mental disquiet. The pride of my brothers in particular had been

grievously wounded, and, like young eagles shut up in a cage, they pined for the free range of earth and air to which they had from childhood been accustomed ; whilst my father, irritable at all times, fretted both himself and them by continual upbraidings. I need not say, that the embraces which passed from one to the other were given with an intensity of bitterness which spoke a language far more intelligible than words ; and that when the turnkey broke in to remind us that the hour of locking up was at hand, we found that not half that each had designed to say was said. My mother would have remained with the prisoners all night, but that my father positively prohibited the measure. We, accordingly, bade them good night ; and, returning to our little inn, passed the remainder of the evening in a frame of mind upon which it is humiliating even now to look back.

“ Our first business on the following day was to look out for a private lodging, at once conveniently situated for visiting the gaol, and moderate in its rent. We were fortunate enough to find one, not indeed remarkable for its elegance, but sufficiently comfortable ; and having little to remove in the shape of baggage or effects, we passed into it immediately. Here it was that Margery began that career of faithful and gratuitous service which ended only with her life. She cooked for us, waited upon us, washed our linen, and otherwise attended to our wants, not merely with cheerfulness, but with alacrity ; and the heavier the burden imposed upon her, the more zealously the trusty creature bent her back to it. But why continue these details ? Let it suffice to say that, after an interval of another fortnight, an announcement arrived, that the furniture and effects of Llanrwst had been sold ; that the money raised was sufficient to discharge the amount of the fine ; and, consequently, that my father and brothers, who were imprisoned only till that should be paid, were set at large.”

CHAPTER V.

THE MISER.

“ THE first use which my father made of his liberty was to wait upon Messrs. Clutchem and Holdit, and to endeavour to enter with them into some compromise for the liquidation of his debt. He found them not indisposed to come to an arrangement, provided the details were left entirely in their hands ; and as my father knew himself to be in their power, he saw the impossibility of contending against them. An instrument was in consequence drawn up, which constituted them sole trustees of the estate of Llanrwst, for the benefit of the creditors. They were to grant leases, collect the rents, and otherwise manage matters, till a favourable opportunity of disposing of it by sale should occur ; and in the mean while they agreed to allow my father an annual maintenance of one hundred pounds. This was a sorry pittance, it is true ; but his circumstances were completely desperate, and it was not without a feeling of thankfulness at escaping a worse fate that my poor father accepted it.

“ Matters being so far put in a train, the next point to be considered was, whither we should remove ourselves. To retire to Llanrwst was out of the question ; because, in the first place, the house was bared to the walls, and, with our scanty means, we could not refurnish, far less pretend to inhabit it ; whilst, in the next place, had things been different, we should be liable to ejection at a moment's notice. The property was already advertised, with the right of immediate possession ; and it suited ill with the taste of any member of the family to appear as tenants by courtesy, where they had so long lived as proprietors. To go elsewhere again, in quest of a home, could serve no other purpose besides frittering away, in travelling expenses, a portion of that income which would but ill supply the necessaries of life, because every spot under the sun

was the same to them, who could be said to breathe freely nowhere except on their native hills, or amid their native valleys. It was true that, by remaining in Chester, we should be liable to rencounters with many persons who had known us in better days. But it was prudently resolved to keep as far aloof from them as possible, and on no account to entangle ourselves by accepting their invitations. A small house was accordingly hired in one of the back streets of the city, and there, with Margery as our only attendant, we established ourselves.

“The lapse of a very moderate space of time served to convince us, that the apprehensions which we had entertained touching the risk of being drawn into the vortex of a society too expensive for us were perfectly groundless. It was quite astonishing to see how quickly our country acquaintances ceased to recollect us ; for though, for a time, they coldly saluted both my father and mother, by bowing to them if they met in the streets, even that slight token of recognition soon ceased to be offered. Men who had eaten at his board, slept in his house, shot upon his hills, fished in his streams, now looked the other way when, by chance, they saw my father coming ; and ladies who esteemed my mother’s notice a thing to be talked about, now stared her in the face, and passed on. We were too proud a race to take this much to heart. At first, indeed, we did feel it, as men always feel mortifications, no matter by whom applied ; but the sense of offended pride gave place to contempt for those who struck at it, and we held our heads the higher, as often as one of these petty insults was offered.

“It was not, however, in this respect only that my father learned to feel that there is a mighty difference between the value of a man’s friendship when affairs go well with him, and when they run in an opposite channel. With unaccountable Anprovidence, he had never thought of educating any one of his three sons to a profession ; a neglect which was the less excusable, as the estate of Llanrwst, had it even been free and unencumbered, was totally inadequate to maintain in respectability more than the eldest of them. The consequence was, that though

none of us were deficient in talent, and though we knew about as much as the sons of Welsh gentlemen generally know, we were totally incapable of earning our own livelihood ; and, what was worse, the two elder, at least, were as disinclined as they were unable. We all saw, however, that something must be done. A hundred pounds a year would go but a little way towards supporting us, in addition to our parents ; and hence we began immediately to chalk out lines in which to journey through life. My brothers, with one voice, declared for the army. It was a gentlemanly profession, suited well with their manly habits, and was not beneath the dignity of the ancient stock from which they sprang ; and my father wrote, without delay, to as many of his friends as he believed to have interest enough to procure for them commissions. Poor man ! he wrote as he ever acted, with perfect openness, made no secret of the derangement of his affairs, and spoke of the near approach of that awful day which should witness the eternal alienation of Llanrwst from its pristine owners. He did not know of what stuff friends are usually composed. The legitimate day brought back answers from his correspondents ; the whole of which agreed, both in matter and manner, to a tittle. They were extremely sorry to receive such bad accounts of his circumstances, — regretted that he had not acted more prudently, — wished it were in their power to serve him ; but frankly owned that they had no interest. Thus were the hopes of two as spirited youths as ever served their country by sea or land blighted, and one more instance added to the many which the history of human life supplies, that he who expects a favour from his neighbour must possess the power to oblige that neighbour in return.

“ I never had any peculiar predilection for a military career. There always appeared to me to be too much of restraint about it — too much of control, extending not merely to men’s actions, but to their thoughts and manners. My taste led me from childhood to love freedom more than life ; and had the house of my fathers continued to shelter me, I am afraid that I should have lived and died an extremely useless member of society. But, like my brothers,

I saw that the hour was come when it behoved me not to hang an unworthy burden round the necks of my parents ; and I, too, looked about, in order to choose among the professions. I selected the church ; first, because it was an honourable and a useful calling ; next, because I believed that it would afford ampler means of indulging my own predilections than any other. The choice was acceptable to the other branches of my family, and from that time I turned my mind wholly to such studies as promised to fit me for ordination.

“ In this manner two years stole on, the rector of the parish in which we lived being our sole acquaintance ; and as he was a humane and good man, displaying a singular interest in our fate, under his guidance I read, and from him I received an assurance, that when the proper season arrived, a title for orders should not be wanting. But, long before that time arrived, events fell out, which gave a new turn both to the prospects of my family and to my own wishes.

“ My brothers, after vainly hanging on from day to day, in the hope of some opening presenting itself, of which they might take advantage, suddenly quitted home, without so much as bidding their relatives farewell. As may be imagined, their failure to return when evening closed in affected the whole of us with serious alarm ; and during several days after, our fears and anxiety were almost too painful to be borne. Before a week had expired, however, letters were received, announcing that they could no longer endure to add to the distresses of their parents ; and that finding every avenue through the aid of others shut against them, they had determined to open one for themselves. In a word, they had enlisted as private soldiers in a regiment of light dragoons, and expected every day to embark with their corps for India. I need not say, that such a communication, though it allayed our anxiety as to what had become of them, was very far from lightening the grief which their abrupt departure had occasioned ; yet there was no remedy for the evil, and we submitted. Poor fellows ! the sequel of their story is soon told. One of them, the younger, and the gentler of the two, perished by

the ship's foundering on its passage ; whilst the other fell a victim to the climate, within a few months after he landed.

“ I was now left alone, — with my mother, whose health, never very robust, had of late been visibly declining, — and my father, whose irritability increased upon him so fast every day, as to threaten serious consequences to himself or others. I had no easy task to play ; to nurse an invalid, to soothe a ruffled temper, and to manage, as I was latterly called upon to do, the pecuniary matters of the family ; but one of my cares was before long removed. My poor mother died about a year after the news of her children's fate reached her, of a consumption, as people in general asserted, but more truly of a broken heart. My father was dreadfully shocked. In spite of the harshness of manner which had of late obtained a mastery over him, he loved her with the sincerest affection ; and as she expired rather suddenly, he had anticipated no such issue of her complaint. He spoke not a word all that day, and I found him on the morrow, — alive, indeed, — but a paralytic and a driveller.

“ Now, then, at last I began to think that Heaven had utterly forsaken me ; and, but for the kindness of Margery, I really know not what consequences might have ensued. My poor father was in a condition, when to wish for the continuance of his life was to do him the grossest injury. In mind and body he was equally smitten ; and he demanded the greatest care and attention, for he could perform no single office for himself. In such a predicament, the services of Margery were invaluable. She nursed him as if he had been her nearest relative ; tended him like a baby, and bore cheerfully with the peevishness which even yet he displayed, as often as some fancied wrong was put upon him. But I will not dwell needlessly upon a picture so humiliating. Let it suffice to state, that for upwards of six months after my poor mother was committed to the dust he lingered in this species of intermediate state between death and life ; and that he fell asleep at last, without having recovered, even for an instant, the use of his faculties.

“ There was, however, one subject of contemplation which, amid all my distresses, still gave me some consolation, and in which Margery largely participated. It was this : though the estate of Llanrwst had been most industriously advertised, — purchasers being invited to come forward in almost every paper, — no offer, at least none worth attending to, had yet been made, and as time stole on, I began to flatter myself that the debt which brought it into the market might, even yet, be wiped off by means of the sequestrated rents. I cannot pretend to describe the effect which an idea of the bare possibility of such an occurrence had upon me. When I permitted my thoughts to turn in that direction, and they turned thither involuntarily as often as other and more immediate occupation was wanting, years passed away like moments ; and I pursued my calculations, with a coolness hardly to be accounted for, far beyond the period when even I, in all probability, should be a denizen of the world of spirits. True, I was ignorant both of the extent of embarrassments and the system of liquidation adopted by the attorneys : but these were matters which weighed light in the balance against the visions of a heated fancy ; and I would have struck to the earth any one who presumed to assert, that the restoration to its rightful owner of the one spot of earth in which all my affections centred was impossible. It soon appeared that even this source of comfort was unreal ; at all events, that it was less surely founded than my sanguine temperament supposed.

“ My father was yet alive. It was, I think, on the day but one preceding his demise, that a letter, addressed to him, was handed in by the clerk of Messrs. Clutchem and Holdit. I opened it, as I was in the habit of doing with all his letters, and my horror may be conceived when I read as follows : —

“ ‘ Chester, Sept. 17. 17—.

“ ‘ Dear sir,

“ ‘ We have the pleasure to inform you that a sale of the estate of Llanrwst has at last been effected, under what appears to us very favourable terms. The purchaser, Mark

Mangoe, Esq., a merchant of Bristol, trading to the island of Jamaica, has offered for the same the sum of 15,750*l.* — being 3750*l.* above the value of the mortgages upon it ; and we hope, in a few days, to send you the balance, after all deductions have been paid.

“ ‘ We are, sir, yours truly,

“ ‘ CLUTCHEM and HOLDIT.’

“ My brain absolutely swam round, as I perused this laconic and impertinent epistle. It fell from my grasp, and with it fell the whole fabric which fancy had so industriously reared. I could not breathe ; a film came over my eyes, and I was obliged to lean upon a table to hinder myself from falling. I was thus circumstanced when Margery accidentally entered.

“ ‘ My own darling boy,’ exclaimed she, rushing forward and supporting me in her arms, ‘ what evil has befallen now ? What is it that ails the light of my eyes, the child of my earliest love ?’

“ ‘ Nothing, Margery,’ replied I, ‘ nothing at all,— only our last hope is taken from us :— Llanrwst is sold !’

“ ‘ Sold !’ exclaimed she, staggering back, — ‘ Llanrwst sold ! And who has dared to sell that which was not his to sell ? And who ventured to buy that which no money may purchase ?’

“ ‘ I don’t know who is the purchaser ’ answered I ; ‘ but the sellers are the creditors’ trustees. Messrs. Clutchem and Holdit have put an end to all our day-dreams, as far as a return thither is affected by them.’

“ ‘ And will you submit to this,’ cried she, speaking with extraordinary energy, ‘ when there is not a man in the lands that will refuse to draw sword and wield gun at your bidding ? Will you allow a pair of paltry knaves to give away your inheritance, without striking a blow to save it ? O that Mr. Tudor were but alive, or Mr. David either !— they would not see the house of their fathers own the sway of a stranger and a Saxon !’

“ ‘ Margery,’ said I, rendered calm by her impetuosity, ‘ how often must you be told that right, not might, has the ascendancy now ? Two centuries ago, the course which

you suggest might have been adopted: now, there is one, and but one, resource left.'

" 'And what is that?' asked she eagerly.

" 'To purchase it back,' answered I. 'Yes, Margery, even now, with a prospect so appalling before me, I will not despair of being able to restore Llanrwst to its ancient owners. I will go over, without a moment's delay, to these attorneys — the purchase is not yet completed — and prevail upon them, by any means, to have a clause inserted in the deed of conveyance reserving for me — me, myself, and none other — the right of buying the lands back again, at the same price which is offered for them.'

" 'Now, blessings be on thee, sweet child!' replied Margery in rapture. 'Thou art wiser than all thy kindred; and, with this object in view, what will we not suffer of privation and starving, should it be for twenty years to come! Go, go, — and may He who cares for the widow and the orphan prosper thee!'

" 'I kept my word. I went directly to the lawyers, and, without a syllable of circumlocution, stated the object of my visit. The men of tape and parchments stared at me as if I had been insane.

" 'And what prospect have you, Mr. Davies,' said Clutchem, 'of ever being able to repurchase this property? The balance owing to you, after your bills are settled, will be but a trifle; and how do you expect, without any business or visible means of subsistence, to save fifteen thousand pounds?'

" 'Leave all that to me,' replied I; 'it may be that I shall not succeed in my efforts, but I am nevertheless desirous of being authorised to make them.'

" 'But there is another party to be consulted,' interposed Holdit; 'there is Mr. Mangoe, who is not very likely, I should suppose, to agree to any such stipulation. No man cares to run even an ideal risk of having his landed estate forced from him.'

" 'Offer him any bribe you choose, short of what is necessary to cover all expenses. Let him buy the lands for thirteen instead of fifteen thousand pounds, provided he consent to this stipulation; — perhaps the thing may be

more easily arranged in this way,—keep the odd two thousand pounds to yourselves, — only let a clause be inserted which shall entitle me to demand back the estate for the same sum which is given for it.’

“ ‘ Well, but if we were disposed to assist you here, young gentleman,’ continued the elder of the two partners, — ‘ and for my part I consider your feelings to be very natural, and very praiseworthy, — there must, you know, be some stipulation as to time. We could not propose to any purchaser that he should be kept in suspense for ever ; nay, not even for the whole of a young man’s life. Name your period — say ten years, or twenty, or ——’

“ ‘ Give me thirty,’ said I, interrupting him. ‘ I am now within a month of twenty-one years of age ; and if I cannot redeem it before I attain to fifty, I shall never redeem it at all.’

“ ‘ Well, this is an extraordinary proceeding,’ said Holdit, with difficulty suppressing a contemptuous laugh, ‘ as ever came under my observation ; but, as my friend Mr. Clutchem says, such feelings are very honourable and very natural in gentlemen of old families. — Let me see, this is the seventeenth of September. We had better bring things to terms. Let us say, Michaelmas-day. You desire to have a legal right to recover possession of Llanrwst, any time between this date and Michaelmas-day, 18— ; on which condition you are willing to dispose of the property for a less sum than has been offered. — But your father, what says he to it ?’

“ ‘ My father,’ replied I, ‘ is, as you know, totally incapable of acting ; and I ——’

“ ‘ There will be a hitch here, I am afraid,’ observed Clutchem. ‘ I doubt whether the stipulation will hold good.’

“ ‘ Oh, no fear of that,’ replied his partner ; ‘ it is a mere arrangement between Mark Mangoe, Esq. on the one part, and Llewelin Davies, Esq. on the other, that the said Mark Mangoe shall, on demand by the said Llewelin Davies, any time between this present Michaelmas ensuing, and Michaelmas 18—, sell and make over to the said Llewelin Davies, for and in consideration of a sum to be

stipulated, all and whole, the lands, tenements, rights of warren, chase, manorial rites, &c. &c. appertaining to the property of Llanrwst, lying and situated in the county of Denbigh and principality of North Wales.—There can be no hitch here, because it is an arrangement quite distinct from the sale of the estate.’

“ ‘ I believe you are right,’ replied Clutchem ; ‘ and you, Mr. Davies, may depend upon our using our best exertions to meet your wishes in this particular.’

“ I did not wish to prolong the conversation any farther ; but wishing the two honest men good morning, I hurried back to Margery.

“ The poor creature’s joy knew no bounds, when I informed her that my object was gained. ‘ And isn’t there the bits of goods up in the vale there ? the bedsteads, and bedding, and linen, and all ; sure they’ll fetch something any how ? And the tenantry, don’t you think but they’ll come forward too ?’

“ ‘ Yes, Margery,’ replied I ; ‘ but you are not aware of the amount. What think you of fifteen thousand pounds ? — how shall we raise that ?’

“ The simple being stood perfectly aghast. Fifteen thousand pounds was a sum, of the exact value of which she could form no conception, because it exceeded, to an incalculable extent, any which she had been in the habit of counting upon or seeing. She knew, indeed, that it was something enormous ; and perhaps the very vagueness of her knowledge, like the haze which intervenes between the eye and visible objects, magnified the idea which was excited in her mind ; but she was quite incapable of arriving at any rational conclusion as to its sterling value. She made an effort to answer cheerfully, but her manner responded not this time to her wishes.

“ ‘ God alone knows, Master Llewelin,’ said she, in a subdued tone. ‘ But if honest industry and rigid economy can raise it, it shall be forthcoming.’

“ She quitted the room as she spoke, and left me to my own, not very agreeable, reflections.”

CHAPTER VI.

THE MISER.

“ I HAVE said that the communication from the attorney and the conference which followed upon it, occurred on the day but one preceding my father’s demise. I had heard nothing farther of the result, when on entering his room in the morning, according to my invariable custom, I found that the old man had breathed his last. However low a parent may have fallen in the scale of rational beings, — and the poor slaving dotard, whose limbs refuse to do their office, and whose tongue is tied, has surely fallen low enough, — no man can receive the information that he has ceased to exist without a pang. I gazed upon the remains of my father with extreme bitterness of heart: his state during the last six months was forgotten, and I thought only of that happier time, when he used to dance me on his knee by the side of the winter’s fire, or romp with me and my brothers in a summer’s evening upon the lawn. I shed a torrent of tears over him, which were, all things considered, very unnecessarily called forth; and leaving Margery to direct other arrangements, I retired to consider what was to be done, and to give directions respecting his funeral.

“ My mother, at her own especial desire, was buried in the churchyard of the parish where we lived: of my brothers, one found a grave in the bosom of the deep, the other was doubtless interred like his more low-born comrades, without parade, near the spot where he died. I could not reconcile it to myself to separate the ashes of the head of the family from those of his forefathers; and though the state of my finances but ill authorised it, I determined to remove him to the ancestral vault in the church of Llanrwst. With this view, I ordered a coffin to be prepared, and a hearse with a single mourning-coach to be in readiness against a set day; and that due honour might

be done to his memory, I wrote to acquaint the clergyman, as well as the steward, of the time when it was my design to be with them.

“ The few days that intervened between the death of my father and the commencement of our journey towards his last abode passed away without the occurrence of any memorable incident ; and on the morning appointed, the hearse and mourning-coach were at the door. Into the former the shell was borne by the undertaker’s men ; and Margery and I, perhaps the only beings in this large city that really valued the deceased, took our places in the other. It had been the custom of the family, from time immemorial, to conduct its funerals by torchlight ; and I calculated the distance with sufficient accuracy to meet a contingency which I had no desire to avoid. We accordingly reached the gate of the avenue about ten o’clock on the night of the twenty-sixth of September ; and the news being spread that such an event was about to happen, there was no lack of mourners or torch-bearers to meet us. By the gloomy and waving light of their flambeaux, we slowly proceeded up the vale, till the procession halting at the main entrance, the coffin was lifted down, that the inanimate clay might rest for an hour or two in the hall of its fathers, whilst Margery and I, likewise alighting, moved into the drawing-room.

“ If you have known what it is to revisit the place of your birth, under circumstances at all similar to those which at that moment surrounded me, then may you form a conception of the nature of the thoughts that crowded into my mind. If such has not been the case, it were a mere waste of words did I so much as attempt to convey an idea of them. The room in which I had spent so many happy days, which I quitted, as it were but yesterday, in all the order of civilised life, was now literally empty. Not a chair, not a table, not a vestige of the articles which once filled it, was left ; and the very echo of my own footsteps came back hollow upon my ear, as I walked from one end to the other. It was lighted up, no doubt ; for three or four rushlights were fixed in stands upon the chimney-piece, and a few sconces, nailed against

the wall for the purpose, sustained each of them a farthing candle : but the light was only strong enough to mark more sensibly the absolute desolation that reigned around. The same was the case in the hall. A bench carried in for the purpose supported the bier, at the head and foot of which stood men holding blazing torches in their hands ; but except by the presence of these, the void of that capacious vestibule was totally uninterrupted. I could not for a moment doubt that the spirit of rapacity which so thoroughly emptied these apartments of their contents had spared none besides, and the event proved that my surmises were not founded upon mistaken grounds.

“ Whilst I indulged in these gloomy reflections, with a perseverance no more than natural under existing circumstances, an increasing number of voices from without, and a heavy trampling of feet within, gave indication that the hour of the funeral was at hand. I moved to the window ; the night was clear and serene, wanting, indeed, in the majesty of moonlight, but rich with the more chastened and delicate glitter of a thousand stars. The air had forgotten to stir, for neither leaf nor grass-blade was in motion : not a gossamer cloud showed itself to prognosticate a change, from one end of the horizon to the other ; and but that groups of mourners, the ancient cultivators of the soil, broke the silence by an occasional interchange of sentences, the rushing of the river alone would have reminded me, that nature herself was not asleep. I cannot express to you the soothing effect which this exquisite night-scene produced. It recalled my thoughts at once from subjects harrowing because gloomy, to others melancholy perhaps, but not devoid of a hallow which sanctified the wound inflicted ; and I went forth to take my part in the procession, with the spirit of a man who mourns, but, as Scripture expresses it, ‘ not without hope.’

“ In describing the situation of Llanrwst, I forgot to mention, that at the gorge of the vale, and about a stone’s throw removed from the bed of the river, stands the parish church, a plain but not inelegant edifice, which is stated to have been erected by an ancestor of mine, not long after the introduction of Christianity into North Wales. Its

situation is very striking ; for the stranger commands from the churchyard a view of the whole compass of the valley, sounded on every side by mountains ; and the river, falling over a ledge of broken rocks hard by, amuses his ear as he stands with a ceaseless roar of waters. It was thither that, according to immemorial custom, the chief of the tenantry now prepared to convey all that was mortal of their late landlord ; and the order of the procession was marshalled in strict conformity to what had taken place when his immediate predecessor returned into dust.

“ When I stepped out into the hall, I found that the appointed hour was come, and that an old man, who had been steward under both my father and grandfather, was giving his final instructions to the company. By his command the bier was elevated upon the shoulders of six stout yeomen, four men in black, with blazing torches, marching in front ; whilst I, as chief mourner, walked by myself immediately in rear of the body, and about forty others came two and two behind me. Each successive pair likewise carried torches, as did two persons on each side of the coffin ; and at a given signal the whole moved forward slowly, and in order.

“ Had I been less affected than I was, by the realities amidst which I felt myself to be thrown, the scene would have doubtless appeared more picturesque, if not more interesting, than it did. As the case stood, I could not avoid looking up, from time to time, as the flashes of light fell strongly upon the boughs, and exhibited every leaf and stem, as it hung over us, in a pale and unearthly livery. The measured tread of footsteps, likewise, with the distant sound of waters, came with peculiar effect upon the ear, and gave a striking air of solemnity to a ceremony which scarcely stands in need of so many adventitious accompaniments to render it impressive. As we advanced, the roar of the river, heard at first but faintly, grew louder and louder. Its clear silver current, too, reflected back the flame of our torches, when, arriving at the churchyard-gate, the clergyman met us, and in a voice scarcely audible amid the din of the cataract pronounced that sublime declaration, — ‘ I am the resurrection and the life.’ And

now the bell, whose tolling had been distinctly heard over other sounds, ceased, and the head of the procession gaining the western door, the interior of the church became suddenly illuminated. The light streamed from column to column, and glanced from aisle to aisle, as, one after another, the torch-bearers entered, till the whole became so brilliant, that the eye was conscious of a painful sensation when contemplating it. Last of all, the bier was placed upon tressels in the body of the church: the mourners, leaving those who carried flambeaux to stand in a double row along the aisle, took their places in pews appointed for them; and the vicar, mounting the desk, read the striking passages of Scripture which the Rubric has appointed to be used on such occasions.

“ At the western extremity of the building, and almost in a line with the altar, is situated the vault of the Davieses, the exact extent of which is marked by an iron railing that surrounds a gorgeous tomb. The tomb in question consists of an entablature, or platform, of grey slate-stone, upon which are laid, at length, the figures of two persons, a warrior and a lady, both of them of full size, and resting on their backs. The statues are of marble; but time has wreaked its wrath upon them so effectually, that the features are cruelly defaced, and even tradition hardly survives to tell of whom they are the effigies. Above them, however, hung incontestable proofs, that the blood of the Davieses flowed in the veins to whose memory the sculptor wrought them, in the form of one or two rusty head-pieces, ornamented with the family crest, and a tattered banner, in which it was still possible to trace, that the device borne upon our shield was emblazoned. Towards this point the body was moved, as soon as the clergyman, after finishing the lesson, had taken his station; and in five minutes my father was laid beside twenty mouldering coffins, there to sleep soundly till the last trump shall awaken all the inmates of the charnel-house together.

“ The ceremony was now over; and the excitement consequent upon it beginning to subside, my thoughts were not unnaturally directed to a consideration of the steps

which it behoved me next to pursue. I would have quitted the Vale of Clwyd on the instant, had not the condition of the horses demanded a few hours' rest; but as this was the case, a moment's consideration convinced me that, however sorely against my will, I must remain where I was till the morrow. I need scarcely add, that there were not wanting numerous and kind offers of accommodation both by the vicar of the parish and the tenants, each of whom seemed more anxious than the rest to secure the honour of entertaining me; yet, I know not whence it arose, I could not prevail upon myself to pass the night any where except in Margery's hovel. It was the last roof that afforded me shelter ere I turned my back upon Llanrwst; and I resolved that no other on the lands should receive me till I came again to claim them as my own. Thither, therefore, my nurse and I withdrew; whilst the rest of the company, according to established usage, adjourned to the little ale-house, and drank deep, at my expense, to the memory of the deceased.

“ I suppose the kind-hearted Margery had anticipated some such arrangement, and given necessary directions to the friend whom she had put in charge of her cottage, for, on entering, I was surprised and gratified to find that a bright turf fire was burning, and that a table, furnished in a style worthy of the occasion, occupied the centre of her little kitchen. Every thing, moreover, appeared to be in the same order which prevailed when, upwards of four years ago, my mother and I took refuge here; and of dampness, or other evidence of neglect, not a vestige could be discovered. • Margery could not suppress her satisfaction at the care which had been taken of her little property. ‘ This is all on your account, Master Llewelin,’ said she. ‘ It is only because they honour the oak, that they regard the mistletoe which hangs about it; and were not honest Rowland a true lover of his master's house, he would not have wasted a thought upon the good of a poor creature like me. Eat and drink, honey dear, and refresh yourself; and then try to get a little sleep in the bed which you once before honoured by occupying.’

“ I could not comply with the former of these invit-

ations, for the business of the past day deprived me of all appetite ; but I cheerfully obeyed the latter. I did lie down, and, in spite of a thousand distressing thoughts of the past, and gloomy anticipations of the future, I gradually dropped into a state of unconsciousness, and slept soundly.

