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# A PRODIGY.

A Tale of Music.

BY THE AUTHOR

OF

"MODERN GERMAN MUSIC," "ROCCABELLA," &c. &c

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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# A PRODIGY.

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## PART THE FIFTH.

(CONTINUED.)

### THE RAPIDS.

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#### CHAPTER VI.

##### A GHOSTLY COUNSELLOR.

“GET up, Quillsey! your chair is wanted!” cried the voluble Countess Baltakis in her shrillest tones of triumph—“Lady Caldermere!—Doctor Mondor wishes expressly to be presented to you. Every one has heard of his wonderful cures. I have had the Burlington watched night and day, that I might be the first to get hold of him—and here he is! But you must not keep him long. Every-

body is dying to be introduced to him; so, I assure you, you may take it as a real compliment to be first—though of course you were entitled to expect it.—Lady Load, you shall have him next,—not” (with an audible *aside* to a friend) “that he can make *her* look young again.—Doctor, I can and will only spare you to Lady Caldermere for ten minutes”—and Madame Baltakis flounced away somewhere else.

“One must give way, of course!” said the discomfited Mr. Quillsey, rising with a shrug and a sigh and a smile of secret intelligence—“for who does not wish to be presented to Lady Caldermere?—But she *is* a good creature—the Countess Baltakis!”—and so, unnoted, and unheard, the displaced decorator crept away to simmer his taste and tact into other ears.

She sat in a dumb terror of expectation.—The person was now close upon her.

“I wished particularly to be presented to you, my Lady,” said the gentleman, sitting down, and speaking in French with a strong

foreign accent, "as my Lord, I have ascertained, is not in London."

That head and that ear Lady Caldermere thought had sat by her once before—at Baden-Baden.

"I beg your pardon," said she, absently—forcing herself to look the stranger full in the face. . . . The deep scar on his forehead, by distorting the eyebrows, had given to the upper part of the countenance a peculiarly unpleasant expression. Or was it the motion of his lips?—She waited breathlessly to hear him speak again.

"Ah!" said he, politely smiling, "I can see that I remind *you*, too, of some one you have known.—I am used to the thing. It is perpetually happening to me—though it would be an odd chance if there were two such disfigured faces as mine.—But with a man it does not matter, save as making an ugly puzzle. When I think of such a young, beautiful woman, as a patient of mine, the Princess Chenzikoff, — with her face dis-

torted by a scar across her cheek and lip—I can look in my glass, and say—‘No matter! With or without my Cain’s mark, no one would have fallen in love with me.’”

It must be! He *was* the Baden Spectre—there could be no doubt of that.—She said something—what, she could never tell—of having met the Princess Chenzikoff abroad.

“O, to be sure, at Baden-Baden;—and we sat next to one another at table one day, I think. That must be . . . let me see . . . O, long before that madman forced his way in and tried to murder the poor Princess.—Did you know her well, my Lady?”

“No,” replied the other, whose terrible constraint increased every moment.—“She was pointed out to me.”

“In the *Conversations Haus*? Yes, every one was talking of her. Was she not lovely?—You would not know her were you now to see her again, without her veil. She will wear a veil for the rest of her life, she says.—And yet, no sooner was she out

of my hands, than one of her old lovers, whom she had refused four times a year—came forward again—such is her fascination. She is, I believe, by this time, the Countess Haugwitz.”

Lady Caldermere made the requisite murmur, which in good society passes for an answer. She had not heard two words out of ten.

“A strange place, Baden-Baden,—is it not?—quite deserted by invalids now.—I was more sorry than surprised to learn that my present patient had derived no advantage from the waters,—but I hope, by meeting you here, that Lord Caldermere is at least no worse; and that some of the symptoms detailed in his last letter, have been at least alleviated; though prescription from a distance is to little purpose, I know. How is my Lord?”

“I hardly know how to answer you,” said Lady Caldermere, rallying her spirits in sheer desperation, and trying to shake off

the dread she battled with as unreasonable. —“I was not aware, till this moment, that Lord Caldermere was in correspondence with . . . with any foreign physician.”