“ It was late when I rose next morning ; and on walking abroad, I found that the exquisite serenity of the preceding night had passed away. The heavens were covered with dark clouds ; a few large drops of rain were falling, and the state of the fields, plashy and moist, proved that there had been a heavy shower. It was well that the case was so. I experienced no desire to behold the scenes of my boyhood otherwise than in shade, feeling, as I did, that I looked upon them, perhaps, for the last time ; and it was a sort of relief to me that the sun could not shine upon the picture of desolation and neglect which these scenes presented. For four long years no labour had been expended upon the lawn, the walks, the grounds, or the garden ; and the whole were therefore in a state of the most melancholy disorder. Long rank grass and noisome weeds overspread the avenue ; the fruit-trees, torn down from their fastenings, trailed upon the ground ; the lawn was rough, knotty, and uneven, and the very flowers had either disappeared or run to waste. In like manner, the house itself exhibited a deplorable example of the consequences attendant upon the absence of those who would have kept it in repair. Large masses of plaster had fallen, and lay mixed with broken slates, and fragments of broken glass under the eaves ; the front door, thrown wide open, offered free admission to every stray passenger, whilst a number of broken windows, and the absence of all smoke from the chimneys, denoted that his welcome would be a cold one. My heart sickened as I gazed upon what appeared to me no unfit emblem of the ruin of my name ; and I turned away with the firm determination of never again revisiting the spot, till I could behold it under more auspicious circumstances.

“ As soon as the expenses of the funeral were settled and other little matters attended to, the horses were ordered, and Margery and I began our journey towards

Chester. We reached it in good time, and I lost not a moment in applying myself to the task of arranging, as I best could, my affairs. In spite of the most scrupulous attention to economy, I found that some debts had been contracted, and that to discharge them it would be necessary to dispose of every article of our wretched stock of furniture. This would, of course, compel me to give up the house, but for that step I was prepared; and I was ready to take it at once, but that some delay was unavoidable, in consequence of the necessity under which I lay of giving my landlord warning. But the question which I found it most difficult to answer was, whither should I betake myself, and by what means earn a subsistence for myself and my companion? I was yet too young to receive ordination,—that source of employment was therefore beyond my reach; and what to do in the interval I knew not. Nor was this all: though the creditors had agreed to allow my father a miserable subsistence out of the rents, was it probable that they would continue that allowance to me; and if they did not, how should I be able to live? These were exceedingly painful anticipations: happily, before the moment came which would have converted them into realities, the wheel of fortune turned, and other prospects opened upon me.

“About ten days had elapsed since the date of my father’s funeral, when I received a note from Messrs. Clutchem and Holdit, begging the favour of a call at their office. I obeyed the summons immediately, and was received with even more of civility than had been shown to me on a previous occasion. Being asked into a little private parlour, which, though it communicated with the room where the clerks plied their quills, was still secure against all intruders, unless summoned by sound of bell, I found the two partners together, and was requested, with many obsequious bows, to be seated. I took a chair, and the conference began.

“‘We have not been inattentive to your wishes, Mr. Davies,’ said the senior of the two; ‘but we find it a hard matter to put things in a proper train. Mr. Mangoe is a shrewd, calculating fellow, and has given us more trouble

than we could have expected in a business so simple ; but these merchants are so accustomed to speculate, and find things turn up so often contrary to all rational expectations, that they cannot be brought to see the most ordinary matters in the same light with other people. We have been sadly put to it to convince him that he may agree to your terms, yet do it safely.'

“ ‘ Well, but *have* you persuaded him ? ’ asked I, willing to make our conference as brief as possible.

“ ‘ Why — yes ; that is, I hope so, ’ replied Holdit. ‘ We have a letter from him by yesterday’s post, in which he expresses himself disposed to treat, provided he can have the estate for fourteen thousand pounds, and you limit your privilege of redemption to twenty years.’

“ ‘ I have already told you my mind on that head, ’ replied I, ‘ and I cannot alter it. For a man not worth a shilling to accumulate fourteen thousand pounds, thirty years are surely not too many.’

“ ‘ What you say is perfectly just, ’ interposed Clutchem ; ‘ but you are slightly in error in one particular. The sum originally offered, and that for which the transfer of the fee-simple may be had, is fifteen thousand seven hundred and fifty pounds : when you come to redeem the property, you will be called on to pay that amount, not fourteen thousand.’

“ ‘ Then there is the greater need that the time for which I stipulate should not be curtailed, ’ answered I.

“ ‘ Very true, very true, ’ replied Holdit ; ‘ but I fear we shall not be able to bring the West-Indian to this. What if we split the difference, and put down the period of redemption at five-and-twenty years ? ’

“ ‘ I will not abate one year, one month, nor one day, ’ said I ; ‘ and, therefore, if the business cannot be settled as I originally suggested, the estate must go. Is there any other point to be discussed between us ? ’

“ ‘ Have you quite made up your mind to this ? ’ asked Clutchem.

“ ‘ Quite, ’ answered I, rising ; ‘ and it surprises me, that you should for an instant doubt it. I have spoken

very plainly ; and I never say one thing while I mean another.'

" ' Nay, nay, my good sir,' exclaimed Holdit, interposing between me and the door, ' don't be in quite so great a hurry. The thing may be done to your mind, after all. Mr. Mangoe has left with us discretionary powers to a certain extent ; and though we deem it right to do our best for a client, we will not absolutely stand in the way of the gratification of your wishes.'

" ' So,' said I, resuming my chair, ' my interests were to be wholly neglected, that Mr. Mangoe's might be attended to. But no matter. Speak to the point at once, and let me know when and how this barter is to be concluded.'

" ' Now, if you please,' replied Clutchem, producing a deed from his desk, duly drawn up and engrossed, ' I will now fill up one or two blanks, which were left till we should have had this conference with you ; and then, all that is needed to close the bargain will be your signature.'

" I kept my seat in silence, whilst the worthy practitioner of law proceeded to fill up the blanks in question. This was soon done ; upon which he put a pen in my hand, and requested me to subscribe my name at a corner, where he had marked it in pencil.

" ' And what may be the nature of the instrument which I am now about to sign ?'

" ' It is a deed of conveyance,' replied he, ' wherein stipulation is made according to your proposition.'

" ' And the sum which I am to receive amounts to ——

" ' Fourteen thousand two hundred and fifty pounds.'

" I signed the document without asking another question ; and Llanrwst passed from the house of Davies, to all appearance, for ever.

" I was about to quit the office, when the gentleman, who last addressed me, once more requested that I would wait a few minutes longer, that every thing might be done in a business-like manner, and our accounts closed at once. I obeyed ; upon which three or four sheets of paper, headed ' Llewellyn Davies, Esq., on account with Messrs. Clutchem

and Holdit,' were submitted for my perusal. 'What is all this?' asked I.

"Only a statement of debts and mortgages upon the lands, with our charges, as agents for the property, and solicitors in your own case.'

"I glanced hastily over it, looking not into the details — for it would have occupied half a day to examine these — but to the gross amount of separate charges. The encumbrances, much to my surprise, fell short, by nearly two thousand pounds, of what I had supposed: they amounted in all to barely ten thousand three hundred pounds. The charges for agency, on the other hand, came up to one thousand seven hundred; whilst the bill against myself individually, for drawing deeds, writing letters, postages, &c., was set down at exactly one thousand pounds.

"So,' said I, 'I have disposed of a property worth fifteen thousand pounds, that a debt of ten thousand, amply secured upon it, might be liquidated; and an attorney's bill of nearly three thousand pounds ——'

"Our charges are fair and reasonable,' replied Mr. Holdit; 'we defy any man to prove the contrary. We go by the strictest rules of the profession.'

"Very possibly,' replied I; 'but as our business is now ended, I presume I am at liberty to withdraw?'

"By all means, sir,' replied Clutchem. 'But what shall we do with the balance in your favour of one thousand two hundred and fifty pounds?'

"Give it to me now, if you have it,' answered I. There was no delay in complying with this request. The sum of one thousand two hundred and fifty pounds, in Bank of England notes, was handed to me; and putting these, with the accounts regularly receipted, in my pocket, I hurried home."

CHAPTER VII.

THE MISER.

“ I STATED some time ago that the only individual with whom we maintained an acquaintance during our residence in Chester was the clergyman of the parish ; and that, taking a lively interest in our fortunes, he volunteered to direct my studies whilst reading for the church. Of late, circumstances had prevented me from seeing so much of him as I was formerly in the habit of doing ; and our intercourse, when it took place, had become less confidential : but my affairs were no sooner adjusted than I determined to open my whole soul to him, and consult him as to the most feasible plan to be pursued in my progress through life. To one thing, indeed, I had fully made up my mind, which was, not to break in, however pressing my necessities, upon the little capital of which I was master, but so to dispose of it, as that, without the hazard of loss, it might surely, if gradually, accumulate. Yet even on that head I stood no less in need of an adviser than on the subject of my own future proceedings. I accordingly waited upon the vicar at his house, was received with the warmth of a good heart, and the candour of an ingenuous temper, and told my story from beginning to end with as much calmness as I could command. I summed up the whole by requesting that he would favour me with his counsel, or point out any honest calling into which I could enter with a prospect of success.

“ He did not conceal, that the announcement of my determination to devote the entire energies of my mind to one end greatly surprised him. He had never heard of a scheme more romantic, nor, he must be permitted to add, more extravagant ; and he could not but blame me for having sacrificed so large a sum for the attainment of an object not worth the trouble of seeking. ‘ What possible chance is there,’ continued he, ‘ that you, a young man,

totally unacquainted with business, without connection, without interest, without what deserves to be called a capital, can ever succeed in advancing your fortunes to the amount requisite for this repurchase? And were the contrary the case, what is there in the idea of possessing a few barren hills and heaths, that should tempt you to sacrifice every substantial enjoyment in life? Really, Mr. Davies, you must excuse me, if I pronounce the entire project to be that of an insane person.'

" 'In your eyes,' answered I, 'and in the eyes of people in general, the project may appear the offspring of insanity; but in mine, and those who feel like me, it is not so. What to others would be ruin is to us annihilation; for the whole world contains nothing worth living for beyond the range of the mountains that encircle Clwyd. Were it not for the hope of being able at some day — no matter how remote — to return thither, I would lie down and die where I am.'

" 'The good man was visibly affected by the energy of my manner, and from that moment entered with greater zeal into my views. A variety of plans were discussed between us, all of which, however, fell to the ground in consequence of some impediment or other, till at last a thought struck him, and he gave it utterance, though not without some hesitation.

" 'It is very clear,' said he, 'that trade will not answer, because you know nothing of it, and would, consequently, be a dupe to every knave who thought it worth while to cheat you. For none of the professions can you be fit for some years to come; and time, in your case, is no less precious than money. I can think of only one opening for you. What say you to undertaking the office of usher at a school? There is a friend of mine at Bow, in the vicinity of London, who keeps a large and long established academy: I believe he stands in need of a classical assistant at this moment; and I think there would be no difficulty in persuading him to receive you, on my recommendation.'

" I grasped at the proposal without a moment's hesitation. 'There are two points, however,' said I, 'on which I should desire to be informed, previous to undertaking so

long a journey. The first is, how shall I be able to dispose of my housekeeper? from whom no consideration on earth will ever tempt me to separate; and the second, can I calculate upon such a salary as will, at all events, leave me at liberty to dispose of my little fortune at interest?’

“The vicar smiled. ‘I will answer your last question first,’ said he, ‘because there is no difficulty in answering it. In such academies as that to which I design to introduce you, the ushers usually board with the head-master, and, therefore, unless it be for clothes, your expenses there will be very trifling. The salary will probably amount to forty or fifty pounds a year.’

“‘Oh, then I am satisfied,’ answered I; ‘one half of that sum will procure for Margery all, and more than all, that she can desire; and my own stock of apparel, though not extravagant, is sufficiently ample to be kept up by a less expenditure than the other.’

“‘But, my good friend,’ replied he, ‘you are not serious in your design of carrying this honest Welshwoman wherever you go?’

“‘I never was more serious in my life,’ replied I; ‘she acted the part of a mother to me in infancy—she has been more than a mother to me since, and death alone shall divide us the one from the other.’

“‘Well, well,’ said he, ‘this too, I suppose, is one of those sentiments which the mountain air engenders; but, whatever it may be, it is very amiable, and very creditable. Margery is a good servant: to that I can bear decided testimony; and possibly we may find an opening for her, too, in the same family of which you are about to become a member. And now for the disposal of the twelve hundred pounds.’

“I was too happy in the prospects which he had just opened out to me to be very willing, or, indeed, very able, to discuss any point besides. I, accordingly, entreated him to take charge of the money, and to apply it in any way which he should judge fitting; and I never found cause to lament that he acceded to the proposition.

“I will not prolong my narrative by giving any detail either of the effect produced upon Margery, when our pro-

bable removal to London was announced to her, or of the preparations which I deemed it prudent to make, in anticipation of a sudden call. Let it suffice to state, that whilst the simple creature rejoiced at the occurrence of what was represented to be a fortunate event, she sought not to disguise her alarm at the prospect of undertaking so long a journey, by which, as she expressed it, 'we should be cut off from even a sight of the blessed hills where all our hopes centred.' Nevertheless, the assurance that no contingency should ever bring about a separation between her and myself seemed, at last, to reconcile her to the step, and she became, before long, quite as fidgety about the issue of the negotiation as I. But our anxiety was not doomed to be of long continuance. The course of post brought an answer to my friend's application, in every respect such as he had anticipated; and I was engaged as an usher in the Classical and Commercial Academy of the Rev. Stephen Stripe, upon terms even more advantageous than I had been led to expect. As Margery, likewise, was hired in the capacity of under laundry-maid, nothing now remained but to put our little affairs in order, and set out for the metropolis at as early a day as possible.

"It required neither much time nor much attention to adjust the former of these matters. A small sum of money reconciled my landlord to the premature evacuation of his house; and the worthy vicar cheerfully undertook the task of disposing, by auction, of such effects as I found it impracticable at once to turn into cash; so that by the evening of the second day we saw ourselves at liberty to move whithersoever we would; and at an early hour in the morning of the third we mounted the stage, and bade adieu to Chester.

"The journey was literally unproductive of a single incident of sufficient moment to leave a trace in the memory: it was tedious and irksome, as, in those days, journeys by a public conveyance always were; but its tedium was neither diversified by the appearance of danger, enlivened by the presence of original companions, nor rendered memorable by any occurrence out of the ordinary range of stage-coach adventures. The case was somewhat

different as we approached the capital. That labyrinth of brick and mortar, pouring out continually, and receiving continually back in succession, its thousands of men, horses, and carriages, was beheld with feelings of the most indescribable and complicated nature, both by my companion and myself: indeed, from the moment that we arrived fairly within its vortex, I, at least, may be said to have journeyed in a state of absolute stupor.

“ It was late in the evening ere our vehicle, after stopping at twenty different points to set down passengers and deliver parcels, made a final halt in the yard of the Saracen’s Head, Whitechapel. We alighted, as soon as it was announced to us that the stage went no farther; and being at once ignorant of the town, and indifferent as to the elegance or inelegance of a temporary quarter, I ordered that beds should be prepared. I will not say one word either about them or the general arrangements of the hotel. Doubtless, you cannot be ignorant of the chilling effect which is produced upon the mind of an ordinary stranger, who happens to establish himself, on his first arrival in London, at a coach-inn; and you may perhaps imagine how grievously it was magnified in the case of one who felt himself to be a friendless adventurer. An absolute loathing came over me, as I contemplated the filthy chamber into which I was ushered: I sickened as I rolled down the bed clothes and beheld the sort of dormitory into which I might have inadvertently cast myself; and, wearied as I was with a week of incessant travel, I neither undressed nor slept soundly that night.

“ Long before the first glimmering of dawn broke through my chamber window, every disposition to doze was dispelled by the bustle and noise attendant upon the successive departure and arrival of at least a dozen public coaches. I rose just as a clock in the office below struck six; and having made but an indifferent toilette in the dark, a measure to which the impossibility of obtaining any attention from waiters or chambermaids reduced me, I descended to the coffee room. If I had been disgusted by the objects which presented themselves to my different senses on the preceding night, those which met them now

were still more loathsome. A lamp, which was suspended from the roof, and had almost exhausted its oil, cast a feeble light through the room, exhibiting half-a-dozen tables, overspread with glasses, fragments of tobacco-pipes, punch-bowls, some of them scarce empty, and other remnants of last night's debauch; whilst a combination of every conceivable stench, rendered doubly powerful from confinement, produced an effect upon the sense of smell not to be described. I retreated from the disgusting scene more abruptly than I had approached it; and, during the next three hours, found what amusement I could in sauntering about the yard, and striving earnestly, but in vain, to inhale even one mouthful of pure air.

“ If I have appeared to dwell upon the circumstances attending my first arrival in London with a degree of minuteness to which the importance does not entitle them, my excuse must be, that they have left a trace in my memory not less enduring than that which the branding-iron leaves on the back of the criminal; and that, even now, I cannot look back on the few miserable hours which I spent in the Saracen's Head without a shudder. Without entertaining any serious belief in the doctrine of omens, I could not, situated as I was, dismiss the idea, that the whole of my future career would take its character from the commencement; and the agony occasioned by the conviction, not the lapse of more than thirty years has taught me to forget. Heaven knows that the dark presage was not admitted without reason. But it matters not. The grand object of my life is attained; and though the efforts necessary to its attainment have been unintermitting, and the privations and sufferings which went along with them such as can be known only to God and myself, the result has taught me neither to lament the one, nor repine at the other.

“ Having partaken of a decoction of sloe leaves, rendered less harsh by the admixture of a drop or two of milk and water, which, with a few thin slices of bread and butter, was served up as breakfast, I prevailed upon Margery, not without some difficulty, to remain where she was, whilst I, putting my credentials in my pocket, sallied

forth in quest of our future home. By dint of repeated enquiries, I at last found myself in front of a large clumsy red-brick house, which stood a little to the left of the high road, from which it was separated by a court-yard and a high wall. There was no possibility of mistaking the uses to which it was devoted. The long, low wings which flanked the main body of the edifice, with the little belfrey raising itself above the central roof, told a tale of ceaseless labour, miserable fare, and merciless regularity; whilst a huge brass-plate, affixed to one of the folding gates, assured the passer-by that 'the Rev. Dr. Stripe' resided there; and that he conducted the affairs of 'Gander Hill Classical and Commercial Seminary.'

"I rang the bell, and after a pause of at least five minutes' duration, a wicket, or small door, was opened by a lad in a sort of undress livery, which, slovenly as it was, because manifestly made for a person twice his size, he appeared to have just huddled on for the purpose. On explaining my business, I was immediately invited to enter; and ascending two or three steps to a flagged pathway, which divided into two equal parts an oblong grass-plot, I passed towards the house. The next minute I was ushered into what seemed to be a dining-parlour, where I was permitted, for perhaps ten minutes more, to enjoy the company of my own thoughts.

"I need scarcely say, that the interval thus spent was very far from being an agreeable one. Up to the present moment, I had, less from ignorance than design, abstained from considering the office which I was about to assume in any other light except as something which held out to me the prospect of a competency. It is true, that when I did permit my thoughts to revert to my own schoolboy days, the insults and degradations to which the unhappy ushers were liable rose painfully into view; but that was a picture which, as I could not look upon it without horror, I never voluntarily permitted to push itself into notice. Now that I was brought so immediately into contact with the reality, the case was widely different. I felt already humbled and debased. I saw before me only a prospect of grievances less easy to bear with patience, than others,

in reality, perhaps, more serious; and I shrank with an unaccountable nervousness from the very interview which I had travelled some hundred miles to obtain. Such was the state of my thoughts when the door opened, and Dr. Stripe made his appearance.

“ Every person, situated as I then was, is a physiognomist. Aware that much, at least, of my future happiness would depend upon the disposition of my superior, I examined every line in his countenance with a scrutinising stare; and my satisfaction was not light, when I read palpable indications of a kind heart and an amiable temper. There was much of intelligence, likewise, in the keen blue eye, with a strong vein of humour about the mouth; and if there was little elegance in the manner with which he saluted me, there was at all events a great deal of candour and cordiality. Our first interview accordingly passed off to the mutual satisfaction of both parties. It was suggested that I should remove immediately to my future home, bringing Margery along with me; and as a mark of respect to the friend at whose recommendation the connection had been formed, I was invited to dine that day as a guest with the family.

“ I am not going to weary you with a history of the many paltry annoyances to which for a period of a full year I submitted. In the doctor himself, it is true, I found throughout an indulgent and considerate superior; and from the boys I met, for a time, with no molestation beyond what immemorial custom has authorised in like cases. My fellow-assistants, too, though the reverse of gentlemanly, were, in this respect, as civil as their nature would permit them to be; whilst among the parlour-boarders there were one or two whose amiable tempers and refined feelings went far to reconcile me to the somewhat humiliating task of tending them. But the satisfaction arising from these various sources was solely dashed by the intervention of annoyances in other quarters; and these rose at length to such a height that they could not be borne.

“ Dr. Stripe was a widower; and though the father of six daughters, the youngest of whom could count full

fifteen summers, he intrusted the management of his domestic matters to a woman, of the precise nature of whose claims upon him it might have been difficult to determine. Mrs. Mathews sat at the head of the table, taking care to place beside herself, on all occasions, a daughter of her own, whom the Misses Stripe were taught to treat with the utmost deference. Both mother and daughter were disgustingly vulgar; but there was this difference between them, that the former made no effort to conceal her vulgarity, whilst the latter would have appeared, had the thing been practicable, exceedingly refined. I pitied the poor girls from my heart, subjected as they continually were to the overbearing violence of the one, and the supercilious impertinence of the other; and I was too little master of the art of dissimulation to conceal my sentiments. The consequence was, that both Mrs. and Miss Mathews became my bitter enemies; and possessing the inclination as well as the power to render my situation irksome, they neither checked the one nor abstained from using the other.

“When I first arrived at Gander Hall, a chamber on the second floor was allotted to me, not very commodious certainly, but sufficiently so to meet my wishes. I had been an inhabitant of the seminary about three months, when Mrs. Mathews discovered that the room would be wanted for a friend of hers, who was in the habit, from time to time, of passing a few days with her, and my trunks were very unceremoniously removed to a garret. I made no remonstrance against this, because I saw that the doctor possessed little will of his own; and I suppressed, as far as might be, every indication that the arrangement was not to my taste. By acting thus, I doubtless avoided an altercation, which must have ended in my immediate dismissal from the school, but I only increased the hostility of Mrs. Mathews, and drove her to devise new methods of exercising it. Every opportunity was in consequence taken to wound my feelings and trench upon my self-respect. Allusions were continually made before me to genteel beggars, who, without a penny to bless themselves withal, assumed the airs of people of con-

sequence. At table, I was uniformly placed at the most remote corner from what was understood to be the seat of dignity; and as often as strangers dined with us, the ingenuity of Mrs. Mathews and her daughter was tasked to insult me. Nor did the matter end here. My fellow-assistants, taking their tone from the lady of the house, affected to look upon me as a troublesome interloper, and the very boys were encouraged to play tricks at my expense. Nevertheless, I bore all for a full twelvemonth, if not with patience, at least without a murmur; and had the malice of these harpies been satisfied to vent itself upon me, I should have probably endured it still longer. It appeared in the end, however, that the animosity entertained for me was extended to poor Margery also. A thousand contumelies and hardships were laid upon her, which she, actuated by the same motive with myself, abstained from noticing; nor should I have discovered the truth at all, but for an accident.

“ It happened that I was taken ill one night, and quitting my garret in the dark, I stumbled over something which lay outside the door. The cry as of one suddenly roused from sleep informed me, that my foot had kicked against a human being; and my astonishment may be conceived, when, on examination, I found that that human being was Margery. I demanded an explanation of the circumstances which brought her here. At first, the considerate creature would have concealed them; but on pressing the matter, I learned, that during the last month she had rested her over-wrought limbs on no softer bed. The servants, instigated by Mrs. Mathews, not only refused to hold any communication with her, but drove her, by repeated acts of personal violence, from their apartment; and the simple soul, as if there were some virtue in being near me, had ever since slept where I found her. My indignation knew no bounds. I determined at all hazards to inform Dr. Stripe how affairs stood, and either to obtain redress, especially for Margery, or resign my situation.

“ I saw the doctor early on the following morning, and without any circumlocution told my tale. He was undis-

guisedly shocked at what he heard ; but when I ventured to accuse Mrs. Mathews of being in fault, the worthy man's anger took a somewhat different direction. ' The thing was utterly impossible. Mrs. Mathews had superintended the management of his family for more than thirteen years, and he had received the most convincing proof that she was both a trustworthy and a humane person. He could listen to no complaints brought against one in whom he reposed unbounded confidence, and he requested that I would on no account repeat them. But the ill-treatment of one of his servants, no matter by whom offered, should certainly be enquired into ; and in the mean while I had better resume the order of my duties.'

" I was not to be thus diverted from my purpose, but again renewed my assertion, that Mrs. Mathews, and no other person, was to blame. ' Nay more, sir,' continued I, ' he must be morally blind that does not see, and worse than morally blind that does not resent, the treatment which your own daughters receive at the hands of that woman.'

" I had proceeded thus far, when the door of the room burst open, and Mrs. Mathews herself, her eyes flashing fire, burst in.

" ' So, sir,' said she, placing her hands on her sides, shaking her head violently, and advancing towards me, — ' so, sir, you presume to lodge complaints against me, — you dare to accuse me of behaving ill to Dr. Stripe's daughters, — you, a poor, proud, penniless, beggarly Welshman ! Well, it is all very well, sir,' continued she, turning to the doctor, ' very well indeed ; but either this puppy with his hag of a nurse, or whatever else she may be, quits this house, or I don't stay another hour in it.'

" The doctor was sadly at a loss how to act. I believe that he loved his children tenderly : I know, indeed, that he was too good hearted not to love them ; and it was evident that he experienced a strong reluctance to exhibit before me, how perfectly destitute of authority he was in his own house : but his habitual deference for Mrs. Mathews was too powerful to be overcome by any other consideration. He would have addressed her in the tone

of a superior if he could, but the effort, though made, led to nothing, and his words, instead of controlling her passion, only augmented by attempting to soothe it.

“ ‘ Don’t tell me of his meaning nothing,’ continued the virago. ‘ Haven’t I the use of my ears? and didn’t I hear him lay to my charge, that I stirred up people to maltreat the Welshwoman, and that I behaved ill to the Miss Stripes? And am I to continue under the same roof with a make-mischief? If you think, sir, that I treat your daughters, sir, otherwise than is becoming in one whom you have placed at the head of your family, sir, then say so; and I will relieve you, sir, of my presence at once, sir; but if not ——’

“ ‘ Nay, nay, Mrs. Mathews,’ interposed the doctor, submissively, ‘ you know very well that I never accused you of any such thing, and that I am not given to receive complaints of those whose worth I know. Let there be an end of this at once: I am sure Mr. Davies regrets that inadvertency, or excited feelings, hurried him into any such language as that which you justly deprecate; and he is too manly, as well as too gentlemanly, not to say so.’

“ ‘ Am I expected to apologise to a person,’ said I, ‘ who has recourse to the contemptible practice of eavesdropping?’

“ ‘ Eavesdropping, sirrah!’ cried Mrs. Mathews, furious with rage; ‘ I scorn your words. I am no eavesdropper, not I; but if you will speak falsehoods in so loud a tone, they must be overheard. I tell you what, Doctor Stripe, my mind is made up, — he or I must find another home within the hour.’

“ The doctor looked beseechingly towards me, and I could not mistake his meaning.

“ ‘ Make yourself perfectly easy on that head, madam,’ said I. ‘ I never intended, unless matters had been differently arranged from what they are, to continue an inmate of this family, after making my present statement. — But let me remind you, sir, of one plain fact. You do your family infinite wrong, by condemning them to such an example as is now before them. Of what nature the tie may be which binds you and this woman together, I

know not; but with a daughter old enough, and sufficiently experienced, to sit at the head of your table, it must be singularly adhesive, since it compels you to fill her place with a stranger. Far be it from me, however, to dictate on such a subject: I have spoken my mind, and now I can only wish you farewell.'

"I passed from the doctor's study, where the preceding conversation took place, to my own garret; and began immediately to pack up my clothes. I was thus employed when Margery rushed in.

"'And is it on my account, honey dear,' said she 'that you are going to leave a situation where, your own lips told me, you might be able in time to do much towards the attainment of our wishes? Sure, now, you wouldn't mind what I told at a moment when I was taken by surprise, and quarrel with the good doctor because of me?'

"'Even on your account, Margery,' said I. 'No consideration whatever should tempt me to remain another day under this roof. But do not distress yourself. I have received wrongs and insults enough in my own person, to justify our removal, independently of the treatment which they afforded you.'

"'If that be the case,' replied Margery, 'let us go instantly. Whilst I thought that I only suffered, Heaven forbid that I should complain! because, what was I born for but to suffer in the cause of my master's house, and to bear a thousand things more than I have borne for my own darling child? But if they have put wrong or insult upon you, then indeed there is cause enough why we should leave them.'

"Margery ran instantly to put her own wardrobe in order; and she had scarcely disappeared, when, to my extreme surprise, Dr. Stripe himself entered.

"'I am very sorry, Mr. Davies,' said he, 'at what has happened. I have entertained for you, from the first, a sincere regard, and I cannot bear the idea of thus dismissing a young gentleman, who came recommended to me by one of the oldest and best friends that I have in the world; but you see how I am circumstanced. That

woman,' continued he, looking cautiously round and lowering his voice, 'is essential to me,—I cannot do without her. I admit the coarseness of her manner; I am not insensible to the indelicacy of her behaviour towards my children; and I see many more faults in her. But she knows my ways; she is thoroughly honest; and I have been so long accustomed to depend upon her, that I could not carry on the establishment without her. You and I, therefore, must part. But let us not part in anger. Here is the amount of what is due to you; and rest assured, that if ever you stand in need of my advice or assistance you shall have it.'

"I thanked him, not without emotion; for I pitied the good man, and I believed his professions of friendship to be sincere.

"'And whither do you mean to go?' asked he; 'and to what occupation do you intend to turn?'

"'These are questions,' replied I, 'to neither of which I can reply. My first design is to hire a cheap lodging somewhere, and my next, to trust to Providence.'

"'Are you disposed to take a situation in some other school?' continued he.

"I answered decidedly in the negative: in truth, my blood boiled at the bare possibility of again subjecting myself to such a degradation.

"'But you must do something,' continued the worthy man. 'Your design of taking orders is not unknown to me, and should nothing better offer, I hold a living in Kent, to the curacy of which I will gladly appoint you. But you are not yet of age to be ordained, and you cannot exist for a year upon that pittance.'

"'I will do my best,' answered I; 'besides, I have met at your table more than one individual who has given me an insight into life, such as I never had before. I will see whether my own talents may not avail something, through the medium of the press.'

"'Well,' said the doctor, 'if that be your bent, I may be able to——'

"Mrs. Mathews's voice was now heard at the bottom of the stairs, and the doctor, starting as if a thunderbolt had

burst near him, squeezed my hand, and abruptly quitted me. My preparations, however, were by this time complete. I took my trunk in my hand, descended the stairs, and meeting Margery equally loaded in the court-yard, we passed on unnoticed, at all events unheeded, into the Hackney Road."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MISER.

"As chance would have it, a stage happened to be passing just as the gate of Gander Hall closed after us, and the coachman pulling up, we took our places in it immediately. We proceeded onwards towards the capital at a rapid rate; but rapidity of motion failed in this instance to produce its customary effect, for seldom has traveller had less cause to rejoice at it. I was going I knew not whither; I was ignorant even of a fitting place of shelter for the night; and as to any scheme for to-morrow and the day after, none such had been devised or considered. It was therefore with regret, rather than satisfaction, that I beheld street after street left behind; and when at last the arrival of the vehicle at its place of destination compelled me to abandon it, I felt somewhat like a man who, destitute of a guide, is overtaken by darkness on a moor, across which there lies no beaten track.

"I hired a lodging for Margery and myself in one of the most obscure of the obscure streets which communicate between the Strand and the river. It was not, as you may believe, either very elegant or very expensive, yet were the apartments far from being incommodious; and after the ceaseless bustle of a school, the very quiet that surrounded me was welcomed as no trivial blessing. Here, during several months, I lived without holding communi-

cation with a single individual except my nurse. I did not so much as pass the threshold during the whole of that time ; but devoting every energy of mind and body to the completion of a poem, I received by degrees an impression, that the visions which had hitherto passed obscurely and indistinctly through my mind might be realised.

“ In the mean while the slender stock of money with which I had embarked upon my new calling began, in spite of the most rigid economy, to diminish. I possessed, when I quitted Dr. Stripe’s, something less than fifty pounds ; more than half that sum was expended ; yet the work, upon the success of which I calculated for a fresh supply, was by no means in a state of forwardness. My constitution, likewise, accustomed to the free air of the country, began to suffer from long confinement in a city ; and my spirits, sinking with the decay of the bodily machine, refused to support me longer in my mental toil. Under these circumstances, I was at last persuaded by Margery, who watched over me with the tenderness of a mother, to lay aside the pen, which my own conviction assured me was now wielded to little purpose ; and to seek in exercise a recovery of the tone, of which so great a change of habits had deprived me.

“ I walked out, and taking the direction of the Park, found myself before long by the margin of the Serpentine, and gazing with delighted eye upon the lively scene around. It was a cold, clear, bracing day in January ; and the river being frozen over, its surface was covered with skaters, who passed to and fro with the velocity of the wind, or moved about and about within a narrow compass. On either bank were crowds of pedestrians, of all ages, and both sexes, with here and there a carriage filled with as much of beauty and fashion as still lingered within the magic circle of London. It was the first time that I had ever witnessed a spectacle, which not less, perhaps, than any other about town, is calculated to attract the notice of a stranger ; and the effect produced upon me was, as it usually is, in the highest degree exhilarating and agreeable.

“ I had enjoyed it to satiety, and was retracing my steps towards Cecil Street, when, on passing the upper end of the basin, my attention was powerfully arrested by a small group of persons who appeared to keep entirely aloof from the crowd. There was a plain carriage standing on the drive, within which sat two ladies and an elderly gentleman; a boy, well dressed and beautifully formed, skated near, and the party appeared to watch his evolutions with a mixture of pride and satisfaction. He was a fine, bold, manly fellow; and though manifestly a beginner in the art, exhibited no symptom of distrust either in his own powers or in the frozen element. On the contrary, he seemed absolutely to court danger; for, though a board, set up by the Humane Society, warned him that at a certain point the ice could not be relied upon, he all at once dashed off in the direction. The movement was beheld by those on land with undisguised horror. The ladies screamed; the gentleman rose, and called loudly to him; but the lad merely waved his hand in reply, and rushed onwards. It was a rash act, and the consequences were not different from what might have been anticipated. I had sprung forward instinctively, and was already upon the ice, when, with a plunge, the boy disappeared; the frail substance on which he moved had given way, and he was immersed in the water.

“ I neither saw nor heard another object or sound, except the crash of the breaking ice, and the abrupt immersion of the youth; I looked not once about to observe whether other aid might be nigh, but, springing forward, gained the edge of the pool, just as the boy, rising from his first plunge, showed his head above the surface. I grasped at him instantly; but my weight was too much for the fractured ice, and instead of saving the boy, I myself fell into the water. Still I kept my hold; and, struggling hard, I contrived to plant him with one elbow upon the ice, whilst I supported him from behind, as well as I could, till, the alarm spreading, ropes were thrown, and we were both dragged to shore. But though the whole of the adventure, from its very commencement to its close, passed within the space of five minutes, so intense had been the

cold, or so severe the shock to the youth's nerves, that he was dragged out in a state of insensibility. Nothing could exceed the anxiety, as well of the persons in the carriage, as of the people in general, in his favour. He was lifted from the ground, stripped of his wet garments, and wrapped up in a warm cloth cloak, in a moment; and being deposited in the carriage, the coachman was directed to drive with all speed homewards. He did so with an alacrity in apparent agreement with that of his master; and, without wasting one word upon me, who stood shivering at a little distance, the party quitted the Park.

“ To say that I did not experience something akin to indignation, at the palpable indifference displayed towards one who had certainly risked, and might have sacrificed, his own life, in seeking to preserve that of another, would be to assert an untruth. I did feel indignant—so indignant, indeed, that I with difficulty suppressed a curse which trembled on my lips; but the feeling was not more powerful than it was transient, and I soon blamed myself for having given way to it, even for a moment. In all probability, the boy was an only son, perhaps the heir of some ancient title or lordly inheritance; and if so, it was very little to be wondered at that the interest of his relatives should be too much occupied about him, to permit their wasting a thought upon me. I blushed for my own precipitance as this idea occurred to me; and, thankful that I had not exhibited it either by word or gesture, I returned home, amply remunerated for the risk which I had run, by the consideration that I had done a meritorious action.

“ I said a few minutes ago, that my constitution had given way under long and unnatural confinement; and that when I went abroad that morning, it was for the purpose of bringing back, as far as might be, both my health and spirits to their natural tone. Such an accident as had just befallen me was not, however, the kind of remedy of which I stood in need. A frame enfeebled by previous disease was ill calculated to resist a revulsion so sudden and so serious; whilst my clothes, freezing about me as I walked along, struck a chill to my vitals, from which it was long ere I recovered. I was seized that very night

with shivering fits, which ended in a violent fever; and I lay upwards of three weeks powerless to perform for myself even the commonest offices.

“ I recovered at last; but it was only to discover, that, after the expenses attending my illness were defrayed, little would be left behind out of the paltry reversion of my year's salary. Now, then, indeed, my prospects began to wear a lowering and gloomy aspect. It was true, that I could not complain of being penniless; because the sum which remained to me after the sale of Llanrwst, was untouched: but upon that I had determined never to break in; and nothing short of a necessity more urgent than could be resisted would ever tempt me to violate the pledge. Something, however, must be done. I returned to my poem. I laboured incessantly, denying to my enfeebled frame both the sleep and sustenance necessary for it; and by dint of extraordinary exertions, I brought the piece to a conclusion. But there was one mighty difficulty yet to be surmounted. I was utterly unknown to the booksellers; I was master of no channel through which to obtain an introduction; and my talents being yet in the shade, I could scarcely hope that even an introduction, if obtained, would prove of service. Nevertheless, my case was urgent; and I determined, at all hazards, to introduce myself to one of the leading houses in the city.

“ I was on my way towards St. Paul's Churchyard for this purpose, my manuscript carefully folded in my bosom, when I accidentally observed a gentleman standing beside the window of a print-shop, to whom I had more than once thought of applying in my difficulties. The individual in question was a Mr. Clitheroe, one of those literary persons of whom Dr. Stripe was in the habit of inviting so many to his table, and who, though not free from faults, had all along attracted to himself a greater share of my notice than his companions. Clitheroe's age might be about five-and-thirty. He was rather handsome than otherwise; and his conversation, in spite of an occasional coarseness, was, upon the whole, attractive as well as entertaining. His wit partook, indeed, somewhat too much of ribaldry, and his jokes and puns appeared to

me to be as often forced as natural. Yet there were occasional flashes of feeling, both in his manner and observations, which always reconciled me, at least, to his defects. I had been pleased with him from the first; my behaviour towards him had shown this; and as it is natural to relish the society of those who seem to appreciate ours, Clitheroe had uniformly treated me with marked kindness. I accordingly felt no hesitation in addressing him on the present occasion; and I soon discovered that the good opinion which had been formed of me was not worn out, in consequence of a change in my circumstances.

“ I needed not to inform him that Gander Hall was no longer my home. He had heard so of the inmates already, and he had made numerous efforts, hitherto without success, to discover the place whither I had betaken myself.— ‘ But you look ill,’ continued he, ‘ and jaded; you have lost your complexion, and your figure is wasted—how is this? Where have you resided of late, and what has been the nature of your occupation?’

“ I told him the truth, exactly as it stood; and he heard me to an end, without once seeking to interrupt me; but when I ceased to speak, he gazed at me with an expression of the deepest commiseration, and then said, —

“ ‘ Davies, I pity you from the bottom of my heart; not so much on account of the bodily privations which are in store for you, but because of that laceration of every fine and noble feeling which you must undergo, in the miserable course which you have chalked out for yourself. Know you what it is that you follow? Are you aware of the thousand mortifications and crosses with which he must put up, who, with poverty in array against him, aims at literary distinction? Have you weighed well the disadvantages against the benefits, — the agony of failure against the triumph of success?’

“ ‘ I cannot say,’ replied I, ‘ that I have ever given to the subject the serious consideration to which you regard it as entitled; but this I can aver, that with me there is no choice. I must succeed as an author, or perish.’

“ ‘ Is there no other door open for you?’ continued he. ‘ I know that your last situation must have been irksome in

the extreme, but then the benefits attending it were certain. Had you not better return to it?’

“‘No,’ replied I. ‘You have never experienced the miseries of an usher’s life, otherwise you would not so much as propose a return to it, under any circumstances whatever.’

“‘Nor have you experienced what it is to struggle for a scanty subsistence by adopting literature as a profession, not as an amusement. — Davies,’ continued he, speaking every moment with increased energy, ‘I hate no man with a hatred so bitter as to desire to see him dependent for bread upon a bookseller. Some there are, doubtless, of enlightened ideas and liberal minds, who, if they cannot further your views, will at least behave towards yourself with delicacy; but had you seen, as I have seen,—far more, had you felt, as I have felt,—the degradations to which *poor* authors are compelled to submit, you would close your ears against the whispers of literary ambition, as you would against the voice of a syren. No, no; you have been accustomed to field-sports in your youth; obtain the situation of gamekeeper; your arm was once strong, and it will soon become strong again. Row a wherry; drive a coach; sweep the streets; do any thing; but never adopt literature as your profession.’

“I was deeply affected, as you may suppose, by the bitterness and energy with which these words were spoken; yet considering that I had already gone too far to recede, I could reply to them only by observing, that it was impossible for me to think meanly of a pursuit which he appeared to have followed so satisfactorily as well to himself as to others.

“‘I!’ exclaimed he, — ‘I follow it satisfactorily to myself! — You little know either my past or present history, when you hazard such a remark as this. But come along,’ added he, putting his arm through mine, and walking with me in the direction of Fleet Street, ‘I will let you somewhat behind the curtain; and if, after all, you determine to go on, you shall not lack an introduction, at least, to a publisher.’

“The history which my companion communicated to me

was one which excited in my mind not so much an abhorrence of literature, considered in the light of a profession, as pity, not unmixed with indignation, at the improvident extravagance of its members. I found that the speaker, like many of his class, had entered life with very slender means and equally slender expectations, yet that he never possessed prudence enough to save out of the superfluities of to-day so much as might enable him to contend against the possible destitution of to-morrow. With talents of a high order, his extreme improvidence had hindered him from ever aspiring at a rank more elevated than that of a newspaper or magazine scribbler; and though he possessed many of the qualities necessary for the production of a work of real merit, present necessities had continually stood in the way of his making so much as an attempt to compose it. Then, again, he complained of the griping dispositions of his booksellers; yet I could not but suspect, that things were laid to their charge of which they were scarcely guilty; for it appeared that there was not an individual in the trade, within the circle of his acquaintance, to whom he either was not then or had not at some time been indebted. Nevertheless, his story did not fail to make a deep impression upon me. I considered that the very nature of his occupation leads a mercenary writer to set little value upon funds which he acquires, he scarcely knows how, and which pass from him as lightly as they are earned; and the possibility that such a disposition might grow upon myself was not contemplated without dismay; even though a vision came along with it of success as boundless as my fondest hopes had ever anticipated. Let it be remembered, that I lived for one object alone; and should the habits of a literary career divert me from it, I acknowledged with a shudder that life would cease to be of value. But there was a stubbornness about me which impelled me to go on at all hazards. I professed my desire, notwithstanding Clitheroe's monitory detail, to avail myself of his acquaintance in *the trade*; and as he readily consented to do for me whatever his circumstances would permit, we walked on together.

“ You have, doubtless, visited Paternoster Row, were it merely as a matter of curiosity ; and cannot be altogether unacquainted with the dark and gloomy cells which have sent out so many volumes teeming with learning and genius, to instruct and amuse the world ? Towards one of these my acquaintance guided me ; and after pushing back a half-glazed door, and descending an awkward step, we found ourselves in a large ware-room, dimly lighted by a couple of bow windows and a cupola, or skylight. The walls were covered on all sides with shelves, on which were arranged volumes of every size and dimension ; huge packages of paper, printed and blank, were lying here and there upon the floor, whilst the body of the room itself was filled up with numerous enclosed desks, at each of which sat one or more clerks, in full occupation. It presented, all together an appalling spectacle to one in my situation ; for the most perfect silence prevailed, and the men of figures paid no more heed to us than if we had been statues. My companion, however, soon broke the spell by which they appeared to be bound. He directed one of them, in rather an authoritative tone, to inform his master that he was wanted ; and in five minutes after the arbitrator of my literary destiny appeared.

“ I need not repeat the particulars of that interview. Let it suffice to state, that the publisher, a wary North-countryman, took infinite pains to repress in me every disposition to think favourably of my own performance, by speaking in unqualified reprobation of the subject of my work, considered as a matter of barter. He assured me, that for poetry, of whatever kind, there was very little demand ; but that descriptive poetry (and mine, unhappily, belonged to that class,) was utterly unsaleable. Still he expressed himself willing to look at the manuscript, and to give his candid opinion respecting it ; and as I found it useless to expect better treatment at his hands, I was compelled to accede to the proposal. I gave him up my treasure, and, accompanied by Clitheroe, retired.

“ ‘ Now, what think you of that for a specimen ? ’ said my Mentor. ‘ The fellow is a perfect stranger to your cir-

cumstances : he cannot tell whether you be a writer for pay, or a mere amateur ; yet you see how slightly he talks beforehand of a work for which he has already made up his mind to offer nothing. Are you not convinced already, that any honest calling is to be preferred to that of an author ?’

“ ‘ Had you not assigned better reasons than this for the adoption of your opinion,’ replied I with a laugh, ‘ I am not sure that I should even now subscribe to it. Probably I am myself to blame in having made choice of such a subject ; and if so, we cannot condemn a tradesman because he looks solely to the matter of profit and loss.’

“ ‘ You are a philosopher, I perceive,’ replied Clitheroe, ‘ not less than a poet. It is well that you are so ; for I am mistaken if you find not ample scope, ere long, for the full exercise of all your stoicism. — But where do you dine to-day ?’

“ ‘ I had intended to dine at home.’

“ ‘ Nay, you shall dine with me. Half-a-dozen of the choice spirits of the age favour me with their company, and I shall be proud to make you acquainted with a fraternity of which you seem determined on becoming a member.’

“ I could not very well refuse this invitation, after the friendly interest which Clitheroe had shown in my welfare ; and at the hour appointed I repaired to his chambers. The entertainment would have done no discredit to a peer. Every imaginable delicacy crowded his board, and his wines were at once costly and delicious, whilst the individuals collected together to partake of these luxuries were, like himself, dependent upon their wits. ‘ So,’ said I, as I walked back towards Cecil Street at a late hour, ‘ it is thus that your gentlemen of the press live. No wonder that their career is too often but a protracted struggle to ward off utter ruin and escape a gaol, whilst they heedlessly waste upon a single meal more, perhaps, than the utmost industry may enable them to earn in a week ! Well, well, it must be my own fault, then, if I walk in their footsteps.’

“ I reached the door of my lodgings whilst these words

were yet on my lips ; and letting myself quietly in, retired to bed with a mind too much disturbed with uneasy thoughts of the past, and no less uneasy forebodings of the future, to find relief even in sleep."

CHAPTER IX.

THE MISER.

" A FULL week had elapsed without furnishing any tidings from the publisher, or bringing me again into contact with Clitheroe, when, with a beating heart, and a troubled and uneasy step, I once more turned my face in the direction of St. Paul's Churchyard. The truth is, that I had on the previous evening paid away my last guinea, of which a few shillings only remained in my purse, and the prospect even of immediate want failed to reconcile me to the scarcely less horrible idea, that my little reversionary patrimony must before long be encroached upon. There was a vague and perhaps unreasonable conviction on my mind, that should circumstances ever compel me to withdraw so much as a farthing from that hoard, all hope of accomplishing the object, to attain which so many sacrifices had already been made, must be abandoned ; and hence the bare possibility of being reduced to so grievous a strait could not be contemplated without dismay. You will say, perhaps, that in permitting that feeling to obtain a mastery over me I was guilty of excessive weakness. It may be so : it was, perhaps, an act of weakness to set my heart upon the recovery of an estate possessed of little more than an ideal value ; yet I would not have relinquished that hope for the proudest title under the crown, or exchanged the barren hills of my fathers for the richest domain in England. I experienced, therefore, in full violence, the agonies of one

who sees that his prosperity or ruin is on the dice ; for I doubted not that the acceptance or rejection of my poem must determine, at once and for ever, how the speculation in which I was embarked would terminate.

“ A ten minutes' walk brought me to the publisher's office, and I enquired, with a hesitating and doubtful voice, whether he were at home. I was answered in the negative ; but on giving my name and address, it was announced, that a parcel had lain several days in the expectation that I would either call or send for it. I requested to be put in possession of it, and immediately quitted the shop. There could be no doubt as to its contents. My manuscript was returned, but whether for revision, correction, or as a step preparatory to a definite negotiation, the letter which, doubtless, accompanied it could alone determine. I hurried home, tore aside the envelope, and found that my anticipations had not deceived me. My manuscript was, indeed, returned ; and with it came a billet, stating, in few but civil words, that Messrs. Ledger and Pica saw marks of very considerable talent in the poem, but regretted that it would not suit their views to undertake its publication. ‘ Thus,’ said I, bitterly, whilst I cast the letter aside, — ‘ thus end my dreams of literary distinction ; and with them perishes the last hope of seeing Llanrwst again.’ I spoke with perfect calmness, with the calmness which always accompanies a real misfortune, though it is frequently wanting when a lesser evil befalls us ; and, taking up my hat, walked abroad, without either knowing or caring towards what point my steps should be directed.

“ I was too much engrossed with my own gloomy thoughts to pay any heed to outward objects, when I found myself suddenly grasped by the arm, and, looking round, saw that Clitheroe was at my side.

“ ‘ Thou art in a profound reverie, friend Davies,’ said he, gaily ; ‘ some glorious vision, doubtless, is before thee, which I, Goth as I am, presume to interrupt. What is it ?’

“ ‘ Glorious, indeed,’ answered I, striving to imitate the careless tone of my companion ; ‘ for it points to hopes utterly blighted, and prospects utterly overcast.’

“ ‘The poem has been rejected,’ said he, with a sneer : ‘ I guessed as much. I had no hope that, whatever its merits might be, the first work of a nameless author would fare better. But, courage, man ; Rome was not built in a day ; and though there be bad luck now, there will be better hereafter. Give me the manuscript, and I will strive to dispose of it elsewhere.’

“ I thanked him for his offer ; but all confidence in my own talents was destroyed, and I declared my determination never again to submit myself to such a mortification.

“ ‘But how do you propose to live?’ asked he : ‘ I understood that you looked to this source, not for fame but subsistence.’

“ ‘And so I did,’ answered I ; ‘ but the trial has been made, and I will not repeat it. Live ! I do not wish to live ; and if I did, the means are wanting.’

“ ‘ I see how it is,’ replied he ; ‘ like many other deserving persons in this great city, you begin to know, from experience, how keen is the tooth of poverty. Now, as we are in this respect brother-sufferers, you will not refuse me the gratification of dividing with you, in the mean time, what little I possess ; and when the tables are turned, and you become rich and I penniless, you shall divide with me.’

“ I gazed at the spectator, whose handsome countenance gleamed with an expression of pure benevolence ; and who met my stare with a smile, as if the very thought of doing a kind action delighted him. If ever there was a moment when the project which had so long engrossed my thoughts appeared in other than an amiable light it was then. I contrasted my own situation with Clitheroe’s ; my own sorrows with his : and I blushed to think, that whilst my fellow-man could struggle against the pressure of absolute want, yet retain his cheerfulness, I could give way to desperation, because a plan, scarce rational in itself, was not about to be realised. I thanked him with the earnestness which this reflection was calculated to excite, but absolutely declined to avail myself of his proposal. ‘ No,’ continued I, ‘ bad as my case is, I cannot pretend to represent it as desperate. Every scheme which I had de-

vised must, indeed, be thrown aside ; but I cannot so far forget what is due to honour and propriety as to rob one whose means are, in all probability, as scanty as my own. But you, Clitheroe, embarrassed as you are, how can you dream of offering to divide your little all with a stranger?’

“ ‘ Because,’ replied he, in a tone of deep emotion, ‘ the reflection that I do occasionally aid another can alone carry me through the troubles and embarrassments to which I am daily and hourly subject. Davies, I told you but half my story the other day ; you shall hear the rest of it now ; and if, after that, you still grudge me the poor satisfaction of serving you, you are no friend of mine.

“ ‘ You know what my mode of existence has been for many years back ; that I have been tottering on the brink of destruction, evading creditors, and doing a thousand things, of the least discreditable of which there was a time when I would have scorned to be guilty. You know — for I have told you as much — that poverty and I have been so long intimately acquainted that, in my eyes, it has lost most of its horrors. But I have not told you what led to this :— I have said nothing of the cloud which overcast my destiny, and left me nothing to expect but a life of external mirth and inward misery, till my own desperate hand, or, it may be, that of the executioner, set me free. There was a time when I felt and acted as you would feel and act ; when I was respected, and deserved to be respected, by the generous and the good. Oh, it drives me mad to look back upon the days when my father esteemed me a very prodigy of virtue and talent, and my poor mother blessed God because He had given her such a son, to be an honour and a comfort to her in her declining years ! How often has the kind good man talked to me of the preferments and dignities to which my abilities could not fail to lead ; whilst she, with a tear in her eye, never omitted to sum up all by exclaiming, “ Preferments and dignities you may not attain ; but be a good man, my son, for the blessings which accompany a quiet conscience, as the world cannot give them, so neither can it take away.” But I forgot these lessons, Davies, almost as soon as I began to mix in society. Gay and light-hearted myself,

clever, too, as men were pleased to represent me, I entered but too readily into the pursuits of the extravagant and the unprincipled ; and, long before I attained to the age of early manhood, I was ruined. Nor did the evil stop there. Beset by duns, hunted from place to place, threatened with a gaol, and deserted by my false friends, in a moment of madness I forged ! Ay, you may well start back in dismay ; I repeat that I forged — forged a bill of acceptance upon a banking house, with which my mother's brother, a wealthy merchant, was connected, to the amount of two thousand pounds. The forgery was discovered, as you may believe ; but the respect in which my family were held induced the parties to hush the matter up ; the money was paid, and my neck saved from the halter. But it was a blow which my poor father never recovered ; he lingered on for a year or two, but it brought him to the grave at last. Thanks to my extravagance likewise, he died penniless ; and my poor mother, who had been accustomed all her life to the comforts, if not to the elegancies of life — God ! how can I proceed ?' exclaimed he, dashing his clenched fist violently against his forehead ; ' my mother was fain to take shelter in an hospital. Can you wonder, after this, if all my friends and relatives turned their backs upon me ? Can you wonder if I became, from that hour, an outcast and an alien ; a vagabond adventurer, whom no one loved, whom all men hated ?'

“ I was for the space of some moments too much shocked by the confession to which I had just listened to retain sufficient command over myself to attempt a reply. Exerting myself, however, because aware that it was not my business ' to quench the smoking flax,' or to add, even by apparent coldness, to the distresses of one already miserable enough, I, at last, said, — ' Clitheroe, you have told me a fearful story, more fearful by far than I could have anticipated. Your errors and crimes have, indeed, been great ; yet to despair, whilst it only adds one to the number, can lead to no fortunate result. Call to mind the sound principles in which you were educated, and recollect by whom the promise has been made, " that a broken and a contrite heart shall not be despised." It is not thus that

you can ever expect to make amends for the past ; that can be done only by using aright the fine talents which Providence has given you : and, slender as the chance may appear of your finding a fitting channel for their exercise, even to you hope is not denied. Let me beseech you to repress this useless violence ; and if the good opinion of one so humble as myself be of value, rest assured, that your conduct now, accompanied by the generosity of your nature, has secured it.'