“No?—but you need not be surprised. Reserves with those who are habitually the most trusted, are frequently a symptom of a case such as, I fancy, my Lord’s may prove. —Then, I dare say, you had not heard that I was on my way to England, so soon as I could leave the Princess Chenzikoff,—with the express purpose of putting my poor services at his entire disposal?—I am afraid you must become used to my poor disfigured face, even if it does happen unpleasantly to remind you of some old friend. My Lord’s cure must be a work of time. Have you any commands for Caldermere to honour me with?”

“Are you going down to Caldermere?” was her question, in a trembling tone of surprise.

“To-morrow!—I should have gone down



to-night, indeed; only Madame Baltakis told me in her note that I might possibly meet you here. What a wilderness of a place this London is! and how much—much changed since I was here last, twenty years ago.—Not this part of the town, though, so much as some others.”

It could not be!—No!—The dreaded one had never been in England!

“But your heavy climate is not changed. I recollect that well. What a climate! with this bitter east wind in June! How you English ladies keep your beauty so long, we foreigners can never understand—I suppose it is because you are all so happy at home.—But here is Madame Baltakis!” and he shrugged his shoulders with an expression of disinclination, as he rose.—“Then you have no commands that I can have the honour of taking down to Caldermere?—If you stay some weeks in town, I hope you will find we have made progress.”—And he joined the noisy lady of the house,

leaving Lady Caldermere in a state of bewilderment which words cannot describe.

Short as that dialogue had been, there was matter in it for a life's misery. She might have fancied that every word had been selected and spoken for some peculiar purpose—even had she not been made suspicious by that vague affright for which no valid reason could be given. A strange physician summoned without her knowledge to Caldermere!—one, too, who knew something of her history! She must know *his*. Meanwhile, her perplexity was intolerable: worse, she felt, than the worst certainty could be. She would question Madame Baltakis: but no—there was no bringing herself to confess to that woman that she was ignorant of home affairs which concerned her so nearly. —She would write to Justin, and ask what he knew. She would go to Caldermere so soon as she could without exciting suspicion, and speak directly to my Lord's strange guest. “Hemmed in on every side!” mut-

tered she to herself. “Why did I make so terrible a marriage?”

Something, possibly, however, might be found out there and then. She passed hastily through the rooms, which were now full; but Doctor Mondor was nowhere to be found: instead of him, in the midst of the crowd, Countess Baltakis fanning herself, and talking to a dozen people at once.

“Colonel Vandaleur, will you see the Countess to her carriage? Met him in Sicily—how interesting!—What a countenance! Lady Load is sure he must have been born with that scar.—No, Mr. Transom—not the slightest idea of establishing himself here! He prefers wandering about—and will only take up a case when he fancies it.—I am sure we are indebted, Lady Caldermere, to my Lord’s illness, for treating us to a sight of so remarkable a person. . . . No, a Maltese, Kitty,—not a German.—His mother was . . . They say it is some preparation of platina or petroleum, which works wonders.

Of course *you* will think him a Quack, Sir Matthew, if he cures Lord Caldermere. He's a charming man.—Such a sweet face, and the scar gives his eyes so much expression. Now, don't it, Piper?—I appeal to you as an artist. I seem as if I had known it all my life—I am positive I have met with it somewhere.—Or perhaps it is mesmeristic. They say he puts people to sleep: in a wonderful way—besides the *petroleum*.—A truly charming man, I call him.—Going, Lady Caldermere?—How I rejoice with you at being set at ease about Lord Caldermere.—Baltakis adores him as a perfect wonder.—She's gone, Kitty, thank God!—a spoiled apple-green colour: jealous, no doubt, poor thing, of this Doctor Mondor: for people do say (not Baltakis, he never utters) that Lord Caldermere beats her.—And what a joke it is, her son being *our* pianoforte player.—Yes, indeed it is so, Lady Load—and her natural son!—She had one, that I know.—But we must

keep this dear Mondor amongst us. Lady Lydia, we must find him an English wife!—The Sultan offered him six (that was your story, Mr. Percelby) for curing him. *You* get no such fees, Sir Matthew; but then you kill people, you know—otherwise the dear Dorkings would have been with us to-night. The Duchess will marry again. Thank Heaven, Grisi is done, for I want my supper. See after yourselves, good people.—Come, my Lord.”