" Clitheroe made no reply ; but grasping my hand in his, he squeezed it with a warmth which told, more plainly than words, that my declaration had not been wasted on him. I saw, too, that tears were rolling over his cheeks, and, so far from desiring to repress them, I hailed the event as the agriculturist hails the coming of a summer's shower upon a soil long parched up. But I was not anxious that the rude multitude should witness the spectacle ; so I led him unresistingly onward till we arrived at my lodgings in Cecil Street. Here we spent the remainder of the evening in sober and serious discussion each of the plans and projects which he had formed, or dreamed of forming ; and we separated for the night better reconciled than either had expected to be, both to the past and the future.

" From that day forth, Clitheroe and I were inseparable. The confidence which he had reposed in me I did not hesitate to return ; and I found that, so far from blaming my design, or turning it into ridicule, he entered into it with cordiality and earnestness. By his aid I was put in the way of earning a trifling subsistence. I became a reporter to one of the newspapers ; and thus, by devoting my nights to hearing, and my mornings to writing out the speeches of the ' collective wisdom of the empire,' I managed to live with strict economy. But the atmosphere of a large city was odious to me. I longed for the pure air and freedom of the country with an eagerness not to be described ; and happily no great while elapsed ere circumstances enabled me once more to enjoy them.

" I told you of Dr. Stripe's offer of a curacy. The good-hearted pedagogue had not, it appeared, forgotten either the

interest which he once took in me, or his voluntary promise ; for, on learning from Clitheroe where I had established myself, he hastened to find me out, that he might renew the one and repeat the other. I closed with the proposal instantly. I felt, indeed, that out of a stipend of sixty pounds per annum there was but a slender prospect of my being able to save as much as would enable me, previous to the expiration of the thirty years, to collect so large a sum as I needed ; yet my situation in London was become so irksome, that I resolved at all hazards to abandon it, should I be driven to the cruel necessity of abandoning my grand design at the same time. In few words, I presented myself before the bishop, and was ordained.

“ This ceremony had passed, and my little affairs being, as it were, wound up, I was preparing to set out for the country, in order to enter upon the duties of my new office, when an adventure befell, which gave, all at once, a brighter colouring to my prospects. It was on a beautiful morning in May, and London, full of the titled and the wealthy, seemed one moving mass of well-dressed people, when Clitheroe and I strolled forth to take our last walk, preparatory to a separation. He had latterly withdrawn himself altogether from that class of society in which, when our acquaintance began, I found him moving ; and not having laid himself out to obtain admission into any other, he depended, for companionship, almost wholly upon me. It did not, therefore, surprise me to find him this morning more than usually low-spirited ; for the prospect of my departure affected him deeply, and he made no attempt to conceal it. I was exerting myself strenuously to keep up his spirits, and exacting from him repeated assurances, that no sense of loneliness would again draw him into a vortex from which he had just escaped, when the notice of both was strangely, though somewhat differently, attracted by an apparition which came suddenly upon us. We were sauntering along, and engaged in earnest conversation, when two persons, well mounted, an elderly gentleman and a remarkably handsome boy, abruptly turned a corner, and confronted us ; both of whom reined in their horses, as if a recollection of our faces, or something connected with our

history, had occurred to them. For my part, a single glance reminded me, that the boy was the same whom I had preserved from drowning in the January preceding, whilst the countenance of his companion was likewise familiar to me, as that of the person who exhibited so much alarm at the moment when the youth's heedless daring hurried him into danger. I felt no desire to address them, though I was equally little disposed to exhibit by my manner that I considered myself neglected; I would have, therefore, walked on. But Clitheroe, stopping short, shook as with an ague fit, and, whispering in my ear, 'I cannot look upon that man,' suddenly let go my arm, and disappeared. The stranger approached the *pavé*.

" 'Surely,' said he, 'I cannot be mistaken — surely you are the gentleman of whom I have been so long in search, and to whom I am indebted for the life of my son?'

" I would have answered, but the boy, with extreme earnestness, exclaimed, 'It is, it is, indeed, papa: it is the very person;' and, springing from his horse, rushed forward. I took his proffered hand freely: I did not attempt to conceal that I was the individual whom he supposed me to be; but I would not for a moment listen to the expressions of gratitude which both father and child poured forth.

" 'You must have thought me the most thankless of human beings,' said the former, as soon as he had compelled me to learn something of his feelings on the occasion, when I quitted the Park as I did, without so much as acknowledging the weighty obligation which your bravery imposed upon me; nor have I, from that day to this, forgiven myself the exhibition of an indifference which I did not experience. But he is my only son, — my only child; and, in truth, I had not, at the moment, a thought to spare upon another object besides himself. Yet do me the justice to believe, that since then I have omitted no exertion to discover his preserver. I have even inserted advertisements in the public prints, entreating him to come forward; nay, the very police have been employed to trace you, though hitherto without success. Now, however, that accident has brought about that which design failed to

effect, you must not deny me the gratification of proving that you have vitally befriended one whose fault is not ingratitude.'

"I could reply to this speech in one strain only, by assuring the speaker that I deserved no thanks for obeying an instinct which few would find it easy to resist; but he was not satisfied. He entreated me to visit him, not as an acquaintance but as a friend; and, on my promising to do so, he put a card into my hand, and rode on. I looked at the ticket, expecting that I should discover there some explanation of the extraordinary flight of Clitheroe; but I was deceived. It contained the words 'Mr. E. Montford, Park Lane;' and neither the name nor address threw the smallest light on the mystery.

"I returned home immediately, where, to my great satisfaction, Clitheroe waited to receive me. He was violently agitated: he paced the room backwards and forwards with a broken and uneasy step; and, giving me no time to enquire into the cause of his late conduct, abruptly demanded how I came to be acquainted with that person? I told him; and then, in my turn, desired to be informed whence it happened that the sight of a stranger should affect him so deeply.

"'And you mean to visit him, of course?' said he, paying no attention to my enquiry.

"'Certainly not,' replied I. 'I quit town, as you know, to-morrow morning; and I am not going to delay my journey for the pleasure of receiving another dose of thanks.'

"'You do him wrong, Davies,' replied he. 'That man is incapable of dosing any one with mere thanks, and will be seriously wretched if you give him no opportunity of serving you.'

"'And how come you to know so much of him?' asked I.

"'He is my uncle,' replied Clitheroe, his voice deepening as he spoke. 'The same who might have hanged me, had he chosen; but who paid the bill which I had forged, and saved me, Heaven knows for what.'

"A light came in upon my brain in an instant. 'I will

not leave town to-morrow,' said I. 'I will visit this man; and if he be as you represent, and as his own manner indicates, even yet your just place in society may be thrown open to you.'

"I kept my word, in spite of the repeated remonstrances of Clitheroe, whom a thorough consciousness of his own demerits rendered at once hopeless of forgiveness, and extremely unwilling that I should in any degree mix up my affairs with his. But he had miscalculated the generosity of his uncle's disposition. For a time, indeed, I found it hard to convince him, that one who had gone so far astray could ever be reclaimed; nay, his indignation when the subject was first broached led him to look upon me with an eye of coldness, which, though sensible that I deserved it not, I found it impossible to meet with indifference. But when I succeeded in securing his attention, and detailed, as I did in the most glowing colours, the extent of his relative's sufferings and penitence, the good man's compassion was excited, and he promised to look after him. He did so; and before many months expired, I had the satisfaction to learn, that Clitheroe was placed in a reputable walk of life, from which he never deviated by an act of the slightest impropriety.

"My story is now told; for the little that remains to be added, a few words will suffice to explain. I came down into the country soon after I had succeeded in securing a promise for Clitheroe of Mr. Montford's notice; and during a year or two I lived as curates generally live whose means are straitened. The hope of repurchasing Llanrwst became, as you may believe, every day more and more faint, nor was it till scarce a spark of it remained, that circumstances induced me to fan it up again into a flame. I received one morning, about twenty years ago, a letter from Mr. Montford, informing me that he had purchased the advowson of a living in Romney Marsh; and that he would feel seriously indebted to me if I would permit him to make out the presentation in my favour. The vision which cheered my early youth revived. I rode over to the place, enquired into its value, and having ascertained that a life of absolute penury

would even yet enable me to realise that vision, I accepted his kind offer. From that day to this, my existence has flowed on in one dull and monotonous channel. I no sooner became an incumbent, than I changed my style of living,—not, as is usually done, from worse to better, but from better to worse. I calculated every item of my expenses, to the minutest tittle: I rigidly attended to that calculation; and the great end for which I have toiled has, I rejoice to say, been accomplished. Llanrwst is once more mine, and to-morrow I go to take possession."

Such was the account which my neighbour gave of himself, and such the explanation which he afforded of the very extraordinary habits in which, during so many years, he had indulged. I need not say that we listened to his tale with the deepest attention, for we were interested in the man himself, and therefore not indisposed to take an interest in his story; and he told it with much feeling, and great animation of manner. For the first time, moreover, since our acquaintance commenced, he consented to eat that night at my table, and at an early hour next morning set out to take possession of his recovered patrimony.

Though he had promised to write to me as soon after his arrival in Wales as the multiplicity of business which threatened to embarrass him would allow, I was somewhat surprised by receiving, at the end of little more than a week, a letter bearing the Clwyd post-mark. I opened it with avidity. It was written in the hand of a stranger, and informed me that Mr. Davies had arrived safely at Llanrwst, about noon on the preceding day; that he had wandered over the haunts of his boyhood, like one walking in his sleep; that he had visited the tomb of his fathers, minutely inspected every apartment in the house, causing the very furniture to be arranged as much as possible in the order which prevailed previous to the execution; that though agitated in no common degree, his feelings appeared rather pleasurable than otherwise; and that he retired to bed in the same chamber which he had occupied when a boy. Next morning he did not make his appearance so early as was expected; but the domestics, attributing the circumstance to a restless night, occasioned

partly by the fatigue of travelling, partly by the peculiarity of his situation, took little notice of it, and abstained from disturbing him. As hour after hour stole on, however, they became alarmed. They approached his door, listened, and hearing no noise, ventured to knock. No notice was taken of the signal ; upon which one, who had served his father before him, and was peculiarly attached to the family, pushed it open and entered. He drew back the hangings, and beheld his master a corpse ; and the stiffened condition of the limbs, with the cold and clammy state of the skin, gave proof that he must have been dead at least four hours.

CHAPTER X.

THE ROSE OF EAST KENT.

AT the distance of a quarter of an hour's walk, or perhaps something more, from the Vicarage, in the direction of Shorncliff and Sandgate, stands an old-fashioned, red brick mansion, the architecture and size of which hardly entitle it to take rank among the seats of the aristocracy, at the same time that they mark the station of its proprietors as having been, and still continuing to be, considerably more elevated than that of ordinary yeomen. It is one of those unassuming piles which present to the eye of the careless observer little besides a confused jumble of points and angles, but which, when more closely and more minutely examined, are seen to exhibit not a few of the strictest lines of architectural beauty. The arched windows, with their stone mouldings, the door-ways sheltered by stone porticoes from the weather, the pointed roof and tall chimneys, equally indicate, that the foundations were laid at a period when the art of house-building was understood, at least, better than it is now, whilst they give sufficient con-

firmation to the opinion which refers the date of its erection to the times of Elizabeth, or her immediate successor.

In perfect agreement both with the style and extent of the building are the grounds by which it is surrounded. A neat, well-mown lawn, with a flower-garden and shrubbery, lie in front, beyond which are the green downs planted here and there in clumps: on either hand are a few trees, which serve at once to shelter the edifice from the winds, and to hide the out-buildings; whilst in rear is a steep bare hill, surmounted on the summit by a grove or toll of Scotch firs. Probably, it is to the presence of this venerable knot of fir-trees that the place is indebted for its name; at least there is no other imaginable reason to be assigned why it should be called the Toll.

The mansion which I have just described, and to which a moderate estate is attached, belonged for upwards of three centuries to a family named Wilmot; a race which by some accident or other, contrived never, by exertion on the one hand, or misconduct on the other, either to rise or fall in the world. There is no tradition on record of any individual bearing the name having rendered himself conspicuous either in arts or arms, none of them ever embarked in trade, at least with enterprise or advantage, and none was ever branded as a villain, or ridiculed as a spendthrift. On the contrary, they jogged along the beaten path of life, respectable and respected, in that middle station which is said to be the most conducive to happiness; and whilst they always kept their heads well above water, they did little more. The consequence was, that the Toll underwent no change, either as to its extent or fertility. One generation received it from another, in precisely the same condition in which the first had received it from the generation preceding; the fields attached to it were not increased, neither were they diminished; no rooms were added to the mansion, neither were any taken away: in one word, amidst the revolutions which sublunary things are doomed continually to undergo, the Toll, and the Toll alone, remained stationary.

At the period when circumstances induced me to take up my abode in St. Alphage, the family at the Toll con-

sisted of two persons,—Captain Wilmot, a retired officer of the navy, and his daughter Rose. The former, who was considerably advanced in life, had served his country in every climate, with the fortune which usually attended his family; for though he was admitted to be an excellent officer and thorough seaman, no opportunity ever presented itself of signalising himself. He was respected, indeed, in his profession, beloved by the men whom he commanded, and as an inferior had more than once exhibited proof that his courage was as cool as it was daring; but since he himself filled a situation of responsibility and trust fate had never thrown him in the way of gathering a single laurel. In like manner, his cruises, though not absolutely barren, had been productive of, comparatively speaking, little prize-money. Some, doubtless, he acquired, sufficient, indeed, to cover those extra expenses which the pay of a post-captain scarcely enables him to meet, with a slender residue, barely adequate to complete a few repairs, and keep the *Toll* in its primitive condition. But of the fortunes which naval commanders sometimes make, Captain Wilmot knew nothing, except by report.

The history of this man had not, as far as I could learn, been marked by any incidents greatly at variance with the common occurrences of life. One such there unquestionably was; and as, to a certain degree, the future destiny both of himself and his child may be said to have been affected by it, it may not be amiss if I record it; premising, however, that the information which I am about to record was not communicated to me by the captain himself. I am indebted for it to an individual of whom no mention has as yet been made, but who, if long and faithful services, and a devoted attachment to his master's interests, entitle a domestic to notice, ought not to be passed over. The individual in question was old Bligh, a man who, like his master, had spent his best days in the navy; who began his career as a cabin-boy in the frigate of which Captain Wilmot was the first-lieutenant, and who, when the lieutenant obtained promotion, followed him to his own ship. Here Bligh continued to serve his officer, first as cockswain to the captain's barge, afterwards as steward in the

cabin. When the captain himself abandoned the service, Bligh did not forsake him ; and he now executed at the Toll the joint offices of maitre-d'hôtel, footman, and head-gardener. From this man, who spoke of his master and mistress, not as menials generally do, but as a humble and attached relative, I collected the following anecdote ; and there were a variety of circumstances which led me to conclude that it was strictly true.

The mother of Rose, it appeared, was an Irish woman, the daughter of an ancient but poor Milesian family. Her name was Fitzgerald, and she was a native of the romantic district of Bantry Bay, not far from the shores of which stood her father's castle, still frowning in all the pride of baronial magnificence, but almost entirely denuded of the acres which once afforded a princely revenue to its owners. It is not necessary to state, that wherever the virtue of hospitality may be obsolete, it still exists among the gentry of Ireland ; nor could any of the class boast of a larger portion of the spirit than Mr. Fitzgerald. A king's ship never came to an anchor in the bay without an invitation being immediately conveyed to its officers, who were expected, as often as their duty would permit, to make Fitzgerald Castle their home ; and if the fare to which they were introduced could not always boast of an excess of refinement, it was at least very abundant, and very freely given. Among other stations to which the vessel which Captain Wilmot commanded was sent, Bantry Bay chanced to be one ; and the same liberality which had been afforded to others was extended to him. He became a frequent visiter at the castle ; and no great while elapsed ere he conceived the idea of forming a closer connection with its proprietor.

Though poor in worldly substance, Mr. Fitzgerald, like many other men similarly circumstanced, was rich in being the father of seven unmarried daughters, of whom the mother of Rose was the youngest. " She was a beautiful creature, sir," continued Bligh : " in short, just such another as Miss Rose herself ; and so merry and kind-hearted, and free in her manners, that it was a real pleasure to be near her. Well, what does my

master do? Without considering that an old crazy hulk of a sea-officer is no fit match for a girl of nineteen, he proposed to make her his wife, and the proposal was not objected to by my lady's father. But she, poor soul! — you never witnessed such a change as came over her, from the time when her wedding was first talked of. She did not refuse him, it is true; for why? — she was portionless; and her father made no secret of his desire to see her wedded and settled: but she lost from that moment all her gaiety and mirth, and became as grave and woe-begone as need be. Well, well, why make a short story long? They were married: the captain carried her away in his own ship; and the ship being paid off soon after, we all removed here, into Kent."

It is probable that change of scene, and a constant intercourse with strangers, served for a time to elevate the spirits of Mrs. Wilmot; for, according to Bligh's account, her manner was more cheerful during the voyage and journey than it had been for many weeks before; but she no sooner found herself settled in a fixed habitation than her melancholy returned with increased force. No husband could behave with greater kindness towards his wife than Captain Wilmot behaved towards her. She never expressed a wish that he did not immediately gratify; but as he was more than double her age, she never could, and never did, regard him in the light of a companion. On the contrary, though sensibly alive to his generous treatment, there was an involuntary shrinking back whenever he approached her, which she could not always conceal, even from him; but which she accounted for by attributing it to a nervous affection, to which from her childhood she had been liable. Nor was this all. She felt, with an intensity such as is experienced only by the native of a mountainous country, her separation from all the objects, animate or inanimate, with which her childhood had been familiar; and she pined to visit again the spot of her birth. So, at least, she herself asserted; but whether there might not be some cause for her dejection more deep even than this may very well be doubted.

Mrs. Wilmot's health declined so fast under the pressure

of mental distress, that the captain determined, with the view of leaving nothing undone that could be effected, to carry her back, for a while, to Bantry. One circumstance only prevented him from executing that design immediately, which was, that she promised before long to add another to the objects of his love ; but the very prospect seemed to cheer her, and for a season good hopes were entertained that she might yet do well. Sorrow, however, from whatever cause arising, had done its work too effectually. She gave birth to Rose in due time, and she never quitted her room after.

So far Bligh's story presented few traits, which may not be discovered in the details of human life as it appears every day : there was one fact, however, attending this transaction, to which I could not listen without a sense of painful mistrust. It appeared that when all hope of her recovery ceased to be encouraged, Mrs. Wilmot desired to be left alone with her husband, and that they continued shut up together for some time. What passed during that solemn interview no one can tell : but the captain, when he came forth, was an altered man ; though the only words which he was heard to utter, calculated in any degree to throw a light upon the mystery, were these. As he hurried through the passage, he smote his hand violently on his forehead, and exclaimed, ' Oh God ! why was it concealed from me ? why was this done ? ' Beyond this, however, he never went ; and his unintermitting attention to his wife showed, that of whatever nature her communication might be, it contained no disclosure derogatory to her honour. But the captain's care and kindness were equally unavailing. Mrs. Wilmot died, and was followed to her grave by a profound and sincere mourner in her husband.

It would have been strange had a child, born under circumstances similar to the above, proved other than an object of the tenderest affection and liveliest interest to its parent. Captain Wilmot may be said, for a time, to have lived only whilst his daughter was present to his gaze ; and the extravagance of his attachment, though it took a somewhat different turn, abated in no degree to the last. It is true,

that there was always a dash of melancholy even in his most intimate converse with his child : he never spoke to her in a tone of easy gaiety ; and his eyes have often been seen to fill with tears as they rested upon her ; but nobody expressed surprise at this, inasmuch as she was the very image of her mother. But there were other peculiarities about the captain. He was never known, from the day of his wife's funeral, to make so much as an allusion to his married life, nor did Rose ever hear him mention her mother's name. People put their own construction on this matter, according to their different dispositions and tempers, some attributing it to one cause, and some to another ; but as the truth has never come out, it were little better than a waste of time to hazard even a conjecture about it.

In the mean while the infant grew apace, and, after some female ancestor, by the Wilmot side, was christened Rose ; and well worthy was she of so sweet a name, for there never lived a human being more perfectly attractive. She was beautiful, — yet her personal beauty formed the very least of her attractions. Artless, gentle, and generous, Rose was never so happy as when accident or design enabled her to increase the happiness of others ; and she was, in consequence, an object of love and esteem to the whole of the surrounding neighbourhood. As she passed from stage to stage, from infancy to childhood, and from childhood to youth, every day brought to light some new excellence, of which it was scarcely believed that she was possessed. There was a gravity about her, the offspring, in all probability, of peculiar circumstances, which rendered her at a very early period a companion to the old ; whilst it was tempered by so happy an intermixture of animation and life, that she entered at all times no less freely nor less spiritedly into the amusements of the young. I should say, indeed, that her disposition was rather serious than gay, — that she thought much, and felt deeply, without caring to give proof of the former, or make a display of the latter ; yet were it an act of injustice towards her did my description create the notion that she was either sensitively shy, or affectedly prudish. On the contrary, she was the very child of na-

ture ; and so perfectly aware were her acquaintances of this fact, that she went among them by the endearing appellation of the Rose of East Kent.

Rose was not accomplished in the ordinary acceptation of that term ; that is to say, she was no classic, and the only modern tongues with which she was acquainted were the English and the French. She played, indeed, and sang, with taste and feeling : but her sole instrument was the piano-forte ; and her collection of music consisted almost entirely of wild and simple national airs. But Rose was possessed of acquirements far more valuable than can be bestowed by the ablest masters. Her heart was good, her understanding was clear, and her disposition just so far romantic as to give a zest to the enjoyments of real life, without contributing, in any very serious degree at least, to magnify its petty grievances. But, above all, Rose was religious, not, as sometimes happens, ostentatiously so, but vitally and sincerely religious. She believed that it was her duty to do to all as she would have others to do to herself : she was, consequently, a generous, whilst she was a most judicious, friend to the unfortunate. She believed that it was her duty to contribute, as far as lay in her power, to the instruction, as well as to the bodily wants, of the poor : she therefore attended our village school with zeal and punctuality ; but she did not consider that her station in life had imposed upon her the office of a controversialist. Rose was no disputant upon points of doctrine, either in the cottage or elsewhere ; and, having a profound respect for religion, she very seldom made it the subject of her every-day conversation. In a word, Rose Wilmot was one of those perfect beings whom men are apt to consider as too good for earth, and whose premature deaths give, in too many instances, a sort of confirmation to the theory.

Such were the inhabitants of the Toll when I first arrived in Kent ; Rose being then in her eighteenth, as her father was in his sixty-seventh, year. I soon became a visiter at the house ; and when my mother and sister arrived, to superintend my domestic affairs, the acquaintance, which had already begun, was continued with daily in-

creasing intimacy. The captain, frank, open, and manly, made no parade of wealth, nor pretended to entertain in a style to which his fortune was inadequate : but to his plain fare we were ever welcome ; whilst Rose finding in my sister a companion to her taste, the two became, before long, inseparable.

It appeared that Rose had not attained even to her years, without more than one suitor addressing her in the language of honourable love. Her hand had been solicited by the son of a neighbouring squire, who submitted to so heavy a degradation, only because he believed his child's peace of mind to be at stake. The youth was rejected, greatly to his own surprise and his father's indignation. A similar fate attended the advances of a beneficed clergyman and an attorney, though the former was in possession of more than one good living, and the latter could boast of an extensive and lucrative practice. Neither the one nor the other fared better than their haughtier rival, with a being whose heart seemed steeled against the inroads of the tender passion. I need scarcely add that no arguments were employed by Captain Wilmot with a view of influencing his daughter's conduct in such a matter. He determined to leave her perfectly at liberty to choose for herself, in a case where, above all others, individual feeling ought mainly to be consulted ; and he was rather glad than otherwise, when she declared, that her wish was to live on, as she had hitherto done, with him. Thus, up to her nineteenth year, Rose continued to devote herself to the happiness of her father, to whom she was deservedly dear as light to the eye, without wasting a thought upon subjects which are said, I know not how justly, to hold, for the most part, rather a prominent position in maidens' minds.

CHAPTER X

THE ROSE OF EAST KENT.

TIME passed, and in his progress brought round a season, which at the Toll was always kept as a sort of festival. It was at the close of a September day, when a party, which had assembled there for the purpose of celebrating, by a sort of *fête champêtre*, the anniversary of Captain Wilmot's birth, deemed it prudent to take shelter against a threatened thunder-storm under his hospitable roof. The rain had begun to descend in torrents, and the first flash of lightning had passed, when a loud knocking at the outer door gave notice that others besides ourselves stood in need of shelter. Not a moment was lost in paying attention to the signal: the door was immediately opened, and there was ushered into the parlour a person arrayed in the dress of a sportsman, of whom nobody present knew any thing, but who entered with an air of perfect self-command, which, widely removed from impertinent assurance, can be assumed only by the man of fashion and the gentleman. In the same spirit which swayed his address at entering, he offered his apology for thus breaking in upon the privacy of a domestic circle, by stating, that he was shooting in the adjoining fields when the storm began, and had sought the first cover that presented; and as a lack of hospitality was not one of the captain's vices, the apology was accepted with perfect readiness. Nor was this all. The stranger was invited to lay aside his gun, tie up his dogs for the evening, and join our party; with both of which requests he considered it proper to comply; and he soon entered into the feelings of those about him, with as much ease as if he had been known to them all for years.

As there was no restraint about our new acquaintance, but a few minutes elapsed ere he made known to us both his name and condition in life. He stated himself to be the Honourable Major Elliot, of the ——— regiment of infantry, at that time quartered in the barracks at Shorn-

cliffe ; that he was in temporary command of the battalion, and that, being a keen sportsman, he spent a good deal of his time among the hills and valleys near. As may be imagined, this piece of intelligence did not render him who gave it one whit less interesting than he was before in the eyes of any one present. It is true, that his general appearance and manner had already created an impression greatly in his favour. His age might be, upon a rough guess, about six or seven and twenty : both in face and figure he was strikingly handsome ; and there was an expression in his countenance of great candour, high courage, and very considerable intelligence ; whilst his bearing was frank, open, manly, and humorous, such as conveyed altogether the idea of a well-bred, gallant, and polished young soldier. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied, that a knowledge of both his professional and civil rank had not a tendency to give to these accomplishments less than their legitimate value, more especially in the eyes of the females. On the contrary, a close observer might, by chance, have noticed that somewhat of an opposite effect was produced ; and that his conversation, abundantly attractive in itself, became even more valued after his designation was made public. Yet let justice be done ; it must be allowed that a more fascinating youth than the major is not every day to be met. There was no topic on which he appeared to be at a loss. With the captain he talked of war, of battles by sea and land, till the veteran's heart was won ; with others, whether the subject of books was introduced, or music, or the arts, he was equally at home : in a word, he gave a perfectly novel turn to the discussions of the evening, which all felt and admitted to be for the better. Under such circumstances, it is not to be wondered at if he made large demands upon the good opinion of the entire party, or that minutes and hours stole away much more rapidly than at other meetings of the kind they had been in the habit of doing.

At last the sight of the moon sailing through a clear and cloudless sky seemed to remind the major that the moment of his departure had come : he rose, not, as it appeared, without reluctance ; and saying something about a three

miles' walk across a rough country, prepared to withdraw. If such were really his feeling, and future events abundantly demonstrated that it was, he might, at least, derive consolation from the unequivocal proofs which were given, that regret at parting was not experienced by him alone. All of us looked as if we could have desired the hour of separation to be postponed, though none ventured to say so in express terms. But the honest captain would not suffer him to pass thus.

"I trust," said he, shaking him heartily by the hand, "this is only the commencement of a more intimate acquaintance. I am an old man, and can hardly promise to make my way so far as your quarters; but if you will consent to waive such a ceremony, the more frequently we see you here, the better I shall be pleased." The soldier expressed himself obliged by so hospitable an invitation. He promised that not many days should elapse ere he again presented himself; and gracefully taking leave of the ladies, he returned the commodore's squeeze and withdrew. We heard his whistle, and the barking of his dogs, and he was gone.

"A very nice, pleasant, unassuming young man," said the captain, as soon as his back was turned, "with none of the foolish airs of a sprig of nobility about him. Depend upon it, Mr. Williams, the navy and army are the schools for your honourables. There is no sporting the great man where rank goes by seniority, and where discipline teaches the lord that he may be ordered about at pleasure by the commoner. I dare say he is a good soldier too. He talks like a man who is an enthusiast in his profession; and neither sailors nor soldiers are worth a doit unless they be enthusiasts. Well, well, we must find no fault with a storm which has brought us so agreeable a companion."