## CHAPTER VII.

## SOOTHING MEDICAL TREATMENT.

ANY loiterer at the gates of Caldermere on a glowing June evening some ten days later, who looked through betwixt the lodges—their windows glistening like diamonds—their porches blazing with summer flowers, and sweet with roses—down the avenue flanked with velvet turf, and pillared with rare specimens of pine-trees, — any one, I say, who saw dashing into such a Paradise that irreproachable pony equipage, with its two toy-grooms behind it, might have excusably envied the perfectly-dressed lady of the domain leaning back on the

satin cushions, as one whose lot was cast in pleasant places.—Many a criminal has entered his grim prison gates with a lighter heart than Lady Caldermere's.

She was going home; because she could bear London no longer—no longer endure to be distant from the spot—going home, unasked for, unbidden, hardly expected; having only announced herself a few hours before her arrival, lest her return should be prohibited:—going home, alone amongst terrors, which she had neither good conscience, courage, nor religion to face!—Instead of being cheered by the beauty and shining freshness of everything round her,—so delicious to those who escape from our capital in early summer, the rich solitude of the park weighed on her spirits. Her notion of the country had always confined itself to pic-nics and archery meetings: to thirty guests at dinner every day—and lively morning groups flirting on the terrace. As the phaeton swept up, the only sign of life now

to be seen was a white peacock, surveying, from above, her arrival, as coolly as if he had been king of the domain. They had not had time to remember to set the fountains playing.

She was received with due observance—but the stillness of the house appalled her. “Is my Lord in the library, Simmons?”

“No, my Lady.”

“He is not worse?—not in his own room?”

“No, my Lady; my Lord is at Old Caldermere.”

“Let somebody go down there, then, and tell him I am come; and ask him at what time he will dine.”

“My Lord has been at Old Caldermere since Thursday week, my Lady,” said the groom of the chambers, little less amazed than herself—for he had never dreamed that his lady was not in her husband’s confidence.

“At Old Caldermere!” repeated she,



aghast with surprise. "Send the phaeton back, then, and say with my love that I am arrived: and serve dinner in half an hour. Left the great house, without a word to me!"—She rang the bell violently for her maid. "I had better dress—I will dress."

She dressed for dinner—feeling every moment the constraint more and more terrible.—Still no one.—The phaeton came back without a message.—Dinner was served, before she would sit down by herself. "When did Mr. Bower go back to Bower Mills?" she asked, carelessly.

"Mr. Bower is staying in Blackchester, my Lady."

Another strange thing to ponder!—She went through her wretched dinner in silence; not aware what she ate and drank, or if anything:—but with just sufficient self-command left to recollect that there were four pair of eyes to watch her.—After she had gone through the decent show of a great lady's repast,—“I will ring when I want

coffee, Simmons.—You need not bring lights.”

“ My Lady, if you please—the grey drawing-room is ready.—We had no time . . .” The servant threw open the door of the smallest of the suite, and she was left to herself in the twilight of a long summer evening.

For such a desolate coming home as this had Sybil sacrificed her life’s truth and affections! But remorse had less share in her frivolous distress than a feeling of ill usage,—and a childish, impotent fancy of something still being possible to be done by way of counteracting her ill luck, as she represented it to herself.—She schemed and schemed—it could be hardly called thinking: but no remedy would suggest itself: until, in very weariness of such useless efforts, she fell into that confusion of miserable anxiety which, with the weak-minded, is not far from the first step towards loss of reason.

How long she had sat undisturbed she knew not. The objects in the room, now melting together in the soft shadows of a summer's night, seemed almost to swim and move round her.—She fancied she might awaken presently—and yet she was not asleep. She turned in her chair, as if by so doing she could break the spell of bewilderment.—As she turned, a sudden light fell upon her—and behind the light she saw, pale, stern, reproachful, a face in the doorway.

“What? what?” she could hardly gasp out—putting her hands to her eyes.

“Doctor Mondor, my Lady,” said Simmons, ushering in the visitor, and placing candles on the table.

The visitor sat down on a slight motion from the lady. He waited till she should speak: but she did not—perhaps *could* not.

“I walked up from Old Caldermere,” at last he began, “at my Lord's express desire,

in answer to your message, which rather startled him.”

“What? that I came home when I knew him to be ill,—and had been without a letter for a fortnight—since, in fact, I met you in London.”