In these praises all present joined; and as if the soul of the party had gone with the subject of their commendations, the guests soon after separated, leaving the captain and his daughter to their private meditations.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ROSE OF EAST KENT.

It very soon appeared, that if the family at the Toll were pleased with their new acquaintance, the major was no less gratified by the occurrence, or less anxious to avail himself of the invitation which he had received. Two days only elapsed ere he made good his threatened visit. On that occasion he wore an undress uniform, and rode a beautiful Arab pony, and as both the costume and attitude became him, appeared to peculiar advantage. He was animated in the extreme, repeatedly expressed his gratitude to the friendly storm which had driven him for shelter under the old man's roof, and said and did all those little nameless things which never fail to win upon the good opinion of persons ignorant of the ways of the world, and therefore disposed to consider others as innocent and sincere as themselves. The result was, that after a protracted call of several hours' duration, and after resisting the repeated invitations of his host to stay dinner, he departed, leaving behind him an impression so favourable in the minds of his new friends, as to render him secure of a cordial reception, let him return when he might.

How felt Rose all this while, and what was the nature of the impression made upon her? She had seen the stranger but twice; of his character and connections she knew nothing: he was agreeable, it is true, and well-informed, but he might be a villain for all that. Many an elegant exterior covers a black and depraved heart. But what knew Rose of this? Her world was comprised within the circuit of a few miles, and with the characters of all its inhabitants she was familiarly acquainted. She had never yet met with a bad man who was agreeable, or with a good man who was disagreeable; how then could she tell that such discrepancies exist? I have already hinted that Rose was a romantic girl — her very excellences were all tinged with that spirit, otherwise they could not

have been carried to the extent to which she did carry them ; and hence it appeared to her, that till now she had never beheld a human being worthy of a woman's truest and warmest devotion. Major Elliot seemed to possess all that man can ever possess of relative perfection. She thought of him, when alone and awake, with an intensity of feeling, for which she either could not or sought not to account. The harmonious tones of his voice were ever in her ear : the sparkle of his bright eye was continually before her ; especially as it beamed upon her with a soft and languid expression, after she had sung to him one of the exquisite airs of her maternal country. And then her dreams — they were all of Elliot. In one word, Rose loved the stranger already. Two days, spent partly in his presence, had done more than all the attentions of either her clerical or legal suitor : her destiny was fixed.

Whether the feeling was mutual, and Elliot as deeply smitten with Rose, as Rose with Elliot, came not to be known for some little time. It is true that he appeared at the Toll very frequently : by some chance or other he had always a little business to transact at Folkstone ; and as the ride across the hills was far more beautiful than along the coast, he invariably preferred it. This happened for a while, perhaps twice or three times a week ; gradually the visits were more frequent ; and, at last, they were things of every day's occurrence. In a word, within a month from their first meeting Major Elliot formally declared the passion which his manner and marked attention had already sufficiently betrayed, and urged an immediate compliance with his wishes. Rose heard him with the agitation which such a proposition never fails to produce in the breast of a delicate-minded female. She was far too artless to conceal the influence which he had obtained over her, and far too innocent to deny it : she gave him all the encouragement which he could expect her to give, and referred him to her father for the rest. The old man, it is probably needless to say, was delighted by the occurrence. To see his daughter happy was the only ardent wish of his heart ; and such was the opinion which he had formed of the major's good qua-

lities and character, that he received him with open arms, as the future guardian of his dearest earthly treasure.

I have recorded these matters exactly as they occurred, without any observation or comment of my own. Doubtless, both father and daughter acted imprudently, in suffering things to proceed thus far, without making any previous enquiry into the circumstances of the lover; but let them not be blamed too severely. Than Major Elliot, it would be difficult to meet a more agreeable or gentlemanly man. His brother officers all spoke highly of him, as a good soldier, and as one likely to rise in his profession. Of his rank in life no doubt could exist, for there stood his name in the Army List, having the word "honourable" prefixed to it in legible characters. With respect to his fortune, again, he himself never represented it as great; and, what is more, he honestly confessed that there was no prospect of an addition being made to it, except from advancement in the service, or some staff, or other lucrative appointment. His father being dead, he had nothing to look for from that quarter; and his brother being a poor peer, it was to be expected and desired, that such of their more distant relations as possessed money would leave it all to support the dignity of the title. When a young man acted thus honourably; when he neither made, nor attempted to make, the smallest concealment in his affairs; when his proposals were such as no one could object to, and his behaviour, to the most remote particular, correct and delicate, it was not to be expected that a man honourable as Captain Wilmot was should entertain any suspicions, or deem it at all requisite to institute such enquiries as might lead the individual enquired about to feel that he was regarded with an unkindly eye. The captain was too good-hearted to act thus. Rose was satisfied with her father's approbation; and the lovers accordingly continued to enjoy as much of each other's society as the professional duties of the soldier, and the domestic and charitable occupations of Rose, would allow.

It was soon an understood thing, that Rose Wilmot was engaged to Major Elliot. Many were the congratulatory sentences to which she was doomed for a while to listen;

and many the stale jokes and heartless insinuations with which she was doomed to be pestered. Rose bore it all with great equanimity; but she gradually dropped the company of her more talkative friends, and, at last, by the especial request of her lover, confined her visits entirely to the Vicarage. For ourselves, we never entered into the coteries of the neighbouring town; and hence, the only variety afforded before long to the enamoured pair, at least in the way of visiting, occurred when they partook of the plain hospitality of our poor dwelling, or we partook of that at the Toll.

The faith of the lovers had now been plighted several weeks; and many little pledges of unalterable affection had passed between them. Among other gifts, the major had presented Rose with the identical Arab pony on which he had himself been mounted when he paid his second visit to the Toll; and the animal became, as a matter of course, a prodigious favourite with its mistress. Gentle and tractable, it not only permitted her to ride with the most perfect ease and safety to herself, but it soon came to know her voice, and would prick up its ears and canter towards her whenever she called it. They were a lovely pair, Rose and her Arab: it seemed as if the one had been formed expressly for the other. The day being already fixed for the wedding, and the nature of the connection fully known, Rose did not scruple to ride out with Elliot whenever he wished it. She was too pure for the most determined villain to offer her an insult; and her purity was too well known for the tongue of scandal to be moved at the proceeding.

Things had continued thus, and the wedding-day was but one little week distant, when Rose, who had agreed to meet Elliot half-way between Folkstone and Shorncliffe, set out one morning upon her pony, unattended. She rode on at a gentle pace, expecting every moment to meet her lover; but he came not. Having taken, not the highway, but the track across the hills, she felt a little uneasy lest they might have passed each other in some glen or valley; and as the barracks with the parade-ground were already in sight, she determined to go no farther. But she had hardly reined up her horse, when the sight of troops marching from their

cantonments attracted her attention ; she guessed that some military business was in hand, and that Elliot had been detained by it. Though too delicate to show herself upon the parade-ground, she resolved to ride a little nearer, partly to indulge her own wishes, by gazing even from a distance upon the form which occupied her sleeping and waking thoughts, and partly with the hope that his attention might be attracted, and hence that he might lose no time in joining her when the parade should be dismissed. With this view she put her pony to the canter, and approached the lines.

In the mean while she observed the battalion form into square, and a wooden machine, of a triangular shape, erected in the midst of it. All was now silence. She had ridden nearer than was her original intention, because the sight of Elliot, mounted upon his charger, immediately in rear of the troops, had blinded her to other objects ; and the consequence was, that she obtained a distinct view of all that was passing. There came from a particular quarter of the buildings a guard of soldiers conducting a man handcuffed, and in an undress, towards the battalion. This last body had hardly entered the square, when a wild shriek, and in a woman's voice, caught her ear. A female, at the same instant, darted from one of the houses, with hair dishevelled, and her garments disordered. She held up her hands to heaven ; and falling down upon her knees before Elliot's horse, seemed to be urging some petition with all the energy of deep grief. Elliot turned away from her, and rode into the square. The woman rose, uttered another scream, and began to tear her hair ; when suddenly, as it seemed, catching sight of Rose, she ran towards her. Rose trembled, she knew not why, and was stationary.

" Oh, lady," cried the woman, who was now at her side, and had fallen upon her knees, — " oh, lady, surely Heaven has heard my prayer, and sent you hither. Save him, for God's sake save him, or they will tear him to pieces. I know you have only to speak the word, and it will be done."

" Save whom, my good woman ? " replied Rose, deeply

affected. "Whom am I to save, and from what am I to save him?"

"My husband, my husband," exclaimed the unhappy woman, still kneeling. "Save him from the lash: they are going to flog him for a fault which he never committed. No, no, I take Heaven to witness he did not; and I should have known it if he had. Oh, lady, save him! I know the major can refuse *you* nothing; speak for him, good lady, and God will bless you for it."

Rose was quite overcome, and burst into tears. "Heaven's blessing be upon those dear eyes," exclaimed the soldier's wife, as Rose put her pony to the speed, and was making towards the square. But there was no necessity for that step. Major Elliot had seen her, and was already flying towards her. "Rose," cried he, pulling up his horse when they met, "this is no place for you. Go, my love,—go from the ground, at least now; you cannot stay to witness what must be done."

"Nay, Elliot," replied Rose, "I will not go. I beseech you not to hurt that poor woman's husband. He is innocent, indeed he is; she says so, and I am sure she is correct. Indeed, indeed, I cannot go till you ~~promise~~ promise me that he shall not be punished."

"You know not what you ask, Rose," rejoined Elliot. "Believe me, love, I am not cruel; I would not willingly hurt a hair of his head. But the man is a criminal,—he has been found guilty; and discipline must be kept up. I would refuse you nothing, as you well know, which I could grant consistently with my honour,—and you would not have me sacrifice that?"

"No, Elliot: I would not have you sacrifice your honour, for that is dearer to me than life; but what dishonour can there be in pardoning a guilty man? Is it not the noblest use that we can make of power? Oh, Elliot! remember how much we ourselves stand in need of pardon; and as you hope to be forgiven your own sins, forgive the offences of this criminal. Look to his wife, dear Elliot, and think what I should feel were hers and my situation reversed."

“Rose, you have prevailed,” answered the major; “but, in truth, I would it had been otherwise. You have, moreover, exposed us both. Go:—I will do as you desire, and follow you.” He turned his horse’s head and galloped back to the square. As to Rose, her very brain swam round. She had performed a humane action, for which her conscience approved her; but she had hurt or offended Elliot, and even an approving conscience could not compensate for that. Besides, had she not, in some degree, overstepped the bounds of female modesty, in appearing before a parade of soldiers, and openly exerting her influence over their commanding officer? Such were the thoughts which rushed into her mind, as she rode leisurely in the direction of her home. But she was not suffered to pass thus. The noise of persons running was behind her, and in a moment both the woman and her husband were at her side.

“That is the lady, Will,” cried the poor wife; “that is she that saved you. Bless her, Will,—thank her, and bless her as she deserves.”

“I cannot thank you as you deserve, dear young lady,” said the man; “but Heaven will reward you. Ay,—and I too may do you service. Lady, have a care of what you are doing. I have seen you often, where now I would not see you again; and have heard of you what must never again be spoken. Farewell, lady! your goodness shall not pass unrequited; but have a care of ——”

The soldier seemed as if he were going to give utterance to something of importance, when the speech was interrupted by the coming up of Major Elliot. “Begone, sir!” cried the major, addressing the man in a tone more harsh and authoritative than Rose considered at all necessary. “Begone to your quarters, and take care how you get into a scrape again. There may not always be a friend at hand to save you.” The man touched the front of his foraging cap, and casting an anxious look at Rose walked away.

“What was that fellow saying?” asked Elliot; and he asked it with a degree of agitation such as he seemed unwilling to have observed.

“ Nothing,” replied Rose. “ He only thanked me for having spoken in his favour. But he might have said something worth listening to,” added she with a smile, “ had you not sent him away.”

“ Indeed !” rejoined the major, smiling in his turn ; “ and what might be the subject of his communication ?”

“ That I cannot tell. I only know that the last sentence was one of caution ; but whether against people or things, or witches or hobgoblins, you gave me no opportunity of discovering.”

“ Humph !” replied Elliot.

A considerable pause ensued in the conversation, during which Rose cast a timid glance towards her lover, and beheld with dismay an expression of violent, and, as she judged, painful anxiety upon his countenance, such as she had never seen there before. “ What is the matter ?” cried she, a good deal alarmed. “ You are ill, Elliot, or you are offended with me for appearing, where, indeed, I feel that I ought not to have appeared.” The anxious look departed instantly from his visage, and his old sweet smile took its place.

“ Not so, dear Rose,” replied he. “ Offended with you I cannot be ; though I wish things had turned out differently. But no matter. Rose has had her way, and she is convinced there is nothing which Elliot would not do to make her happy. Let me, however, obtain one promise from you. Never act again as you acted to-day ; and take no farther notice of the persons whom you have obliged. He is not a good man : she is a bad woman ; and they may impose upon you.”

“ I promise,” answered Rose, restored once more to her accustomed composure. The remainder of their ride passed by as their rides generally passed, and Elliot spent the day at the Toll.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ROSE OF EAST KENT.

I HAVE said that the interval of one week only now intervened between the progress of the lover's suit, and its consummation by marriage. It is probably needless to add, that each day was one of extraordinary bustle and preparation, not only among the milliners and dress-makers of Folkstone, but with Rose and my sister likewise. The latter was, as a matter of course, chosen to do the duties of a bride's maid. To prepare her for that important office, a suitable robe must be got ready; and when that was in a state of forwardness, her taste was to be consulted, and her needle put in requisition, to assist the bride in such parts of her equipment as she chose not to intrust to the artists in our country town. Throughout the parish, again, all was tiptoe expectation. The old people, though they grieved at the prospect of losing the dear sweet young lady, yet rejoiced, as in duty bound, at the near approach of her wedding; affirming that she had only met with her deserts; for, in truth, had the handsome major been a lord himself, instead of a lord's son, she would have been still too good for him. With respect to the young folks again, especially the children at the school, the feeling was one of extreme and unmixed satisfaction; partly, poor souls, because they looked forward to a day of mirth and enjoyment, and partly because they one and all loved their young mistress, and were glad because they imagined she was glad also. Such was the general feeling throughout the parish, and, indeed, throughout the neighbourhood. The talkative part of her own sex, it is true, whose society she had latterly avoided, did not profess that satisfaction which none of them experienced, or if they did, we heard nothing of it: but all with whom she continued to associate, whether as friends and equals, like ourselves, or as humble dependents, like the poor people in the parish, cherished but one sentiment—that of unmixed good-will and gratification on the occasion.

Day after day passed on, and each night and morning, as it went and came, brought the nuptial hour nearer and nearer. Major Elliot was, all this while, as attentive as a lover could be. That he adored Rose, every word and gesture gave evidence; yet, strange to say, I could not help imagining, that the faster the period of interval sped on, the less easy and agreeable he became in his general manner. He would drop, at times, into a fit of musing, from which even Rose's raillery could hardly rouse him; whilst anon an expression would pass from time to time athwart his countenance, such as I loved not to behold, and which indicated a troubled spirit. For a while, I was willing to persuade myself that my own imagination had deceived me; but I soon found that the circumstances which struck me had not been unobserved by others.

"Do you not think that Major Elliot has greatly changed of late?" said my sister to me on the evening just previous to that which was to precede the wedding. "I trust he does not repent his choice; but, in truth, he seems to me to have become singularly dull and reserved within these few days."

"I am sorry you have noticed it," answered I; "for I had hoped that my own fancy was deceiving me. Yet I know not why we should suspect evil things, because a man becomes serious on the approach of his marriage. It is a very solemn engagement; and though the major be of age, and free from the restraint of guardians, it is very possible that his family pride may rise in arms, now that the moment of trial is at hand. However, we have seen nothing capable of seriously alarming us as to Rose's future happiness; and whilst that is the case, the wisest course we can pursue is to keep our surmises and apprehensions to ourselves."

The gravity of manner and fits of abstraction which had alarmed us made, it appeared, no impression whatever upon Rose. She either saw them not, or she was too much occupied by her own thoughts to give to them any lasting consideration; for Rose, too, was moody and silent at times, as the hour of her wedding drew near. She thought of her father, the only being whom, previous to her ac-

quaintance with Elliot, she had really loved, with all the affectionate consideration which a dutiful daughter ever feels when about to be separated from her parent, perhaps for ever. Who would take care of him as she had done, when the fortune of war should call her, it might be, many hundred miles away from him? Doubtless it is, both to man and woman, the most blessed of all anticipations, that they are about to be united to the single being with whom they would desire to spend their lives; but to a man, generally speaking, the anticipation comes unchecked, for he has no home to abandon, and no relatives to leave behind. It is not so with a woman: she quits a home, a positive home, the dwelling-place of father or mother, or both, where a thousand little links are woven into a chain to bind down her affections, and to rivet all her wishes. On her side, therefore, there is a sacrifice to be made, which is not demanded on the part of her lover; because she severs old ties for one as yet unknown, and abandons old scenes and old associations for—she knows not what, and she scarce knows whom. No doubt, these reflections had their full weight with Rose: be that, however, as it may, the abstractedness of manner, and fits of gloom, which struck my sister and myself as attaching to Major Elliot, passed, on her part, as perfectly unheeded as if they had had no existence.

And now one day only stood between the wishes, not of the lovers alone, but of all their friends, and their completion. It so happened, that on that very day the family from the Vicarage had been invited to dine at the Toll. We were all assembled in the drawing-room waiting for Major Elliot, who had been some time expected. We were in the act of discussing the arrangement which the lovers had made as to their marriage jaunt,—some recommending the place of their own choice, the Isle of Wight; others proposing Cumberland, or North Wales, as a fit situation for spending the honey-moon, when Bligh put his head—only his head—within the doorway, and stated that “a person in the kitchen desired to see Miss Rose.” Rose instantly prepared to obey the summons; but before she had walked half across the room, the jing-

ling of spurs in the passage beyond foretold the approach of one whom she would not shun, and immediately after Major Elliot entered. He seemed heated, and, if my imagination deceived me not, a good deal agitated.

"Whither go you, love?" said he in a hurried tone of voice, seizing Rose by the hand, and leading her back to her chair.

"Some one has desired to see me," replied she, smiling sweetly upon him, and gently disengaging her hand: "I will return to you in a moment."

"Do not go, Rose," cried the major, endeavouring to be calm; "I know who has asked for you—I saw her enter by the back way as I came up: it is the woman with whom you promised to hold no farther intercourse—you will not go, now?"

"No, certainly," answered Rose. "Tell the woman, Bligh, that I cannot see her; but if she have any thing to communicate, desire her to send in her message by you."

Bligh retired, and the door was shut.

"Her husband has not been in jeopardy again?" said Rose, addressing the major.

"Not at all," answered he.

"The man has behaved wonderfully well, considering his general character; but I am glad you did not see her. It is more than probable that she sought to impose upon you, a second time, by some story of feigned distress: I only wish you had desired your man to turn her out of doors at once. But let her pass. What think you of these, dear Rose? will they match your dress to-morrow?" So saying, the major opened a little box which he carried in his hand, and displayed a brilliant diamond necklace and bracelets, of the value of which I cannot judge, but which, I doubt not, were worth a considerable sum of money.

"And why waste these upon me, Elliot?" said she turning them over and admiring them all the while. "Know you not that I stand in need of no such tokens?"

"I know not what you stand in need of, Rose; but this I know, that you merit more than I can ever bestow upon you. And here," continued he, "what say you to this?" As he concluded the latter speech, he drew from his pocket

a piece of paper, which, on examination, proved to be a licence. Rose, of course, blushed, and we, as a matter equally of course, laughed. The major's hurried manner was gone, and we were in momentary expectation of a summons to dinner, when Bligh again entered.

"The woman would hardly be persuaded to go, miss," said he. "I told her you were engaged; and she was the more desirous of seeing you on that account. At last, when I positively assured her you would not be spoken to, she begged for pen, ink, and paper, and wrote you a note. Here it is, ma'am."

"Read it not, Rose," cried Elliot, starting from his chair, and grasping at the bit of paper. "It is some infernal petition, some imposture, something to deceive your good-nature. Read it not." Old Bligh, however, knew his duty better than to suffer a note addressed to his mistress to pass into other hands. He shrank back from the major's clutch, and held it tight.

"Nay, Elliot," replied Rose, "this is absolute folly. You must think me no better than a child, if you believe that a single note, or any other single communication, either with the husband or the wife, must of necessity expose me to danger. But I have no desire to read it. Give it to my father, Bligh, or to Mr. Williams—he is beside you."

"Give it to me," cried the major in a voice of thunder, "as you value your life," laying at the same time his hand violently on Bligh's collar. We were all, as may be imagined, thrown into the utmost confusion by a behaviour so extraordinary. The commodore half rose from his seat: my sister uttered a scream; and Rose trembled excessively, the colour coming and going upon her cheek in quick succession. As to Bligh, he shook off the major's grasp with the coolness of a veteran; and, handing the note to me, stood bolt upright between us whilst I perused it.

"Read, Mr. Williams," said Rose in a tone of womanly dignity, "and read aloud, that all may hear you. There must be something singular indeed in that billet, to affect Major Elliot so strangely." I did read; but before I had

read to an end the major had disappeared. The letter was as follows:—

“ I have followed you, dear lady, far and near, for the purpose of putting you on your guard ; but no opportunity of speaking has been furnished to me. Even now you will not see me. But, perhaps, you may read this, and if so, the kind office which you did to me and my husband will not go unrewarded. Oh, lady ! beware of Major Elliot ; he is a villain, and will betray you. They say you are to marry him to-morrow. Marry him not, dear lady, for he is married already. His wife is now living in the very county where both I and my husband were bred and born.”

How I contrived to read the above scrawl to a close, I know not. When it was finished, I felt as if a fit of apoplexy had come over me : I had no power to move hand or foot. The like stupor seemed to take possession of every individual in the room : we all stood or sat motionless, as if the Arabian tale had come to pass, and we had all been changed into marble. Two seconds, perhaps, had thus passed, when our senses were suddenly and most painfully recalled. Rose, who had been standing about the centre of the apartment, dropped like one smitten by a deadly wound ; not a sound or motion marked the workings of her feelings, but at once she fell flat upon the carpet.

“ My child ! my child ! ” exclaimed the captain, roused by the situation of his daughter. “ My Rose, my own darling child. Help ! help ! run — ride — fly — bring hither the doctor. Look to her, Mr. Williams, — for God’s sake, look to her ! and you, Bligh, fetch me my pistols. Oh, the villain ! the cold-hearted, hypocritical villain ! Bring me my pistols, I say, — saddle the horse, and let me follow him. I am old ; but there is some vigour in this arm yet, and the scoundrel shall feel it.”

It would be difficult to say which of the two, whether the old man or his daughter, attracted the greatest share of our attention, or seemed to have the greatest demand upon our sympathy. The rest of the party, as was natural, looked chiefly to Rose, and exerted every ordinary expedient to recall her to her senses. For myself, I was

more eager to stay the proceedings of the captain; for Bligh, game to the back-bone, was all for fighting, and swore, that if his master did not shoot the scoundrel, he would do it himself.

“Stay, dear sir!” cried I; “stay at least till Rose be herself again. The villain cannot escape you, if you be determined to add sin to sin. But your daughter,—what is to become of her, while you think only of avenging her wrongs? For Heaven’s sake, let medical assistance be called in.”

“You are right, Mr. Williams,” replied the commodore, “quite right. The scoundrel cannot escape me: he cannot quit his regiment without leave, and I shall find him yet.—Mount, Bligh, mount, and ride for the doctor: I need not tell you to ride fast.”

“He shall be here in a twinkling,” cried Bligh; and disappeared to execute his message.

Bligh must have ridden at the rate of at least ten knots an hour; for we had hardly recalled Rose to the use of her faculties when the surgeon arrived. Having taken a little blood from her, he desired that she should be put to bed, and recommended that the utmost quietness might be preserved,—no one, not even her father, going near her for some time. To these injunctions the most prompt and ready attention was paid. Narcotics were, moreover, administered, as well as every species of soothing medicine calculated to allay the nervous irritability which she soon began to exhibit; for though, on first awaking from her trance, she seemed perfectly unconscious of past events, not many minutes elapsed ere the truth again broke in upon her. All, however, would not do. No sleep—not even a doze or broken slumber—came to her aid. She lay awake—wide, but speechlessly awake. Not a word of complaint escaped her; not a syllable of reproach, either upon herself or any other person; but ever and anon a sigh deep, deep, and distinctly audible, told how heavily the hand of affliction had fallen upon her, and how acutely she felt its weight, even in her heart of hearts. Poor Rose! I saw her no more that day, but my sister remained beside her till the morning, and the spectacle presented was, I under-

stand, a harrowing one. You could not say that the maiden was actually deranged, neither could you affirm that her mind was under the guidance of reason. For many hours she spoke not all; and when at length the faculty of speech returned, it exhibited itself, not in lengthened sentences, but in exclamations short and broken, and piteous to overhear. The name of Elliot passed once or twice, as it would appear, involuntarily over her lips; but she checked herself, as it were, as soon as the word was uttered, and relapsed again into profound silence.

With respect to the captain, no words of mine can convey any adequate idea of the intense misery which the good man appeared to suffer.

“The villain! the cold-blooded, heartless villain! Oh, may God’s heaviest curse, and the curse of a father, light upon him! My Rose, the prop of my old age, thus blighted! Ah, but he shall not escape me.—Bligh! I say, Bligh, put these weapons in good order, and see that the horses are saddled betimes in the morning. Oh, the scoundrel! how well these old hands will look when his base heart’s blood has dyed them!” Thus raved the old man, alternately indulging in lamentations over his daughter, and invectives against her betrayer, during the remainder of the evening. Neither, in truth, was Bligh more calm.

“I thought there must be something wrong, sir,” said he, “when the lubber seemed so anxious to capture that there bit of a letter. And how came he to sheer off so safely? Well, well, Miss Rose shall not go unrevengeed if old Bligh himself be left to avenge her.”

I cannot describe, I may not indeed attempt to describe, the condition of the whole family at the Toll that night. He whose hopes had been wound up to the highest pitch, and who has felt them suddenly swept away from beneath him, as by a whirlwind, could alone enter into the description, were it even adequately given. But for the delineation of scenes such as that, human language is happily not adequate:—I say happily, because words being but the symbols of ideas, were there any words capable of placing so dark a picture before the mind’s eye, the picture

itself must be very frequent in real life. It is not so as yet. Long may it be till the case become different !

CHAPTER XIV.

THE ROSE OF EAST KENT.

My tale is drawing fast to a close, and it is a melancholy one. Day had barely dawned when Captain Wilmot, over whose head the night had dragged heavily on, set forth, attended by Bligh, in quest of the villain who had so cruelly betrayed his confidence. On that occasion the old man's strength, both of body and mind, seemed to have become supernaturally renewed. But the pursuit was fruitless. Elliot had not returned to his quarters. It afterwards appeared, that immediately on quitting the Toll, he took the road for London, from whence, having obtained permission to join the portion of his corps employed on foreign service, he embarked for the East Indies. What ultimately became of him, whether he fell by the sword, or whether a pestilential climate carried him off, I never learned. The only intelligence respecting him, indeed, which ever reached us, was conveyed in a letter from himself to Rose. It bore date ten days posterior to the discovery of his baseness, and ran thus :—

“ How or in what terms I am to address you, most beloved and most injured of women, I know not. That you will condescend to peruse these lines, knowing from whom they come, I am doubtful ; and if you do peruse them, where will be the benefit ? Oh, Rose, forgive me ! I deserve it not,—that I feel ; but you—you were ever a being of purity and mercy. Can that mercy extend even to me ? It is true, that I am a villain ; but not a heartless one. It is true, that but for the direct interposition of Providence in your favour, you would have been ere now

betrayed and undone, and I not less miserable than I am now. I offer no excuse for all this. Even now I write solely to assure you, that, go where I will, your image shall go with me, and that——

“ Rose, I never loved but one, and you are she. My marriage, for married I am, was entered into as a means of extricating myself from pecuniary embarrassments ; and the woman with whom the hated connection was formed has long ceased to be treated as my wife. You, Rose, you only have I loved. God is my witness, that I proceeded in my villany step by step, —that when first I saw you, I dreamed not of your ruin, —that at each visit your influence over me became greater and greater,—that I felt how worthless life would be without you ; and that——

“ But what am I saying ? what excuse is here for conduct such as mine ? Farewell, dear Rose, for ever ! Your miniature is on my bosom ! there it shall hang till that bosom cease to beat. To-morrow I embark for a distant land, from whence I shall never return. May you be happy ! may the image of one who could have been to you all that man ever was to woman cease to hold its place in your memory ; and may another, and a more worthy lover, restore to you that peace which I have so basely taken away ! For me, my house of rest is in the grave.”

Rose had already quitted her bed, and was able to appear, as formerly, in the parlour, when the preceding letter reached her. It had a powerful, but not an agonising, effect upon her feelings. She wept bitterly over it ; but never, except at the moment, did she allude to its contents. The name of Elliot, indeed, soon ceased to be heard either at the Toll or the Vicarage ; and to a stranger it might have seemed as if no such person had ever come amongst us. The only remembrance of him, and of the scenes connected with him, not positively set aside, was the Arab pony. That little animal, at his mistress's express desire, was still permitted to browse and play about the paddock : he was still as great a favourite as ever, and still galloped up to the gate at the sound of her voice, to receive his portion of bread from her own fair hand. But she never mounted

him again. No saddle, indeed, was put upon his back, till the last scene in this sad drama had been acted.

Rose was a strong-minded and a pious girl ; but she was a girl of deep and enthusiastic feeling. She complained not ; and she did her best to assume that cheerfulness which was natural to her, and which now she never felt. But the exertion requisite was too manifest not to be seen, and, in truth, she uniformly appeared to me, at least, in the greatest degree, an object of commiseration, when her efforts were most strenuously exerted to avoid a display of sorrow. Poor Rose ! she was stricken, where wounds are generally fatal, and her wound was mortal.

For several months strong hopes were entertained, that time and change of scene might gradually restore her to herself. Though grieved to part from friends so deserving, even for a season, I accordingly advised her father to carry her from home ; to introduce her, as far as could be done into the gay world ; and if he found that scheme unsuccessful, to try foreign travel. The captain was ill able to bear the fatigues of journeying, and, under any other circumstances, would have been absolutely indisposed to quit his own roof ; but in the present case he hesitated not to carry the plan into execution. They departed for London. From thence, after a sojourn of a few weeks, they made a tour into Derbyshire, and they would have extended their travels to other parts of England, had not Rose earnestly petitioned to be brought back to the scene of her early happiness. To resist these entreaties was impossible ; besides that no benefit had been seen to accrue from the measures already adopted : so, having wandered about in vain during the whole of the summer, they returned, at the beginning of autumn, to the Toll.

Alas ! what a change was visible in Rose ! The delicate hue which was wont to tinge her cheek had given place to an alternate deep hectic flush and deadly paleness. Her fine hazel eye was still bright and expressive ; but the brightness was that which consumption never fails to create, and the expression was one of unchanging pensiveness. Of the exquisite symmetry of her form little now remained.

She was no longer the lively and happy creature whose very step gave evidence of a contented spirit, and whose presence failed not to shed a ray of delight over all with whom she came in contact ; but, " the ghost of what she was," she could barely contrive to crawl from her chamber to the parlour, and from thence, when the sun shone warmly out, to a seat upon the lawn. Poor Rose! the first leaves were beginning to fall when she returned to her paternal roof ; the last were still upon the trees when she was borne to her grave.

I will not distress myself nor my reader by pursuing in detail the melancholy narrative of Rose's illness. Enough is done when I state generally, that day by day the disease gained ground upon her, in spite of every effort which human science could suggest to oppose it. At length she could no longer quit her room. A sofa was accordingly placed beside the window, upon which, for an hour or two each day, she rested ; but even this, even the removal from her bed to the couch, became too great for her ; and it ceased to be done. Oh, what a glorious specimen of Christian fortitude and meekness did that girl present ! When curses were on other lips, and tears in other eyes, she spoke only of forgiveness and blessings, and wept not. Now, indeed, feeling that the hand of death was on her, she scrupled not to speak of Elliot ; and it was invariably as of one whom she had loved to absolute idolatry. " Surely God will forgive him," said she to me, when on one occasion I was preparing to administer the sacrament to her. " I say not that he was blameless ; oh, no, no ! but I forgive him freely—freely ! Oh, most freely ! and here," clasping her thin white hands together, " I pray that he may be forgiven by Him, who knoweth whereof we are made, and is not extreme to mark what is amiss." The angelic piety of the maiden was too much for me ; I could only turn away my head, and burst into tears.

I had sat with her till a late hour one evening in the latter end of October, and she appeared more easy and more cheerful than usual. Our devotions being ended, we had talked, as we generally talked, partly of the unhappy cause of her illness, and partly of the children at the school,

and the poor of the parish, in whose fate she was deeply interested ; and I was rising to depart, when she laid her burning hand gently upon mine, and requested me to stay beside her a few moments longer. " It is a strange fancy of mine," said she ; " but I wish to be carried to the grave, not as the rich are usually carried, but like the daughter of a peasant. It has always appeared to me a foolish thing to conduct such a ceremony as a funeral with any degree of pomp or parade. I should wish, too, that your sister, with five of my old schoolfellows, would act as bearers. Will you arrange this matter for me ; and let them plant a few flowers on my grave ? I was ever fond of the Scotch rose in my life ; and I fancy that the knowledge that such a flower was blooming over my grave would give me pleasure even in death." She smiled when she spoke, as if ashamed of her own request ; but she was pleased that I neither rejected nor opposed it.

" Good night, Rose," said I ; " you shall see me again early on the morrow."

" Good night," replied she ; " but to that morrow no darkness shall succeed."

Except the little sentence last uttered by Rose as I was closing the door of her apartment, I could not tax my memory with any thing peculiarly solemn in our parting ; yet I felt, I knew not why, a strong foreboding that we should meet no more in this world. Neither was I afflicted at the idea : of her recovery all hope had long been laid aside ; and however free from pain consumptive patients may be in the early stages of the complaint, towards the last their sufferings are usually acute. Such had been the case with Rose. At first her decline was gradual and smooth, — her life appeared to steal away like the sands through an hour-glass, or the waters of a quiet river : but of late she had felt the pains of dying in no ordinary degree ; and hence the kindest wish of those who loved her was, that her miseries might soon terminate. I did not, indeed, pray or wish for her death, because that would have been sinful ; but I laid my head upon my pillow fully satisfied, that, should it please God to remove her that night, the calling of her pure spirit to Himself would be

an act of mercy and love. Nor were my forebodings groundless.

We had just sat down to breakfast, in the morning after the interview last recorded, when the slow and solemn strike of the passing-bell informed us that the soul of some one had returned "to Him who gave it." Little doubt could be entertained respecting the individual whose knell was sounding. I sent, however, to the sexton to enquire, and found that it was as we had anticipated:—Rose was at rest. When she died, no one could tell, for the nurse who sat beside her heard neither groan nor struggle; nor was it till after several seconds spent in examining, that it was ascertained how deep her slumber was. For this I failed not to return thanks; since it was evident that her death must have been as tranquil as her life was spotless.

As may be imagined, I lost no time in repairing to the Toll, nor neglected any means which reason and religion dictated, to soothe the sorrow and support the spirits of Captain Wilmot. But what are words of comfort to a wounded spirit, whilst the wound is yet fresh? or how may we soothe the sorrows of a parent, robbed of his only child, as the captain had been robbed of his? Alas! my best arguments fell powerless upon his seared mind. He was perfectly inconsolable; he could not listen either to reason or religion; all his hopes and wishes were with the dead.

The consequence of his absolute stupor was, that the care of all the arrangements necessary for the funeral devolved upon me. In attending to these, I took especial care to fulfil, to their minutest letter, the wishes of the amiable deceased. I gave notice to the school children that they would be required to follow their patron to the grave: I forwarded cards of invitation to the five young ladies whom Rose had named as chief mourners, and appointed my sister to fill the place of the sixth. In a word, I left nothing undone which I conceived that Rose herself would have desired, and which tended, without producing any thing like the show or parade of which she expressed her abhorrence, to mark the esteem and respect in which her name and memory were held. In all these arrangements

the captain took no share. Day and night he was in the apartment with his daughter's corpse ; and when the hour at length arrived at which it was determined to commit it to the dust, it was not without great difficulty that he could be prevailed upon to resign it to its fate.

There are few scenes more chastely or innocently affecting than the burial of a young maiden in this part of the country. The shell, instead of being muffled up in a pall, is covered by a damask cloth white as the skill of the bleacher can make it : it is borne upon the shoulders of six young men, dressed in black, indeed, but each wearing a white silk scarf across his shoulder, a hatband of the same hue and materials, and a knot of white ribands on his left breast. By the side of the coffin, arrayed wholly in white, walk the six chief mourners, generally damsels of the same or nearly the same age with the deceased ; whilst the rest follow, two and two, either dressed in robes of the like virgin colour, or having scarfs of white hung over their more sombre habiliments. Then come the children, provided, as was the case with Rose, the deceased be a person of some consequence, and, at the same time, beloved and respected by her poorer neighbours, each bearing in her hand a bunch of wild flowers, with which to strew the coffin as soon as it is lowered into the earth. Besides all which, there is in the language of the burial service itself something affecting beyond all the formularies that have been ever compiled ; especially when both he who reads and those who listen feel, that the being over whose mortal remains it is pronounced was not unworthy of it. Poor Rose ! all these honours, both of thought and deed, attended her body to the grave ; neither was there a dry eye in the churchyard during the progress of the melancholy ceremony.

To pursue my narrative farther would only be to harrow up my own feelings for no good purpose. Let me then hasten to an end. Rose was buried. The coffin was covered with heaps of flowers, which again were moistened by the tears of those that strewed them. On her grave were planted several Scotch roses, with a few violets and snowdrops ; nor have the weeds ever been suffered to

spring up or choke them. A stone, too, was erected to her memory ; but it bears no other inscription besides the name, age, and date of the departure of her who sleeps beneath. Her virtues, however, are inscribed on the hearts of all who knew her ; and the youngest member of the present generation must pass away, ere she and they are forgotten. Such was the destiny of the Rose of East Kent : a hard one, no doubt, were there no life beyond the present ; but, taking the future into consideration, one rather to be envied than deplored.

With respect to the captain, a very few words will suffice to satisfy the reader of his destiny. When Rose ceased to breathe, the last and only tie that bound him to this world parted. From the day of her funeral he was scarce known to speak. He lived, indeed, about six months, apparently in his usual health ; but his heart was broken Nature at length gave way ; and after a short illness, he was conveyed to the same grave with his daughter. In his will he had not been forgetful of Bligh : that faithful fellow, having no farther connection in this part of the country, returned to his native county of Devon ; and had, when I last heard of him, established himself in comfortable business as an innkeeper in the town of Exeter.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PARISH APPRENTICE.

It was on a cold, calm, frosty night, towards the end of December, the family having long retired to rest, that I drew my chair close to the fireplace in the little green parlour, placed the candles upon brackets conveniently fixed in the wall, and, taking up my favourite Homer, sat down with the intention of reading for an hour or two previous to following their example. The clock in the passage be-

yond had struck eleven, and silence the most unbroken was around me ; for the cat, ceasing to pur, lay fast asleep upon the hearth-rug, and the fire, though bright and cheerful, emitted no noise of bickering ; when, just as I was beginning to give up my attention to the images of the prince of poets, it was suddenly and somewhat disagreeably drawn away to other matters. A sound came upon me as of footsteps crimping through the snow, and drawing rapidly, yet cautiously, towards the Vicarage. By and by, I could hear the wicket-gate swing upon its hinges, and then fall back again with a slam, as if accidentally dropped from the hand of an intruder ; and, lastly, there was a steady tramping of feet across the paddock, which ceased only at the front entrance of the dwelling. I shut my book, not altogether free from apprehension that some evil design was in progress ; and almost instinctively began to prepare for resisting its accomplishment.

I had not, however, proceeded farther in the prosecution of the latter design, than to make a grasp at the poker, as a ready weapon of defence, when a violent knocking at the outer door furnished very satisfactory evidence that there would be no occasion to remove it from its rest. Thieves and burglars seldom announce their proximity by signals calculated to rouse the family whom they intend to plunder ; and hence the first peal of the knocker served to turn my thoughts into another and a much more rational channel. I guessed at once that some one of my parishioners was ill ; that a child perhaps might be at the point of death, which had not yet received the rite of baptism ; and that the person who broke thus unceremoniously upon my midnight vigils was come to lead me to the house of mourning. I was not deceived in the former of these speculations. On demanding the business of the intruder, a voice, familiar to me as that of an old acquaintance, made answer, that Mr. Bushell, of Team Hill, was at the point of death, and that he entreated, as a particular favour, that I would come to him immediately. It is scarcely necessary to add, that I returned a prompt acquiescence to this demand ; and undoing the fastenings, admitted Mr. Bushell's hind, an honest countryman considerably advanced in years, to the

benefits of my fireside, whilst I myself hastened to wrap up against the weather.

Whilst thus occupied, it was impossible not to indulge in various surmises touching the cause of so unlooked-for a message. John Bushell was one of the very few persons in the parish from whom I had on no occasion received the slightest mark of attention, and who, if he never positively sought to injure, at all events took no pains to conceal, that he entertained neither for me, nor for any other member of my profession, the smallest degree of respect. Morose and sullen in his temper, stubborn and obstinate in his disposition, quarrelsome, moreover, and petulant, as well as hard-hearted and griping, he was to all his neighbours an object of dislike and distrust; and either the knowledge of this fact, or something else, rendered him as averse to society as society appeared unwilling to admit him within its pale. A variety of strange stories, likewise, were afloat concerning him. He began life in very indigent circumstances, as a parish apprentice, and afterwards worked as journeyman with the village blacksmith; yet, without any visible means of making a fortune, he had long been in the occupation of one of the best farms in the county. It is true, that on the death of his master, whose only daughter he had married, the profits of the business came to him: but these were by far too moderate to account for his extraordinary rise; and hence men scrupled not to hazard a thousand guesses and conjectures, not one of which redounded to the honour of their object. Nor was this all. Though successful, in the worldly sense of that term, to no ordinary degree, Bushell had, in every other respect, been singularly unfortunate. His wife became deranged soon after her husband took possession of Team Hill, and was now the inmate of an asylum in London: his children either died young, or grew up discreditably; whilst he himself, instead of being softened by such calamities, was stated to have acquired, as each befell, an increased degree of acrimony and ill temper. For the last dozen years, indeed, he had lived entirely by himself, taking no share whatever in parish business, and never making his appearance either at church or market. It would have been somewhat contrary

to the ordinary course of events in country places had his neighbours abstained from insinuating, that wealth acquired by improper means never brings a blessing along with it ; and that the case of John Bushell, late a parish apprentice, and now the richest man among them, was one exactly in point.

Such were the thoughts which passed hastily through my mind as I buttoned my great-coat round my throat, and tied an additional handkerchief about the collar ; but they led to no solution of the problem in which they began, and which they were designed perhaps to explain. The operation of wrapping up, however, being complete, I rejoined the messenger ; and we set forward, at a brisk rate, towards our point of destination.

“ Has your master been long ill ? ” said I, as we trudged along.

“ He has been long in a failing way, sir, ” replied my guide ; “ but it was only the day before yesterday that he took to his bed, or would consent to see the doctor. I doubt there is more the matter with him than all the doctors in the country will be able to cure. ”

“ Do you mean that his case is hopeless — that he is too far gone to recover — that he must die ? ”

“ Not exactly so, ” answered the man, “ though I dare say he won't recover, neither. But there seems to be something on his mind that I would not have upon mine for all the money that he may call his own. He is in a terrible way, sir, as you will see, and abuses every body that comes near him. ”

“ How long has this been the case ? and whence comes it that, in such a frame of mind, he has thought of sending for me ? ”

“ Why he has sent for you, sir, I really cannot tell, and I question whether he could tell it himself ; for it is not two days gone since he cursed you to the housekeeper as a teacher of lies, and I don't know all what. But the prospect of death is not, I take it, very comfortable to him ; and as they say of drowning men, he is ready to catch at a straw. He has been like a madman since the doctor told him that there was little chance of his getting round ; call-

ing at one moment for you, and the very next blaspheming, till it made my hair stand on end to hear him. I always thought things were not as they should be; and now I am sure that I was not mistaken."

"To what do you allude in particular?" asked I.

"Why, to the story of the pedlar, to be sure," answered the man,—“Noah Levi, him as slept here one night about thirty years back, and has never been heard of since. Master has spoken about him very strangely within these four-and-twenty hours, and that is an uncommon thing for him to do; because though I have lived with him ever since he came to Team Hill, I can testify that he never took the pedlar's name between his lips afore. I fear all is not as it ought to be, and that there was more truth in some folks' guesses than some folks would allow.”

There was something so appalling in the train of ideas to which my guide's last insinuation gave rise, that I involuntarily stopped short, and turned towards him. Though I had heard much to the disadvantage of the miserable man whose dying bed I was about to visit, no such charge as seemed to be contained here was ever brought against him; at all events, the charge, if implied, had never been so expressed as to be rendered comprehensible by a comparative stranger. I had frequently been told that John Bushell was a bad man; that he came by his wealth no one knew how, though it was supposed by means which no one chose to particularise; and I had not unnaturally gathered from all this, that his violations of the laws by smuggling, probably, or even by more acknowledged acts of dishonesty, were neither few nor trifling in extent. I had in consequence given him credit for a variety of crimes, each of them sufficient, if detected, to render him amenable to public justice; but of such an offence as that which his ploughman appeared to lay to his charge, I had not been led to suppose him capable. I therefore stared at the man in horror, and demanded, with as much abruptness as energy, what it was that he meant to say.

“God knows, sir,” said the man, likewise stopping, and, as it seemed, startled by my manner: “I do not intend to assert that the case is so. I know nothing about it

more than others ; but I am sure of this, that Noah Levi was a great friend of his when he used to work at old Smeltum's as journeyman ; that he dealt with him a good deal like ; that Noah was well known to carry about with him at all times a heap of watches and jewels ; that he usually passed the night at the forge, when in these parts, for he was an honest Jew, and every body liked him ; and that he came, as I was saying, one evening after Bushell succeeded to the business, as usual, and went away, at least so it was reported, before folks were stirring in the morning ; and we all know that Levi was never seen in this parish again. Now it is not I that say it, but many have said, that Levi was not fairly dealt with. Whether the case be so or not, I can't tell. I only speak as my neighbours do ; but there is One above knows all."

" You have raised awful suspicions in my mind, however," replied I ; " and I pray that they may be unfounded."

We now walked on in silence till, having gained the brow of the eminence which bears the name of Team Hill, we found ourselves within a few rods of Bushell's dwelling. Unwilling to enter the sick man's chamber under the influence of such an impression as had just been excited, I again halted, and looked round upon the landscape with the well-grounded hope, that the contemplation of such a scene would restore, at least in part, the composure of which our recent conversation had deprived me. The moon was high in the heavens, over the face of which not so much as a fleece of grey cloud floated ; and the stars were out in millions, glittering with the peculiar brightness which never fails to attach to them in a serene and frosty night. One sheet of brilliant snow covered the whole surface of the ground ; from which there arose, from time to time, flashes such as the diamond emits when the flame of the lamp falls on it. Hill and valley, fallow-field and meadow, all bore the same dazzling livery ; whilst the few buildings visible, with the trees about the churchyard wall, the Vicarage, and a cottage or two in the distance, were each of them arrayed in a garb of exquisite frost-work. The silence, again, was deep and solemn — so deep, that the breaking of the sea

upon the distant beach alone interrupted it,—for there was not a breath of air stirring, and the movements and voices of living things were every where inaudible.

Having stood in profound admiration of this exquisite scene, till the effect which I had anticipated from it was fully experienced, I turned my face towards the abode of the dying man, and arrived, in a few moments, at the door of a mansion into which I had not before been invited to enter. The house belonged to that class of buildings of which, in the south of England, so many are to be found, erected, probably, three or four centuries ago, and originally inhabited by the minor gentry, a race of which few specimens remain. The exterior presented the appearance of a confused pile of gables and buttresses, with stacks of chimneys here and there rising high above the roof, and attached to one another by iron rods; whilst the interior, with its spacious halls, huge oak staircases, and broad landing-places, told a tale of other times, when the holding of manorial courts was something of much more importance than a form.

Into such a habitation I was ushered by my guide, who, lifting the latch cautiously, led me, without speaking, through the hall into a parlour beyond; and, leaving me there, with a light burning on the table, though without any fire in the grate, departed to inform the housekeeper of my arrival.

I had sat here perhaps five or six minutes, not without an unpleasant consciousness of extreme cold, when, the door being ajar, my attention was powerfully arrested by the sound of voices proceeding, as it seemed, from a chamber above. There were evidently two speakers, one a female, and the other a male; and the man spoke in a tone of violent agitation, accompanied manifestly by extreme weakness, if not pain. At first, I could not distinguish a word of what passed between them. I discovered, indeed, from the rise and fall of their voices, that something like expostulation and remonstrance was going on; for the woman spoke low, and, as it were, beseechingly, whilst the man gave utterance to abrupt and loud exclamations; but it was not till another door had creaked on its hinges, that

a syllable of what was passing could be recognised. Then, however, I heard distinctly enough; and ascertaining, as I did in an instant, that one of the interlocutors was my patient, the discovery by no means tended to reconcile me to the office which I was called on to discharge.

“ I tell you, I wo’n’t see him,” exclaimed the wretched man in a tone of excessive anger and fretfulness. “ It is of no use—none—none whatever—I don’t believe a word of it:—I never did believe, and I won’t believe now. I must have been dreaming when I told you to send for him. Pack him off—bid him go back again; I hate all parsons—all black deceivers—all dealers in lies by wholesale. I wo’n’t see him—no!”

Here the unfortunate man gave way to a paroxysm of fury, blaspheming in a gross and shocking manner, and making use of expressions such as it was sufficiently painful to overhear at the moment, but which I must not so much as attempt to repeat now. But the woman, after listening to his oaths, till either the power or will to continue them failed, answered in a calm but resolute tone, by asserting that he must receive the visit.

“ It can do you no harm, at all events, and possibly may do good. Hodge has been to fetch him: he has come cheerfully all across the snow at this hour, and in this cold night; and you cannot refuse to speak to one who shows so much interest in your welfare. I will not tell him to go till you have seen him; and you know what the doctor told you, only this afternoon.”

“ Woman,” shrieked the sick man, whilst the bed creaked under him, as if he were making an effort to rise, “ I dare not see that man, any more than I dare look upon ——. Don’t I know what he will talk to me about? Do I want to be assured that there is such a thing as hell—I—I who have felt it these thirty years? I tell you ——”

I heard no more; for the woman, closing the chamber-door after her, descended the stairs, and the next moment stood beside me.

It was not without a strong exertion that I managed so far to control my feelings as to meet the housekeeper with an air of tolerable calmness and apparent ignorance of facts.

Probably she was herself too much affected by what had passed to examine my bearing with a very scrutinising eye ; at least, there was nothing in her manner to indicate a suspicion of my being at all aware of her master's state of mind. On the contrary, with a degree of tact scarcely to be expected in a person belonging to her station in society, she opened our conference by asserting, that her master was scarcely in his right senses, and that I must not be shocked or offended should he fail to receive me with the respect due to my office and character.

"The truth is, sir," continued she, "that some terrible secret hangs upon his heart ; and till that be disclosed, he will never be rightly aware either of his own words or of his own actions ; and, therefore, whatever he may say to you on entering, or however he may seem to treat you, I trust that you will not leave him in displeasure." I applauded the good woman's judicious behaviour, and having faithfully promised to abide by her counsels, I motioned for her to lead the way, and followed.

We passed through a dark lobby and up a heavy oak staircase, ending in a sort of second hall, around which were five or six doors, all of them closed ; nor was there any distinguishing mark by which to discover the apartment where the patient lay : but the housekeeper led straight forward, and I soon found that he occupied one at the very extremity of the vestibule. She opened the door. Still no voice or exclamation, however slight, caught the ear, though a dull fire of cinders, burning drearily in the grate, pointed out that the chamber was inhabited ; and a distribution of vials and glasses upon the tables and chests of drawers gave notice that the occupant was an invalid. I now looked towards the bed. The curtains were all drawn so closely round, that it was impossible to tell by a glance whether the bed itself were filled or empty : indeed, it was a sound as of a stifled breathing alone ; which led me to conclude, that I had not, after all, been ushered into the wrong chamber. But the woman who had thus far guided me in was not backward in completing the measure, which she, more than her master, appeared to have devised. She drew back the hangings, having previously deposited her

candle where the flame, without annoying, must still expose the countenance of the sick man to notice; and announcing to him that the minister of the parish was by, she immediately retired.

For some moments after she quitted the room, not a word was spoken either by Bushell or myself. I approached his bed, indeed, and sat down beside him, with the determination of regulating my mode of address according to the opening which he might make; but he continued to lie as he lay when we first entered, with his face buried in the blankets, and maintained a dogged, and, as it seemed, a desperate silence. I now felt that, if any conversation was to pass at all, it must at least begin with me; and I accordingly endeavoured to lead him, with as little violence as possible, into an interchange of something like common civilities.

"I am sorry to find you thus," said I: "but sickness is the common lot of our nature; and as it is never sent except for some wise and good end, I hope it will prove useful to you, as well as to others." Still he made no answer. "I am here," continued I, "at your request, ready and anxious to do for you all the kindness in my power. If there be any way in which I can serve you, you have but to speak, and it shall be done."

A sort of waving of the bed-clothes followed this address, which led me to hope that it had not been without its effect; but, whatever the feeling might be under which the unfortunate man laboured, it soon passed away, and things resumed their old appearance. I next determined to try another method with him. "Mr. Bushell," said I, "this is no time for flattery, or for seeking to deceive either you or myself. If what I hear be true, your days are, in all probability, numbered; and I beseech you, by all your hopes, not here, but hereafter, to make the best use of them."

In a moment the sheet, which had hitherto covered the sick man's head, was cast aside. He raised himself by a convulsive effort upon his elbow, and casting upon me a look of desperate irony and defiance, exclaimed,—

"My hopes!—my hopes hereafter! What are they?"

— what should they be ? — but that there is no hereafter. I tell you there *is* no hereafter. I will not believe that there is an hereafter. When we die, we die, and there is an end of us.”

“ No rational being thinks so,” answered I ; “ and you, I am sure, are not so devoid of reason as to believe what you have just professed. You know better. You know that there *is* an hereafter, where all that has been done here shall be exposed and treated as it deserves.”

“ Did I not say so ? ” exclaimed the unhappy man, falling back upon his pillow. “ Did I not tell her, that you would come only to torment me ; that I should hear of nothing from you but of hell, and misery eternal ? What right have you,” continued he, again striving to rise, — “ what right have you to break in upon my repose with such fables as these ? I tell you to go ; I do not want to hear them. If they be true, I shall know it too soon ; but they are false, — false as that hell of which you babble.”

“ Nay,” replied I, in a tone as mild as my feelings would permit me to employ, “ I should be very sorry to draw for you, or for any man, pictures of an eternity of torments only. There is a far brighter prospect before us than this : there is an eternity of honour and happiness, the doors of which are not, as far as I am aware, shut against any sinner, provided he be penitent. But I need not add, that these doors cannot be opened to the hardened, the obdurate, or the despairing. Surely you would not refuse to listen to the voice of one who would speak to you of such an eternity as this ? ”

A heavy groan was the only reply which the sick man made to my address. It satisfied me, however, that the address itself was understood, and it prompted me to go on in a strain which appeared likely to awaken something like a spark of good feeling in a bosom which had too long been a stranger to any besides the darkest passions. I spoke much of the goodness and long-suffering of the Creator ; I argued vehemently against the folly, not less than the wickedness, of distrusting His mercy ; and I flattered myself, from the continued silence of the patient

that my reasoning would not fail in the end of producing the effect which I desired it to produce. But my hopes somewhat rashly formed, were not destined to a very protracted existence.

“ I will hear no more !” shrieked Bushell, interrupting me in the midst of my exhortations. “ What have I to do with all this? What are the goodness and mercy of the Creator to me? Look there — there — in that corner of the room,” pointing at the same time frantically to a spot over which the shadow fell heavily. “ Do you not see them? Ha ! they are smiling at me — mocking me — threatening me, as if they would say that *I* can have no share in the goodness of which you talk. See, see, they come towards me !— Oh God ! keep them off, keep them off !”

So saying, the wretched man once more buried his head under the bed-clothes, and all my efforts to secure his attention again were fruitless.