“Yes, my Lady. He is in that state (it will soon pass, I dare venture to assure you) in which the most perfect repose from all excitement is necessary. His mind has been overstrained for some years past—and when that is the case, the strongest bodies will give way, sooner or later.”

He paused. The unhappy wife was silent. Doctor Mondor went on :

“Some of the causes of his anxiety, I fear, are far from being at an end—but there is a momentary pause; and during a pause, tone and energy may, and *will*, be in a great degree restored. At least I hoped so till Saturday evening.—I hoped that the perfect quiet of Old Caldermere, the retreat from bustle, and servants, and from people

coming and going in a great house like this, would enable me to give my peculiar mode of treatment a good chance.—What has occurred there to ruffle him I cannot tell you.”

“Did he see anything?” she asked, hurriedly.

“See!—I do not quite understand you—but he would send into Blackchester, then and there, for Mr. Bower:—and he slept very ill, when their meeting was over.—His lawyers were with him on Monday.—He was calmer on Tuesday and yesterday: and, indeed, I hope, only requires calm, and a few simple remedies, to be all we could wish to see him. Meanwhile” (there was a slight change of tone here—tending towards the mood imperative—not lost on his listener), “he begs you not to think of coming down to Old Caldermere; to be under no anxiety on his account; and to amuse yourself.”

“Amuse myself!” cried she, thrown off

her guard by the quiet tone of authority.—  
“This is all very well.—Be under no anxiety, indeed! Do I stand for nothing and nobody in the midst of all these changes and mysteries?—I, my Lord’s wife, not to go near him, when he is ill, and to wait for orders from a stranger—from! . . . Doctor Mondor, who and *what* are you, to thrust yourself into the midst of a family in this way?”

“You are hysterical, madam, and I shall have to prescribe for you.—Who am I?—Lord Caldermere’s physician, summoned from abroad—where I had the honour and advantage of knowing some of your late husband’s family.”

She looked him full in the face, unable to command her increasing agitation. He returned her gaze, and a smile flitted over his lips and passed—as she faltered out, “My late husband’s family?”

“It is so, madam. I have been mistaken for one of them more than once in my life,

owing to my having something of an Ein-stern face. Had the Baron *many* illegitimate sons?—because, who knows but that I may be something nearer than a double to a certain dead man you know of?”

“Yes! he is dead! I know he is dead!” burst from her, in spite of herself.—“Thank God!”

“Amen! my Lady, as you say so!—Yes: I know enough, and more than enough, about Adalbert Einstern; how he took to living by his wits: was disgraced in the army—was taken up by a great lady—became a gambler, and——”

“And how came you to know him?”

“O, my Lady, in our student-days we are not too select in our friends. The fellow was a wild fellow, no doubt—but he had gentleman’s blood in his veins, on the father’s side, at least, and was fairly good company, sometimes. This must be a painful subject to you, my Lady—and one need not be a physician to see how nervous

you are. Allow me to take my leave, pray !”

“ Ring for some water,—I am faint,” she gasped out, hoarsely. “ Now then, go on, go on !” she cried, when she had drunk the water, and the door had closed on the servant.—“ You know more about his death than any one else !—you were with him when he died.—Let me look at you close !—Let me see what more imposture . . . . what is coming next ?” she went on, more and more wildly.

“ Imposture, my Lady !—Look at me—if you dare ! Do not we know he is dead—and do not you thank God for it ?”

“ Are you sure he is dead ?” she cried (now beyond any self-command). “ You know he is not !—You are Adalbert !” And her hysterical scream rang through the room—one which, but that the servants were quarrelling over their billiards, would have brought the household in a swarm around them.



“ Well, madam,—I will not contradict you: any more than I objected to your ‘ Thank God ’ just now.—As you say that he is not dead, it shall be so.—Yes, I am Adalbert, by courtesy Einstern!—You have found out what I may have meant to conceal.—Sweet maternal instinct! Much may it advantage you!—Woman!”—and the man laid aside his tone of diabolical irony, as he rose from his chair and stood over her—“ it is you, not I, who have plucked off the mask:—you must abide the consequences!”—and he passed to the bell, and rang it sharply.

“ Some wine immediately !” was the order to the servant who appeared. “ Lady Caldermere is faint.—Some champagne.”

Yes: as he said, *she* had plucked off the mask.

“ Your servant will wonder, I doubt not,” said the fearful visitor, reseating himself when the door had closed, “ at your agitation. But he knows that I have your husband’s entire confidence. Take care what

you are about.—*I* am master here; and will tell you what you shall do: and what you shall leave undone.—You have brought this on yourself—by coming down here and raving in this insane way.”

She began to sob, in a wild, helpless way, clasping the arms of the chair in which she sat, and moaning—“O God! O God! is there no one who can come and help me?”

“No one. You must command yourself! You shall hear me out.—If you faint, I can revive you without calling on your servants. Here’s the wine!—And I don’t wonder you would like to faint” (the man went on, when the servant had disappeared, in that low voice which was scarcely human), “when you see me rise from the dead in the midst of all your security, and grandeur, and domestic happiness—and when you recollect the love which you showed me during my years of childhood!—Why, do you think I have forgotten it?—There was not a day you did not try to set my father against me (your

first husband was your slave for a while). He would have been kind to me in his rough way—but you could not bear to see me at Einstern. The Baroness loathed the sight of her bastard!—Coarse words, you will say, for a grand lady like Lady Caldermere to hear!—but you have brought them on yourself, I tell you!”

“O me! O me!” was all that the weak woman could reply;—rocking her head between her hands.

“You were very near having this pleasure when I had the honour of meeting my Lady at Baden-Baden, but matters were not then ripe. I have waited pretty long, though!—What, and you thought you could make an end of me, when you got my poor half idiot of a father to turn me out of doors, and to answer none of my letters!—And you were pleased to learn that I was disgraced in the army, and was kept by a woman, and that I became a gambler. I am not the only son of yours who has gam-

bled, recollect!—And I have killed a man in a duel, who challenged me, because I made his sister what you were before you became the Baroness Einstern.—It was high time I should leave Austria.”

He paused in the full disclosure of his triumph, and poured a goblet of champagne down his throat.

“The police were admiring me at a distance, with the intention of making love to me more closely.—Bah! I knew two or three of their officers.—Do you suppose that police officers are as immaculate in Austria as they are in England?—It was their interest at once to screen me and to help me away.—I was to go out and bathe in the Danube,—with one or two people to see me go. I was to be drowned, and to be smuggled across the frontier off into Wallachia, where one of my friends had connexions. The body, of course, was not to be found. My Wallachian friend was conveniently killed in a brawl, only a few days later.—

There was just time enough to get me across the frontier first, and no great difficulty in that. God helps those that help themselves—though I thought it was infernal luck at the time.—While I was in the water, pretending to bathe, cramp seized me, and I went down and struck my head violently against a stake to which boats are moored. Here's the staple mark"—and he touched his eyebrows.—“ You see that the ugly cut has so spoiled my beauty, that even you did not know your son again!—When they got me out, I was so smashed and swelled, that there was no chance of identifying me;—and so they found my clothes, and found my money, and spread the alarm. They would not have let me live—had it not been for the chance of making something out of the family later.—And so, it was proved by testimony, properly given out and registered, that Adalbert Ein-stern is dead. You, not I, have brought him to life, remember.—By luck, however, I sent out of Vienna a trifle or two before I left

it: one, a letter from you to my father on my account, which I stole from his escritoire. The letter was written just before your second son was born.—I can produce this.” He drank deeply again.

“I will not endure this! I will not endure this!”

“Softly! softly, or the servants will fancy you have taken leave of your wits.—What does it all amount to?—That you have plucked off my mask!—Keep the pretty truth to yourself, and don’t abuse my ugly face, or you may find yourself in difficulties.”

“I will go to Lord Caldermere at once! and if you dare to prevent me . . .”

“Far from it, you shall have my arm across the park, if you are up to the walk, —as you seem a little flighty to-night.—Go to Lord Caldermere, if you please—I do not prevent you.—Tell him who I am.—Well, I will deny it. Which of us two will he believe? Your son, or your son’s mother?—Go to him in defiance of his

positive commands!—commands given at my bidding! Do your very worst! Tell him all that I have told you, which is true—and he will believe all that I have told him, which is false—for I shall simply say that you have lost your senses!—You were not unnoticed, woman! the night we met in London! and, in real truth, I do think you are three parts mad!—Sit down, and quietly give up every idea of resistance.—There is not a single word that you can speak to any living creature, which will not lead to your ruin!—I have the game in my hands!”