I sat with him that night some two hours, during the whole of which period he continued perfectly motionless. No exertions either of mine or of his nurse, whom in the end I called in, were sufficient to rouse him ; and I quitted him at last, very little cheered, either with the recollections of the past, or expectations of the future. But the ice being broken, I determined to omit no opportunity of striving to bring him back to a proper frame ; and I consequently made a point of seeing him at least once every day during a space of rather more than three weeks. At first these were, like my nocturnal visit, as useless to him as they were unsatisfactory to myself ; but in the end a constant repetition of truths, too solemn to be listened to with indifference, had its effect. The miserable man gradually laid aside his desperation of manner. He spoke, indeed, to the last, like one who laboured under the extreme of terror : but he ceased to give utterance to blasphemies ; and he eventually unburdened his overloaded conscience, by making a full confession of his crimes.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE PARISH APPRENTICE.

JOHN BUSHELL, the natural son of a woman of depraved habits, first saw the light in one of those abodes of profligacy and wretchedness, a union workhouse. His mother dying soon after his birth, and before an opportunity was afforded of taking an oath of affiliation, the little orphan became dependent for support upon the parish officers, who maintained him, with other paupers, in the place where he was born, and, as a matter of course, gave up the care of his education to strangers. It very seldom happens that persons circumstanced as the masters of workhouses are, find it either convenient or practicable to pay much attention to the moral training of children. There is occupation enough for them in striving to maintain something like the appearance of order among the crowd of idle and debased wretches who, in addition to the aged and infirm, usually make up their families; and hence the young people are, for the most part, left to form a character for themselves after such models as may be placed most prominently before them. The consequence is, that, in nine cases out of ten, a child reared in a workhouse proves, when he attains to manhood, both idle and wicked. It is early instilled into him, by those with whom he associates, that to make the slightest effort to procure a livelihood for himself were an act of extreme simplicity and folly; whilst the examples before his eyes were almost invariably of vices the most disgusting and the most gratuitous. To the full influence of such a training was the boyhood of Bushell exposed; and the tenor of his maturer years was, in some respects, not such as to do injustice to his early education.

It is contended by many accurate investigators of that most inexplicable of all riddles, human nature, that there are no persons living who are not, and have not always been, in a greater or less degree, the slaves of some one master passion. Whether there be any truth in the theory

I take it not upon me to determine ; but nothing can be more indisputable than that we do see, every day, the most powerful bias in men's minds towards things and objects for which it is difficult to conceive how they could have ever acquired a predilection. Perhaps there never lived a more memorable instance of this anomaly in the order of things than John Bushell. A parish pauper, brought up among persons who either never earned a penny, or spent it, as soon as procured, in low debauchery, the child's faculties no sooner began to develope themselves than he exhibited the most determined disposition to accumulate ; hoarding up every thing of value which came within his reach, and pilfering, not to enjoy a passing pleasure, but to hide the article stolen where no eye besides his own might see it. Young Bushell was not, indeed, backward in learning the other lessons which his situation spread out before him. He could swear as round an oath as any individual within the walls : he set truth boldly at defiance whenever it suited his own purposes to do so ; but not all the exertions of those about him succeeded in imbuing him with the true spirit of a pauper,—that of squandering away, with a free hand, his own means, and looking to the parish for the support which our laws compel it to afford. On the contrary, his saving propensity grew every day more and more strong ; at first, to the amusement, and, latterly, to the annoyance, of the ribald set about him ; till in the end it attracted the notice of his superiors, who admired it in proportion to the infrequency of its occurrence.

I have said that the boy's instinct of hoarding led him, on all favourable opportunities, to appropriate to his own use such articles of value as fell within his reach. Pieces of bread and cheese, trifling bits of clothing, occasionally a penny, a knife, and even a button, were found to have disappeared, no one knew how ; yet such was the cunning of the young thief, that he either escaped suspicion altogether, or, if suspected, he managed to avoid detection. But it was not to such proceedings only that the love of gain impelled him. He was ready to perform any office, to undertake any task to run on any message, provided a

pecuniary reward were promised; indeed, he became marked before long as a lad of an exceedingly industrious turn, whom it was a pity not to treat with more attention than was generally wasted upon parish boys. The result was, that his master took him by the hand. He was taught to read and write, and he made rapid progress in both accomplishments: he was sent out to keep cows in spring-time, and to tend pigs in autumn; and as he always received a portion of the hire paid for his services, no lad could be more attentive or more zealous. In a word, John Bushell having discovered that the readiest way of indulging his ruling propensity was to acquire habits of regularity and industry, applied himself diligently to whatever occupation his superiors chose to chalk out for him; and he became, in consequence, an especial favourite with the leading men of his parish. Nor was this all. John Bushell possessed the happy knack of accommodating himself, with perfect ease, to the humours of those about him. With his fellow-paupers he was a blusterer and a blasphemer, taking care, however, even among them, not to speak evil of dignities; whilst with his superiors he was gentle and docile, mean, abject, and servile. Thus, whilst the former esteemed him no bad fellow after all, though abominably stingy, the latter regarded him as one of the most discreet and well-behaved youths in the house.

At the age of thirteen, a new scene opened upon Bushell, by his being bound apprentice to Jacob Smeltum, a man well to do in the world, and the only blacksmith in the parish. As the boy's character for industry and discretion stood high, his master, a good-humoured, though a somewhat careful person, readily received him into his family, where he was treated in all respects as if he had been a son; and, for some time, it is but justice to say that his behaviour was such as to merit that treatment. Early and late he was at work: quick and ready in receiving impressions, he soon made himself master of the several niceties in his trade; of as many, at least, as were known to Jacob himself; whilst his sobriety and steadiness were such as to call forth the highest commendation from his superior. It is true that he did not always decline a treat,

provided it were pressed upon him. He would occasionally accompany a friend to the public-house, and drink a pot, or it might be two, at his friend's expense; but then he never spent his own money in liquor, and never neglected business for amusement. On these several accounts, John Bushell was universally esteemed a sort of pattern to the youth of the place; and more than one old man ventured to predict, that the parish-boy might yet be as good a man as any of them.

It may appear surprising, but it is nevertheless perfectly true, that during the whole seven years which he served as apprentice to Smeltum, Bushell carefully abstained from appropriating to his own use any article of his master's property, after which he apprehended that a search might be made. Many a pang it cost him, when he saw the tea-cup with its silver load standing upon the shelf, or beheld the old man pour his week's savings into a leathern bag, and deposit it in an open drawer; yet, though frequent opportunities of plundering both presented themselves, with a degree of resolution hardly to be expected, he permitted them to pass unimproved. The fact, however, is, that John was not more covetous than he was shrewd and calculating. His master had one child, a daughter, extremely ugly, no doubt, and ten full years older than himself: but John soon began to cast towards her amatory glances; and he was made happy by discovering, that the nymph was not disposed to treat them with disdain. Under such circumstances, John knew well that his interests would be best served by acting towards his intended father-in-law with apparent integrity; whilst he flattered himself that it mattered very little whether these alluring treasures should pass into his possession now, or be held back from him for a few years only. Thus reasoning, he took especial care that no temptation, however urgent, should draw him into the commission of an act of flagrant theft. As to petty peculations, in these he indulged without scruple. Bits of iron were from time to time missing, and even a set of horse-shoes once or twice disappeared, no one could tell how; but then honest John, who had every thing within his power could not possibly be to

blame ; because, if he chose to steal at all, it was extremely improbable that he would not steal to a much larger amount.

But though thus scrupulous with regard to his master, John seems not to have proved equally abstemious in his dealings with other people. Once or twice he was detected in seeking payment of a bill already settled ; and though he excused himself by asserting that it was a mistake on the part of his employer, a somewhat awkward impression remained behind, that he was scarcely to be trusted. In like manner, it was insinuated that he not unfrequently charged more for work done than his master received ; whilst the materials of which iron utensils were made began, soon after he applied to the business, to be less enduring and less solid than formerly. Again, it was noticed, that in the event of his being sent for to perform a job in the houses of the neighbours, little valuables were apt unaccountably to disappear — such as a tea-spoon, should it be left carelessly in the way, or an apron, or a pocket-handkerchief. Yet nothing had ever been so thoroughly brought home to him as to authorise the use of legal means, even in making a search ; and his reputation at home was so firmly established, that there no insinuation against him could be received.

At the period of which I am now writing, it is well known that the class of wandering pedlers was much more numerous in all parts of England than it is now. Our villages, and even our smaller towns, had not then their jewellers' and silversmiths' shops, — where brooches, rings, necklaces, and other gauds, are daily suspended before the admiring eyes of rustic beaux and belles ; but such as desired to decorate either their own persons, or the persons of those equally dear to them, were indebted for the means to a set of itinerant dealers in glittering commodities. The parish of St. Alphage was not without its wayfaring merchant, whose visits might as faithfully be calculated upon as the return of spring and autumn. Regularly as Lady-day and Michaelmas came round, when the farm-servants, receiving their wages, were supposed to be in a trim for making bargains, Noah Levi, a descendant of the

chosen stock, made his appearance in the valley ; and as he was of a facetious and merry humour, his arrival was looked to, not merely with an eye to business, but as a sure source of fun and amusement. Noah spoke English indifferently — a circumstance which enabled many a clodhopper to crack a joke at his expense. Noah's temper was placid as the sea in a dead calm ; therefore there was small risk of his resenting the joke, however rude ; besides, he was of a diminutive stature and a feeble make, and hence could scarcely be an object of dread even to a stripping. But Noah was more than all this : he knew every thing that was passing in the neighbourhood ; he was familiarly acquainted with the peccadilloes of all the people, high and low, rich and poor, within the circle of several miles ; he retailed them wherever he went, with infinite effect, and having a ready wit, he was never at loss to invent, as often as materials for an interesting piece of scandal were wanting. Then, again, Noah was a right merry fellow with the girls. He carried about with him an admirable assortment of beads, red, blue, and yellow ; he knew to a tittle which was the most becoming for every complexion ; and he possessed the happy talent of persuading the simple maiden before whom he displayed them, that such a necklace only was required to set her off to the best advantage. Besides, his needles were the sharpest ; his thread the most enduring ; and his thimbles, by many degrees, the best that were ever manufactured ; and there was not a woman of whatever age or station in the place that was not prepared to swear as much. On all these accounts, and others too numerous to be mentioned, Noah Levi was a welcome guest at every house in the parish ; and seldom quitted it without carrying away with him a considerable share of the petty savings of its younger inmates.

Whence it came about I never could accurately learn, but Noah was nowhere received with greater hospitality than in the abode of Jacob Smeltum. Perhaps there was a kindred-spirit between the two men ; or, which is more probable, perhaps Miss Smeltum, being little indebted to nature, was forward in seeking from art those charms of

which she was ambitious ; and as she was an only child, and her mother long dead, she was rarely crossed in the indulgence of a moderate inclination. Be this, however, as it may, not only was the smith's shop Noah's favourite resort by day, but a rug was usually furnished him on which to sleep in the kitchen at night—an accommodation which the honest Jew very liberally compensated, by an occasional present of a gilt ring or a glass brooch to the young lady ; whilst he repaid her father for his crust of bread and cheese and mug of ale in the evening by retailing his best stories in his liveliest strain. Thus were all parties satisfied ; and the Jew escaped, what to him was no common grievance, the necessity of either running up a bill at the village inn, or resting his person, and his valuable pack, in an open outhouse.

It chanced that John Bushell had been just long enough in his master's service to impress the latter with a favourable opinion of his industry and good conduct, when the lively Israelite arrived, according to custom, to dispose of his autumnal goods in the vale. Noah was by this time somewhat stricken in years : that is to say, his hair had become grizzled ; his eye, though still sharp and twinkling, required, as often as a minute object came to be examined, the aid of spectacles ; and a considerable stoop seemed to denote, that a load of sixty or sixty-five summers lay upon his back. But his complexion, still fresh and rosy, with a brisk gait, and a voice clear and unbroken, pointed him out as one who bore his burden well ; and the keenness with which he drove a bargain furnished very satisfactory proof that his mental faculties, of whatever order they might be, were not impaired. It was remarked as a curious event, that though the apprentice had barely turned fourteen, the old man and he drew at once together as if they had been of the same standing. There was no bandying of jests between them ; no sarcasms on the part of the Christian, nor any retorts wrung from the Jew : on the contrary, their conversation was grave, sedate, and, as it seemed, confidential ; and Smeltum, who entertained a high opinion of the penetration of his Israelitish guest,

received, in consequence, additional assurances that his apprentice would do him justice.

Years passed ; and John Bushell grew up to be a man of great personal strength, and a not displeasing exterior. As has been stated, he early began to treat his young mistress with marked respect ; and the fair Cyclops, regardless of the lowliness of his origin, was far from turning to his addresses an inattentive ear. To the old man himself, indeed, not a hint was dropped of the growing attachment, which, to say the truth, was on the swain's part under admirable control : but love, in low as well as in high life, is always the most enduring when difficulties appear to stand in the way of its accomplishment ; and the nymph continued constant in spite of the chilling influence of hope deferred. At last, the time of his apprenticeship expired, and, at the innamorata's suggestion, it was resolved to hazard an application for the paternal sanction upon their union. A direct refusal was the consequence. Not that Jacob Smeltum estimated at a pin's value the fact of his proposed son-in-law having been bred up in a work-house. Had there been any substance to compensate for that, any money or land, the pauper-boy would have been admitted into his family as readily as the scion of a nobler stock : but Bushell, though a steady lad, was not, the smith asserted, worth a doit ; and he had not scraped together his little fortune to waste it upon a beggar. He was accordingly dismissed from the family ; and though he continued to work as journeyman, at daily wages, he was desired to find board and lodging for himself elsewhere.

The effect produced upon the young man's temper by this change in his circumstances was very striking. Hitherto he had been supple and complying, ready to oblige, wherever interest came not in the way, and cringing towards all who appeared to him in better circumstances than his own : he became, from the moment of his expulsion from the blacksmith's house, in every respect an altered man. Morose, sulky, and ill-humoured, he avoided all intercourse, and, as far as could be, all conversation with those about him ; and, though he still worked hard, it was evident that he worked with much less of avidity and readi-

ness than before. It is unnecessary to say, that nobody gave him credit for any other feeling besides that of disappointed avarice. He had set his heart on succeeding to his master's wealth and his master's business; and being frustrated in these objects, his chagrin became violent in proportion to the degree of certainty which he had previously indulged. Yet his penurious disposition hindered him from running the risk of looking elsewhere for employment, and he accordingly continued where he was.

But his avarice, though excessive, was not the only motive which urged him to pursue this line of conduct: he thirsted for revenge; and that thirst became the more violent, in proportion as he found himself exposed to the sneers and ridicule of his fellow-parishioners.

I have alluded to the strong attachment which subsisted between John Bushell and Noah Levi, the pedler; and I have spoken of it, as the good people of the place were in the habit of doing, as something quite inexplicable. The fact however is, that the two men drew together because their dispositions generally accorded; and they became bosom-friends, because the one found in the other a ready instrument for the furtherance of his own views. Levi, though esteemed honest, and, for the most part, sufficiently circumspect to keep up the appearance of honesty, was as determined a scoundrel as ever bore wallet, or palmed off a string of paste-beads for pearls of price. Though he seldom committed a theft himself, he was always ready to purchase whatever might be offered for sale, without asking questions as to the source from whence it came; and he could advance suggestions, and drop hints, wherever his penetration caused him to discover that they were not likely to be thrown away upon dull ears. A single interview served to convince him that John Bushell might be rendered an efficient partner in the conduct of his more private business. He saw that the lad was greedy of gain, and destitute of all principle; and he set himself industriously to the task of rendering him an expert and cautious rogue;—a task which the natural aptitude of the pupil to receive such instruction rendered exceedingly light. This it was which occasioned that intimacy between

them, at which the ignorant villagers wondered ; and the results arising out of it were at once more numerous and more important than either party, perhaps, anticipated.

Among other schemes to which this worthy pair gave their attention, was that of making themselves masters of the entire property of Bushell's master. It was frequently debated between them, whether a robbery might not be effected ; and nothing except the excessive prudence of the younger villain hindered the attempt, at least, from being made. But, boy as he was, Bushell saw plainly enough that the advantages to himself would be greater, as the risk would be infinitely less, could he contrive to win the hand of his master's daughter, than if he were to act as the Israelite advised ; and hence he could never be persuaded to share with another the booty which he hoped, eventually, to appropriate to his own use. Hence, and hence only, was the old smith spared ; whilst in other quarters, — in Folkstone, and the country places round, — a system of plunder was carried on, more daring, yet more systematic, than ever perhaps eluded detection.

In this state things continued ; Bushell depositing his spoil, during the intervals between the Jew's visits, in a hole which he had dug under the great anvil, from whence, as often as Noah arrived, it was removed and duly purchased, till the unfortunate issue of his suit, by causing a complete revolution in his circumstances and prospects, gave to his views, touching Jacob Smeltum, a new direction. He still coveted, not merely the property immediately within reach, but the house, the shop, and the business ; and as he looked upon the old man as constituting the sole obstacle to the gratification of his wishes, he began to hate him with no common hatred. He felt, likewise, or endeavoured to feel, that a glaring wrong had been put upon himself. He reasoned on the subject of his long and faithful services ; recalled the numerous opportunities which had offered, and been neglected, when he might have wronged his master to his own profit, without much risk of detection ; and he did not hesitate to affirm, that his industry and his skill were the main causes why the business continued so flourishing. In few words, he

looked upon himself as justly entitled to the heirship of a fortune which he considered that he had been largely instrumental in amassing; and cursed old Jacob in his heart, as an ungrateful and bad man, whom it were no evil act to reward according to his deserts.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PARISH APPRENTICE.

SUCH was the state of Bushell's feelings, which rumours of a projected union between his Dulcinea and a young farmer tended greatly to inflame, when Noah Levi made his periodical appearance in the neighbourhood of St. Alphage. The Jew professed to be greatly surprised at the change which had occurred in his friend's situation. He had left him, six months before, an inmate in Smeltum's family, full of confidence as to the accomplishment of his own wishes, and well disposed to continue the partnership which had so long existed between them: he found him now a lodger in a poor man's cottage, and, as rumour went, an altered man in all his habits and dispositions. Yet Noah was far from being displeased at this, inasmuch as he guessed that the sole motive which had heretofore swayed him in treating his master with lenity would no longer possess weight; and, eager to take advantage of this circumstance, he prepared once more to sound him on his readiness to aid in a plan which should promise both profit and revenge.

It was on an October evening, when the work of the day was done, and Bushell, with slow and sulky step, bent his course homeward, that the broad outline of a human figure stooping under a pack, and no less, as it seemed, under the weight of years, presented itself between him

and the western horizon. Though the sun had set some time, and twilight was closing fast, Bushell found no difficulty in recognising the gait of his associate in crime; and feeling, he scarcely knew why, an unconquerable disinclination to greet him, he pushed forward with the design of escaping a salutation.

In this attempt, however, he was not successful. The forge, with the house adjacent, standing upon the side of the road, at a point where it makes a turn to the right in order to descend the hill, the Jew was enabled, by cutting across the meadow, to intercept his friend's movement; and he came upon Bushell just as the other had begun to congratulate himself on eluding an interview of which he was not solicitous.

"Whider so fast, friend Jan?" said the Israelite in his indistinct jargon. "Late abroad — late abroad, I tink. What will de shmight say to such hours?"

"What is that to me?" answered Bushell, roughly. "What control has the shmight, as you call him, over my time? My hours are my own, and I may use them as I please."

"Hoity, toity!" exclaimed Noah, with affected surprise; "is de man bewitched, or hash de evil spirit from King Shaul come upon him? Sure Meesh Shmeltum will not look favourably upon so hasty a temper."

"Fool!" cried Bushell, angrily, "why prate to me about her? Don't you know as well as I how the case stands? Don't you know that the old scoundrel has broken with me entirely, and that all my finely-spun web has been tangled and confused? What a blockhead was I not long ago to follow your advice, crafty as your advice always is! But, by heavens! he shall pay for it yet."

"Mine dear friend," said Noah, approaching his companion with a soothing and insinuating air, "I vash not ignorant of de great injury put upon you, and it vash vid de plain poorpose of convershing about de besht means of taking revenge, that I watched you on your way home-wards. I heard all about it from de peoples, who jeer and make game of you every wheres. Dey shay, — 'Ah! de

parish boy forget himself: he rightly sarved by ould Jacob — ould Jacob too knowing for him!"

"Ten thousand devils!" exclaimed Bushell. "What would you tempt me to do? I know you well: I know that you propose nothing from which you yourself don't expect to reap the main advantage; but tell me only how I may punish the old beast for his ingratitude, and I will be guided by you."

"What tink you of de job now?" whispered the Jew. "If de girl can't be had, can't we secure de swag?"

"What! break into the fellow's house, and get myself hanged for burglary. You forget that the door is closed upon me every night, and that it is not opened again until the morning. That plan wo'n't answer, were it even to my mind, — but it is not. I want revenge as much as I want money."

"Why den, marry de girl at once, and persuade de fader to agree afterwards."

"And be saddled with a d——d old one-eyed wench, without a sixpence to bless herself withal. You give sage counsel this evening, friend Noah, and one worth attending to."

"Nay, but might not de fader die — die suddenly, you know, before a new will could be made, or de property oderwise disposed of? might not ——"

"Wretch!" replied Bushell, in a harsh but a subdued tone. "I understand you: I see what you are at; and, by heavens! the thought has more than once crossed my own mind already: but it required some living fiend, like yourself, to bring it to a bearing. You would murder the old man, — make away with him; — is that your proposal?"

The Jew nodded.

"But if I were disposed to come into this arrangement, how could the thing be done?"

"I tink I could manage dat, for a proper consideration."

"Nay, but if done at all, it must be done immediately. I don't mean to tie myself to the daughter till the father shall be fairly out of the way; and then, you know, I step at once into possession."

“ Ver true, ver true,” rejoined the Israelite. “ It wash a goot house, a goot business ; plenty of monish ; goot furniture ; — a very comfortable setting down for a man brought up in a workhoush.”

“ Devil ! do you throw that in my teeth likewise ? ”

“ No, no, friend Jan ; I shpeak not in malice, but in goot-will. I only shay dat de whole establishment vash handsome.”

“ Well, but the means, — the means of getting rid of ould Jacob.”

“ Oh yesh, de means. Poor Noah ish to run all de risk, to lay all de plans, and to receive noting but tanks. De sons of Abraham don't do business so.”

“ Why, won't my house always be open to you as before ? and have not I done you service enough, to entitle me to look for some service in return ? Have you forgotten how many guineas you have turned out of the contents of the old anvil ? ”

“ All ver true,” replied the imperturbable Jew : “ but de housh is open to me now ; and what better shall it be if it only change its mashter ? And ash to de guineas, truly, Mashter Bushell, dey have been pretty fairly divided between ush. I can give no help on such terms.”

“ What then do you expect ? Will the ready chink, the contents of the old teacup, satisfy you ? ”

“ No ; I will have half of de whole, or I take no part in de matter.”

“ Half of the whole ! ” exclaimed Bushell. “ Why you avaricious land-shark ! am I to put my neck within the noose, for the purpose of enriching you ? ”

“ Nay, dere will be two necks in de noose ; and when de risk is equal, de profit ought to be equal also. Den dere ish revenge. I tought he had insulted you so crossly dat for dat only he deserved to die.”

Bushell was silent for some moments, and the Jew was too wary to break in upon his meditations. They were manifestly not of the most agreeable kind, for, even amid the increasing gloom, the pedler could see that his features were violently distorted ; whilst his limbs moved, as it appeared, involuntarily like those of a horse when he is

suddenly checked at speed. The two men were at this time standing about the centre of a glen or gorge, surrounded on all sides by bare green hills. It was a wild and desolate spot, admirably in keeping with the sort of conference which they held ; and so far well adapted even to their purposes, that no eavesdropper could by possibility overhear them. At last the younger of the two ruffians seemed to have made up his mind.

“ You shall have it your own way,” said he, “ upon one condition ; which is, that you do the deed ; and then I can rest assured that you will never split.”

“ And what security will be given to me dat you don't split, Mashter Bushell ? — Nay, nay, if we share de guilt, let us share de danger, and den de share of de booty comes more fairly. Besides, I am too old ; I could not do de work as it must be done, without you to back me.”

Bushell drew a long breath ; after which he demanded to be informed of the mode by which the foul deed should be perpetrated.

“ Our great business musht be,” said Noah with the most perfect self-possession, “ to despatch him so dat no marks of violence appear on his person. Poison would do dis, doubtless ; but den comes the cursed doctor, who opens de carrion and finds de entrails inflamed, and de stomach injured. Next, dere is strict enquiry at every chemist's shop, as to who bought such and such a drug ; and, lastly, comes de officer, who claps poor Noah Levi, and honest John Bushell, in the bilboes. De cord wo'n't do neider, for it leaves an ugly mark ; and as to rolling him over de cliff, dat might be seen, and we lose our end. But dere is a method, as sure as it is hard to detect. — What say you ? Can you be at the back-door to-night, a little after midnight ? I will open it, and once in the ould shmidt's chamber, it is all over wid him.”

Bushell, after a moment's pause, consented to this proposition ; upon which the Jew, placing his mouth close to the young man's ear, whispered for some moments a secret apparently too horrible to be spoken aloud. His companion stood breathless and with lips apart, till the tempter

ceased, and then staggered back a pace or two, like a man smitten by a sudden wound.

“What!” exclaimed Noah in a tone of irony, “afraid, —afraid of a few words, and disposed to forego wealth, a wife, and, more than all, revenge! Is this my trusty help-mate in so many adventures?”

“Man or devil! for which you are I cannot tell,” answered Bushell, “I am not afraid; I shudder only because I believe that I am now in conversation with the blackest spirit that exists beyond the pit. Who are you? and how comes it that you possess so extraordinary an influence over me?”

“Poor Noah, de Jew pedler,” replied his companion in a voice of renewed submission,—“poor Noah Levi, who tries to turn an honest penny, by shelling the best bargains that are to be bought, and is alwaysh ready to sarve a friend. But it is time that we part. Goot night, Mashter Bushell; I vill expect you about ten minutes after midnight.”

The Jew fell off from Bushell's side as he spoke, and was almost immediately concealed from observation by a bend in the valley.

It were no easy matter to describe the state of mind in which the young man continued his walk homeward. Of many crimes he had already been guilty; and his love of money increased upon him so fast, there was scarcely any which he was not prepared to commit, provided its commission promised only to put a few pounds in his pocket. But to the idea of taking away life he had not yet sufficiently habituated himself to permit his looking forward to such a scene as the Jew had described without horror. True, a loose and undefined consideration, that such a thing might be done—perhaps that it ought to be done—had of late repeatedly flashed across his mind. He had wished old Smeltum out of the way so frequently, that it was scarcely possible to avoid conjuring up an image of the mode by which so desirable an end might be effected: but till to-night no connected or digested scheme had been presented to him; and hence the occurrence was regarded rather as a thing within the limits of possible attainment

than as absolutely determined upon. Now he found himself on the very brink, as it were, of a tremendous precipice. He had pledged himself at least to assist in the performance of a deed which, his feelings even now told him, could never be forgotten ; and he saw that his whole future destiny hung, evenly balanced, for good or for evil. Nevertheless, there was a juggling fiend within, which strongly urged him by no means to retract from the pledge which he had given. "The Jew assures me," said he to himself, "that of detection there is not the shadow of risk ; why then should I hesitate ? Will not this single act put me in possession of independence ? Don't I know that the old fellow is rich ?—am I not certain that his riches will come to me ?—and has he not wronged me ? Away with coward misgiving ! I will be true to thee, Noah, as the steel is true to the flint ; and if I do not contrive in the end to baffle thee of thy portion, then am I less knowing in such matters than I have hitherto supposed." He reached the door of the cottage where he lodged, just as he had arrived at this most Christian determination ; and passing hastily to his own room, made a show of eating his frugal supper, and threw himself upon the bed.

In the mean while the pedler, who had not yet visited his old friend Smeltum, proceeded with a quick step towards the forge ; and being immediately recognised, received, as he was accustomed to do, a hearty welcome. An additional log was cast upon the kitchen fire ; and Martha, anticipating the usual reward of her father's hospitality and her own attentions, made haste to arrange the supper-table in its customary order. A Dutch cheese, flanked on the one side by a huge brown loaf, and on the other by a mug of foaming ale, presented to the eyes of the hungry traveller a pleasant picture ; and glad was he when the smith, cutting off a capacious slice, laid it on a plate, and pushed it towards him. Noah ate voraciously, as he always did when the means of so doing were furnished gratis ; and his attention to the liquor was not less profound than to the more substantial portions of the repast

"Why, thou beest sharp set, friend Noah !" said

Smeltum laughing, as for the last twenty years he had laughed at the Jew's peculiar manner of eating. "I wouldn't be a rasher of bacon in thy way now, were there nobody by to watch proceedings. But never mind, pedler, eat on, and drink thy fill,—thou beest heartily welcome."

"Tank thee, Mashter Smeltum," replied the Jew, in accents soft and oily. "If all Jews and all Christians were like thee, de poor would never go widout bread, nor de weary widout a place to rest upon. But what matters Jew or Christian? we are all de same flesh and blood.—Ah! Miss Martha," continued he, turning to the one-eyed hostess, "what can I shell thee to-night? Plenty of brooches all goold, pure virgin goold, as fair as thyself! There is a necklace too for thee, every single pearl worth the whole sum thou shalt have it for. Bless thy little heart! let me hang it round thy neck, that we may see how well it becomes thee."

This speech was followed by the production of the necklace, which Martha admired more ardently than her father admired its price; and a scene of chaffering and bargain-driving ensued, of which it is not necessary to give any account. Strange to say, however, it ended in the Jew presenting the paste beads to the young woman, in testimony, as he himself asserted, of his sense of her and the smith's kindness; and a feeling in his favour was instantly excited even warmer than before. Not only was the beer-can replenished, but a gin-bottle was produced, out of which Smeltum brewed for himself a tumbler of potent grog; and the Israelite being invited to follow the example, a night of conviviality and hard-drinking began. Such was precisely the end which the wily pedler desired to effect. He told his best stories with more than his accustomed humour: his stock of anecdotes and scandal seemed to be exhaustless; and the smith's liberality became greater and greater, as the liquor which he swallowed took effect. Finally, after some half-dozen glasses had been emptied, four of them falling to the share of the host, the latter dropped from his stool, and was conveyed, in a state of utter intoxication, by Martha and the Jew, to his chamber.

So far every thing had succeeded according to the pedler's most sanguine anticipations. His intended victim was in a condition which at once rendered him powerless of resistance, and presented a fair opening to such as should attribute his sudden death to natural causes; whilst the friendly terms on which they parted would, under any circumstances, shield him from the suspicion of having offered violence to so kind a host. He, accordingly, saw Martha retire for the night, after spreading his pallet, as usual, upon the floor, with the savage exultation of a tiger watching its prey, and addressed himself, not as may be supposed to sleep, but to watch impatiently for the signal which should inform him that his bloody associate was at hand.

It wanted a full hour of midnight when Martha, carrying the candle along with her, wished the Jew a good night, and withdrew. Noah was not, however, left in absolute darkness, for a few embers still burned; and he took care, by raking together as many cinders as could be gathered from beneath, from time to time to feed them. It is strange that even the most hardened villain should feel less at ease in the dark, than when some rays of light are streaming round him; yet that the case is so, all experience proves; and never was more decided testimony brought forward to the justice of the conclusion, than Noah's conduct on the present occasion furnished. He nursed the little spark with the most scrupulous care and economy, placing over the live coal only as many pieces of fuel as would serve to hinder the flame from utterly expiring; and having drawn his chair close to it, planted himself in such a position as to interrupt as much as possible the current of air. This done, he laid his watch upon the table, as if the circumstance of being able to notice how time passed would cause it to pass more quickly; and pulling a dark lantern from his pocket, trimmed and arranged it, that nothing might require consideration when the moment of action came.

In the mean while the night, which had from the first looked loweringly, began to overcast. Sudden gusts of wind, accompanied by smart showers, came up from the south; and striking full upon the casement of the room in

which the Israelite sat, produced a sound by no means acceptable to one in his circumstances. Noah started as the leaden window-frame rattled to the blast, and gazed, with an anxious eye, sometimes towards the spot, sometimes at his watch, whilst a sort of imprecation upon his associate's tardiness rose involuntarily to his lips. "Will the rogue fail me?" said he to himself, as he observed the hands of the timekeeper point to the stipulated moment, yet received no intimation that Bushell was near. "Is he more of a coward than of a ruffian after all? Let me have him once in this scrape, and then, I think, I shall be able to make my own terms with him." He had scarcely pronounced these words when two gentle taps on the back-door announced that Bushell was true to his pledge; and the pedler, rising with greater alacrity than might have been expected from a person of his years, undid the fastenings, and his comrade entered.

"This is an ugly night," said Bushell, shivering either from cold or violent nervous excitement, or both; "and it is bad for our purpose, too. The roads are wet and plashy, and it is impossible for me, at least, to go about the house without leaving prints of my feet behind. Hadn't we better defer this business till to-morrow?"

"After every other preparation hash been made, Mashter Jan; after de old fool is ash drunk ash von beeslit, and Martha sound ashleep? No, no, it must be done now, or not done at all."

"But my foot-marks will betray me," replied Bushell. "See here," lifting up his leg, "the very bricks retain the impression; and what do you think boards and matting will do?"

"Vy, den, pull off your shoes, you vill valk lighter, and make less noise widout them; and we don't want to disturb any body, you know."

The Jew busied himself as he spoke in blowing up a piece of smouldering wood into a flame, to which he applied the candle from his lantern. It ignited more suddenly than Bushell, at least, expected; and he started as if the glare, thus suddenly produced, were the effect of something more than a natural cause.

“Thou art timid, Jan,” said the Jew with a sneer.

“Timid, Jew!” replied Bushell: “no; but commonly prudent. There are chinks in that shutter through which any passer-by must see the flame which you have very needlessly excited. I know my way to the old fellow’s room; and we don’t want light to help us in the work we have to do there.”

“Pull off your shoes, then, and lead on,” said the Jew, as he placed the candle in the lantern, and effectually obscured it. Bushell did as he was desired; and receiving the lantern into his hand, groped forward through the passage.

The ruffians reached the chamber door, Bushell in front, the Jew close behind, without exciting the smallest alarm; and they found it, as indeed Noah had taken care they should, ajar. It was pushed open, and the heavy breathing of the sleeper guided them towards the spot where he lay. Here Bushell’s courage failed him. He stopped, returned the lantern to his companion, and, in a whisper, declared that he had not the heart to proceed. “What! and relinquish all?” said the Israelite, — “house, monish, business, a settlement for life, and revenge! Thou art but a chicken-hearted villain, after all, Jan;—I will do de deed.”

As he spoke he drew up the tin case of the lantern; and a stream of light, falling strongly over the bed, discovered the smith lying upon his back, and buried in profound slumber. Noah approached him, but the sleeping man moved at the moment, and, closing the case hastily, he shrunk back again.

“My arm is too weak,” whispered he. “If he resist, I shall hardly succeed in mastering him. Thou must do it. It is but a firm clutch, and all will be over in a minute.”

“Nay, then, here goes,” replied the younger ruffian, wound up, as it seemed, to desperation. “Hold the light down,—so, so, and now——”

He did not pause to finish the sentence, but throwing himself with all his might upon the stomach of the sleeping

man, grasped him tightly by the throat. A few convulsive struggles followed, but they availed nothing to free the suffocating smith from his murderer, who pressed him down with the strength of a giant, and held his gripe till life was wholly extinct.

"Now, then," whispered the Jew, who had taken no other part in the transaction besides being an unmoved spectator, "thou hast done thy business well. Cover up the carrion, and let us begone."

"Cover it up thyself, coward," replied Bushell, rushing furiously from the chamber. "I have had too much hand in the matter already, whilst thou, old tempter, stood by and did nothing."

He had regained the kitchen, and was eagerly buckling on a shoe ere this speech came to a close; but the pedler found leisure enough to arrange the dead man's bed, and rejoin him, before he could make good his retreat. One of his shoes was missing; the friends searched for it every where, but to no purpose—it was not to be found.

"In the name of fortune," cried Bushell, "what has become of it? I left it here by the fireside, but now it is gone; and I of course am ruined."

"We shall both be ruined if you linger here much longer," said the pedler, after vainly aiding in the search. "You must escape to your own house without it, and leave me to find it if it be above ground." Bushell felt that there was truth in this observation; an indescribable sense of horror, moreover, urged him to abandon the scene of guilt without delay; and though he could not shut his eyes to the hazard of leaving such a proof of his presence behind, even the dread of discovery failed to operate with a counterbalancing weight against it. He rushed from the door unshod as he was; and the Jew, closing it after him, extinguished the light.

"Thou art in the toils as surely as ever foolish mouse was lured into the trap," said he; "and if I make not a good thing of thee, den am I no true child of my fader. This housh is mine; and thou shalt work for my profit as long as it shall suit my convenience."

The callous ruffian threw himself upon his rug ; and when Martha came in in the morning, she found him fast asleep.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PARISH APPRENTICE.

It is scarcely necessary to say, that the sudden death of old Smeltum soon became known throughout the parish, and that it produced every where a strong sensation. No suspicion of foul play was, however, excited ; for, in the first place, the corpse presented only such appearances as usually attach to one who has died of apoplexy ; and, in the next place, there were no reasonable grounds upon which to charge any one with harbouring an evil design towards him. Every thing in the house was seen to be in the very same state in which it had been when the family retired to rest. No attempt at robbery had been made ; nothing of value was missing ; nor was a single article of furniture displaced or injured ; and as the Jew averred that he had heard no noise during the night, suspicion was entirely put to sleep.

The consequence was, that no investigation took place as to the causes of Smeltum's decease. It was, by general consent, pronounced to be natural, — or, to speak more correctly, to have been occasioned by drinking to excess, — and the smith was laid, with due solemnity, beside other “ forefathers of the hamlet.”

In the mean while, John Bushell, with a self-possession hardly to be expected from him, repaired as usual to the forge, and among all who expressed surprise and regret at the sudden demise of its owner, none conducted himself with greater decorum than he. It seemed as if so un-

looked for a termination of the old man's career had obliterated every angry feeling from his memory, and he now spoke as if the kindnesses which he had received in early life alone retained a place there. But whilst he affected to grieve over the catastrophe, Bushell possessed too much cunning to risk any conjecture as to the probable causes of it; on the contrary, he made it appear, that, according to his conception of things, the matter was altogether of a common order,—nay, he taxed his memory for facts, or, which served the same purpose, invented fictions, for the purpose of satisfying others, that of a tendency to apoplexy old Smeltum had often exhibited symptoms. Between the Jew and him, moreover, little or no intercourse took place. The former departed on the evening of the very day when the fatal discovery was made; and he did not return till many months had elapsed, and the scheme, thus desperately begun, had received its accomplishment.

Time passed, and Bushell failed not, as may easily be imagined, to turn it to the best advantage. He acted the part of a sincere friend towards Martha, conducting the business for her, helping to adjust her affairs, and otherwise aiding her with his skill and counsel. It would have been strange had the partiality which she long entertained for him failed to receive a fresh impetus under such circumstances. But a few weeks had expired from the day of the funeral ere all minor arrangements were completed between them; and before the third moon had changed the banns were published. Finally, John Bushell took to wife the daughter of his late master, and attained, in virtue of that union, the height of his ambition.

But, though thus put in possession of what had long been the great object of his desires, the murderer soon discovered, that even success, however complete, will not compensate for the use of such means as he had been tempted to employ. His avarice was gratified, it is true, for the smith left behind him a larger property than he had been supposed to possess, and Bushell was not a man to squander it away: but the voice of conscience he found it impracticable to stifle; and the fear of discovery ceased not for a moment to torment him. Besides, the Jew's demands re-

mained yet to be satisfied ; and the thought of giving up half of what had been so hardly earned to a miscreant, whom he both hated and despised, was scarcely less afflicting than remorse itself. But John knew that he was in the pedler's power : he more than half suspected him of being disposed to exercise it ; and, next to receiving intelligence that Noah was dead, he longed ardently once more to see and converse with him.

In this state things continued — John, restless and uneasy amid his property, Martha hardly less so in consequence of the increasing brutality of her husband's temper — for about two years and a half ; during the whole of which period Noah Levi came not near the place. As he had never absented himself from the neighbourhood for so long a space before, people began to apprehend that some evil had befallen him ; and John, readily giving credence to what he desired to be true, was preparing to adopt a similar opinion, when, to the joy of the parishioners in general, and the undisguised mortification of the smith, honest Levi once more presented himself at the forge. Time had wrought more than its usual effects upon the Israelite. His form was now bent almost double : his hair and beard were no longer grizzled, but white ; whilst his eye retained little of its brilliancy : his voice was become cracked and broken ; and his manner had lost the whole of that levity and humour which formerly characterised it. In one respect, however, Noah seemed to have undergone no change : he was still as sharp as he had ever been in driving a bargain ; and the nearer he approached to the land where wealth ceases to be valuable, the more intently were his faculties applied in seeking to amass it. Though anxious, for the most obvious of all reasons, to transact business with his friend Bushell, he had been unable to resist the temptation of loitering by the way, wherever an opportunity of turning a penny presented itself, — and hence his presence in the country was not known to John, till after almost all his neighbours were aware of it. But it became known to him sufficiently early to renew in full violence those personal fears, which had of late begun to torment him less con-

tinually ; and no great while elapsed ere proofs were furnished that for such there was at least some ground.

It was on a pleasant evening in April, about half an hour after sunset, that Bushell was interrupted in his labours by a visitant, whom of all others he at that moment least desired to see. The smith was standing with his back to the doorway, surrounded by half-a-dozen plough-servants, busied in smelting some old iron into shape, and occasionally shovelling up a spoonful of coals as the furnace required it, when he was suddenly accosted in a voice and after a manner which, once heard, there was no possibility of mistaking. Bushell dropped his pincers and shovel, as he would have dropped a heated bar ; and turning hurriedly round, beheld the Jew, loaded as usual beyond his strength, at his elbow.

“ Vat, Jan, still as industrious as ever ! ” exclaimed Noah, in a tone half-ironical, half-serious. “ If ould Shmeltum could look up from his grave, he would hardly regret that his savings had passed into so close a gripe. Thou knowest how to keep a hold when thou gettest it, dat I can vouch for.”

“ Devil ! ” exclaimed Bushell, forgetting himself on the impulse of the moment, “ I had hoped that thou wert dead and damned months ago : — what brings thee hither ? ”

“ A leetle business, Mashter Shmighit,” replied Noah, “ between thee and me ; a small account to be settled, in which the balance, I take it, ish rather against thee, and in my favour.”

“ Indeed ! ” said Bushell, recovering his self-command in a moment. “ I had forgotten that any such account was outstanding. But you have it doubtless in black and white, and can produce it.”

“ By all means,” replied the Jew, putting his hand into a wallet that hung at his side, and dragging out a shoe. “ I always keep it in dis — in dis — look ye, do ye know it ? ”

Bushell staggered back, — for it was the identical shoe which he had been compelled to leave behind on the night of the murder. He saw at a glance for what purpose it had been preserved ; and feeling that his only chance of

immunity lay in soothing, not irritating, the pedler, he motioned to him to put it up. "I don't doubt your word, Noah," said he in a subdued tone. "I have known you too long to doubt it; and you know me well enough to believe, that I never meant to wrong you. We will look over the account another time: this evening, after supper if you will; for you take up your old quarters, of course?"

"Thank thee, Jan," replied Levi; "we will talk about that anon. In the mean time, I would gladly eat and drink, for I am both hungry and thirsty."

"You shall have the best the house affords," said Bushell, motioning him to follow, and leading at once towards the kitchen. Happily, Martha chanced to be abroad, and the associates lost not the favourable moment to proceed at once to business.

"How comes that shoe in thy possession, Noah?" demanded Bushell, in a tone between anger and jeering.

"I gathered it up, friend, when thou went away," replied the Israelite; "and I have carefully preserved it, as the best of all proofs, that thou, and not I, did the deed."

"Hell-hound!" exclaimed the smith, "thou canst not say that. Was it not at thy suggestion? wert not thou the propounder of the whole scheme?"

"Who, I?" rejoined Noah. "Not I, so help me the God of my fathers! Besides, you know that I never laid hand upon him; you, and you only, have his blood upon your head."

"But you would not split, would you?" asked Bushell in undisguised alarm. "Surely your own conscience tells you, that our cause is common?"

"I am no traitor, Jan," replied the Jew, "provided I be fairly dealt with; but more than two years have elapsed without bringing one communication from you, and twenty more might have slid away, had I not come hither to enquire after it. I tell you frankly, that your life is in my hands, and it shall be spared on one condition only. You must make over to me the title-deeds of this estate. The business you shall have at a moderate yearly rent; but, so help me Heaven! if you once fail in paying it, the secret shall come out, and then—take the consequence."

Bushell rose from his chair, paced the room from one corner to another several times, whilst the crafty Israelite watched every movement with a glance of the most perfect self-possession. "Scoundrel!" he at last exclaimed, "in this our bargain, was it not agreed between us to share the booty? and am I not ready to give up thy full portion, whenever it shall be demanded?"

"Ver true," replied Noah; "but during some thirty moons or thereabouts I have been left in entire ignorance even as to the value of the booty of which you speak; and had I not arrived in my own proper person to enquire into it, not one syllable of information would have been communicated to me. Look ye, Jan; I am as well disposed as yourself to act with openness. You have broken the contract; and, therefore, if you reject my proposal, look to what shall follow."

"But, my dear Noah," continued Bushell, changing his tone, "you would not surely reduce me to a condition worse than I was in before? I tell you, there is not a moment of my sleeping or waking existence in which the old man fails to haunt me. I see him by day, and I see him by night; he is uppermost in my mind when at work, at my meals, and in my bed; surely you would not rob me of the poor recompense of so much misery?"

"What is thy misery to me?" rejoined the pedler with perfect composure; "dat is thy own business: but this nug house, de freehold attached, de property in the funds, wid de custom of de shop,—these matters I do regard, and I must have them."

"What if I say no to that proposal?"

"Then thou shalt hang, as sure as my name is Noah Levi."

The conference was here interrupted by the arrival of Martha, whom the pedler immediately greeted in the subdued manner which distinguished him in other days. Well pleased was she to receive again under her roof a man whom early associations had taught her to esteem; and her preparations to entertain him were commensurate to the degree of satisfaction which his presence manifestly occasioned. But the pedler, strange to say, appeared indis-

posed to take advantage of them. Whilst Martha was busy arranging the supper-table, he drew from his bosom a deed, duly endorsed upon parchment, in a fair legal hand; and pushing it over to Bushell, requested him to affix his name at a particular corner which was left blank.

“ For what purpose is this ? ” demanded the smith.

“ That you know already,” replied Noah: “ it remains for you to accomplish it or not, at your pleasure. But——”

“ Ruffian ! ” muttered the smith, “ it will avail thee little ; but if I must, I must.” So saying, he put his hand to the deed ; and the entire property of his murdered father-in-law passed in an instant into the possession of the Jew.

“ You stay here to-night ? ” added Bushell, with an expression of ill-concealed fury in his eye.

“ I am sorry that I cannot,” replied the Jew, “ but I will do what is far better ; I will leave thee till Michaelmas to arrange thy affairs, and then I will visit thee again.” He rose as he spoke, and, in spite of the entreaties both of Martha and her husband, quitted the house.

During the six months which followed this strange scene, John Bushell's proceedings resembled rather those of an insane person than of a man in his sober senses. His business was neglected, and he wandered about from place to place, speaking to no one, and taking apparently no interest in any thing that passed around him. His sleep too, which ever since he came to the forge had been broken and uneasy, went from him entirely ; and his temper, always rugged, became absolutely savage. His wife received no gentle treatment at his hands ; and his very children (for Martha had brought him two) seemed to be objects of absolute loathing to him. Wild and incoherent sentences dropped from him, sometimes in his feverish slumbers, sometimes when wide awake ; and even the desire to amass money, which, up to the present moment, had shown itself in every proceeding, deserted him. At last, however, Michaelmas approached ; and as if he had made up his mind to some novel course, which it would require all his energy to follow, he suddenly returned to his old habits. The forge was again frequented, and business resumed with the same

assiduity as formerly: his temper became gentle, pliable, and easy; and his very wife appeared at least to receive her share of the kindness which was lavished upon all. It is needless to say, that such conduct led to numerous guesses and surmises among the parishioners; but John Bushell had always been to them a riddle, and could scarcely be said to have become more unintelligible of late than he was formerly.

Michaelmas came at length, and with it came the Jew: punctual to the day appointed. This time he paused nowhere to drive bargains; but making straight for the forge, was welcomed with much seeming cordiality both by Bushell and his wife. Either the old man's shrewdness had deserted him, or Bushell played his part to admiration, for Noah scrupled not on this occasion to put himself completely in the power of one whom he knew to be both daring and desperate. He became the guest of his tenant; and, as my guide to Team Hill had informed me, was never heard of from that night forward.

The truth is, that Bushell, feeling or fancying that his life or that of the Jew must be sacrificed, made up his mind to avert his own fate, by hastening on that of his treacherous associate. It was not, however, as he himself affirmed, without a violent struggle, that he arrived at this desperate determination. The blood of one victim weighed already so heavily upon his soul, that the thought of adding another to the load could not, for many weeks, be admitted; but avarice, and a powerful feeling of self-preservation, overcame, in the end, every other consideration, and the Jew was devoted to destruction from the hour in which Bushell resumed his habits of industry. The old man blindly ran into the snare. He was artfully inveigled into a loose declaration, that he designed to prosecute his journey ere the family should be stirring in the morning; and care having been taken that this should be said in the hearing of witnesses, the smith looked upon his main difficulty as overcome: he was not deceived, for the Jew was already in his dotage.

Martha, by her husband's orders, provided for them that night a substantial supper; and having seen that the means of continuing the carouse were abundant, in case the

two friends should feel disposed to indulge, she withdrew at a given signal. The movement was not lost upon the pedler, who, though far from being the man that he once was, retained still some portion of his original sagacity, and he instantly demanded of Bushell the cause of an arrangement so unusual.

"You spoke of leaving us early," replied the smith; "and as we have some important business to settle, I thought we had best take time by the forelock, and settle it to-night. How stand our accounts?"

"You owe me," replied the Jew, producing the deed of settlement, "exactly three years' rent of these tenements, and interest for two years and a half on four hundred pounds five per cents., which with compound interest will amount in all to one hundred and thirty pounds. But I was never harsh to a good tenant; so I will remit thee, for old friendship's sake, the odd thirty, and give thee a discharge in full for the hundred."

"Thou shalt have it, good Noah, with thanks," answered Bushell. "But tell me, worthy Master Levi, what that pack of thine contains. Art cheating wherever thou goest, as usual, vending baubles for things of value? or is thy cargo really something worth this time, seeing thou hast disposed of so little of it?"

"I am no cheat, friend Jan, as thou canst testify; indeed, I never sell aught except at a loss, God help me! But I'll tell thee what,—de little box is richly laden this trip. I am from Paris, and carry to London articles fit only for de London market."

"Well, well, I wish thee luck, Noah. But drink, man; fill thy glass again; 't is rare Hollands,—never paid the King's duty, I trow; there is no headache in a gallon."

"One glass more, with all my heart," replied the Jew; "but as we have not such business in hand to-night as when last I sat drinking here, we need not drain the bottle too deeply. Ah! that was a snug job. Hast forgotten, Jan, how the old fellow kicked and struggled? Truly, thou art a lusty dog to keep thy hold; I thought at one time he would have cast thee off."

"Nay, nay, let that pass," replied the smith, pushing

the liquor towards him. "'T was an ugly business, and ought to be forgotten by both."

"So it is, so it is, now that there is fair play between us; only things fall out strangely. 'T was on this very night, three years ago, that he and I sat at this very table, and drank from this very bottle; and where is he now?"

"Where thou shalt be in a moment," cried Bushell, who had approached the old man unheeded, and now seizing him furiously by the throat, threw him to the ground. "The trick is thine own, hoary ruffian!" he continued, seating himself at the same time on the pedler's stomach, and forcibly suppressing his breath. "I thank thee for teaching it, chiefly because I am permitted to play it off upon thyself." But the pedler was not to be vanquished as old Smeltum had been, seeing that his senses were not stupified with drink; and though incapable of a successful resistance against a man in the full vigour of youth, he nevertheless struggled with the energy of despair. He displaced the hand which covered his mouth and nose, uttered a shrill and piteous cry, and would have repeated it, had not the smith changed his mode of attack, ere time was allowed to draw breath. With a giant's strength he tore the old man's head forward towards his breast, and casting himself with all his might upon it, dislocated the neck in an instant. But the cry, though short and somewhat stifled, had not been emitted in vain. The murderer still sat upon his victim, when the door of the room burst open, and his wife, breathless with horror and alarm, stood before him.

"Woman!" shrieked Bushell, rising and grasping her violently by the arm, "you have seen that which you ought not to have seen; but know this, that the brute who now lies there stark and stiff took away the life of your father, and would have reduced your children to beggary. Swear, therefore, over his corpse, that the secret of this night shall never be divulged, or, by Heaven! you share his fate."

Poor Martha's brain swam round. She repeated the words of the oath which her savage husband dictated, and reeled, rather than walked, back to her own chamber; but

from that moment her intellects were never settled, and she became within the twelvemonth utterly insane. Bushell, however, looked not to her. Having carefully stripped the pack of every thing valuable, made himself master of the deed of assignment, and emptied the pedler's pockets, he removed the body to a place of concealment which he had long prepared for it ; and so prudently had his plans been arranged that it rested there, unsought for, during a space of more than thirty years. No one, indeed, dreamed of enquiring what had become of the Jew. He was believed to have taken his departure, as he threatened to do, early in the morning after his arrival at the forge ; and if he never returned, the fact seemed sufficiently accounted for, by his age and increasing infirmities.

The remainder of this bloody tale is told in few words. Put once more in possession of his ill-gotten gains, and enriched by the plunder of his associate, Bushell began, before long, to look higher in the world ; and the farm of Team Hill falling vacant, he applied for a lease, and obtained it. The forge, however, no bribe would tempt him either to sell or to let. Many advantageous offers were made, but he rejected them all ; and at last, to the surprise and regret of the parishioners at large, the building was pulled down. In its place a barn was erected, which though at an apparently inconvenient distance from his dwelling, Bushell persisted in using, after he had, with uncommon care, and at a very considerable expense, boarded it over.

For a short time after his removal to Team Hill, Bushell affected a hospitality and openness of manner which sat not well upon him. He took a leading part in parish matters, too ; attended all vestries, undertook the most laborious offices, and discharged them with ability and credit ; yet his neighbours could not bring themselves to regard him with any other eye besides that of distrust and suspicion. Very few would visit him, and fewer still spoke of him in other terms besides those of unmitigated dislike ; till, professing to be disgusted with their envy of his prosperity, he withdrew himself from society altogether. Much about the same time the eldest of his children died ;

and his wife, who had not recovered the shock occasioned by the scene of which she was a witness, went raving mad. He removed her, without delay, to an asylum no-one knew where, and hired a housekeeper, whom, with an unaccountable inconsistency, he paid extravagantly, to keep her about him ; but little advantage accrued from this change. His own conscience could not be lulled asleep ; and as his parsimony prevented him from drowning it in liquor, it preyed upon him day and night. His temper became more and more harsh, more and more sullen, more and more austere. His second child, driven from her home by the severity of her father, became a common prostitute, and perished miserably in London. Every thing, in short, went wrong with him, save his pecuniary affairs, and from the flourishing condition of these he derived no solid gratification.

In this manner the wretched man dragged on for many years an existence as worthless to himself as to others ; suffering, as he frankly confessed, all the torments of the damned. One good or generous action he was never known to have performed ; and he died at last, ~~not~~ only unregretted, but universally abhorred. Yet his wealth perished not with him : the whole of it was bequeathed to public charities, with the vain and superstitious hope, expressed in his will, that the use to which it was applied might, perhaps, atone for the means adopted in its accumulation.

It is only necessary to add, that after Bushell himself had been committed to the dust, a search was, at my suggestion, instituted for the bones of the Jew. It was not unsuccessful. The boarded floor of the new barn being removed, a skeleton was found, bent completely double, about three feet under ground, just beneath the spot where the great anvil used to stand ; and no doubt can exist, that that very hole, from which Levi had so often drawn his dishonest gains, became at last his grave.

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