“O God! what is to become of me?”

“Settle it with your God!—settle it with your conscience!—settle it with your mother’s love!—I have not waited so many years for nothing.—I heard of your grand marriage, when I was living as tutor in the Wallachian family to which my friend had recommended me.—I was sure we should come together again, some day: and meanwhile, it was the best thing to lie quiet for

a while.—I found there an old blockhead of a quack, an Armenian; and picked up a little medicine—quite enough to serve my turn in addition to a little talent or two.—I have never wanted a patient since.—But really God has helped me, as I was saying.—For it was a chance—was it not?—that in one of the families I entered, I had the pleasure of alighting on your darling—for whose angel sake I was to be kicked into the kennel, forsooth!—I am proud to recollect the service which I rendered him in return!—Perhaps you do not know it! Perhaps you do not know that I stood betwixt him and a marriage with the young Russian Princess.—Perhaps you do not know that it was I who gave him that dear choice wife of his: a *ballet*-girl who had been sold to half Munich—and who, to boot, has madness in her blood! as I could mention to my Lord, if he did not avoid the subject!—He has broken with your immaculate son Justin, as you are aware, on account of your Prodigy;—and



has forbidden him the house.—Will you send for Justin and tell *him* what I have told you?—Do, and Lord Caldermere shall know in what state my Lady's brains are!—You would come down here, where no one wanted you! You would run away from London to avoid being pointed out as the mother of a Prodigy, who has so gallantly distinguished himself! You would be prying, and inquiring, and trying to patch up matters! Take the consequences! You can do me no further mischief, poor woman!”

He rose as he spoke,—put on his gloves quietly—quietly said “Good night!”—quietly rang the bell,—and spoke quietly to Simmons: “Tell my Lady's maid to watch her to-night, and to give her some gentle, quieting draught,” said he, as he went out; “she has not been quite well.” And, ten minutes later, he was singing and laughing his way home to Old Caldermere through the dewy park.

How Lady Caldermere got to her own

room she never knew—and never remembered, how she had flung herself into bed ; full of an opiate—not the first which she had taken—this time as recklessly administered as if she had been careless whether it quieted her for a while, or lulled her for ever.—Nor could she ever tell what hour of the dim night it was at which she found herself, still dressed, out of her room, in the open air—wandering distractedly about on the terrace. Beneath it, at one angle of the house, lay a canal, now like a sheet of black marble ; for neither moon nor stars were out.—The woman was wretched enough to look into this with a sort of greedy wistfulness. That which opiates could not do—the dark water might do for her!—But she was an arrant coward ; and the longing which she dared not fulfil, added only another to her torments. She rushed back to the house—into her own room—and flung herself on the floor.

When it was late in the day she awoke,

—undressed how she never knew, and in her bed, with her lips parched, and her throat on fire,—looking haggard, and grey, and as her maid whispered in the world below, a thousand years old. That functionary presented her with a sealed note,—which recalled her to herself, in a second. “Doctor Mondor,” said she, “walked up with it this morning.”

On the outside was: “From Dr. Mondor, —a prescription;” within were these few words: “Repeat what I prescribed for you last night;” (then followed a scrawl in medical Latin :) “My Lord is better this morning—and you will be so too, if you keep quiet. I shall tell your servants again, that there is no need for them to be anxious; and that you only require complete repose. I shall come to you again, shortly.”

## PART THE SIXTH.

THE MONTH OF JULY.



### CHAPTER I.

IN LONDON.

ONLY once before had Charles crossed the Channel to England: if, indeed, it had been he.—Little, at all events, was there now left of the boy in the velvet coat, who had flung peaches out of the window.—Though he had still some months of grace to grow in, ere he arrived at years of discretion—he was a husband—about to become a father—a celebrity for whose possession the great

people of Europe were quarrelling. Yet though not much of young life remained for him to learn:—there might still, he felt, be much that he could enjoy.

The travelling wonderments of Gottlieb, to begin with, were enough to make any heart so kind as his happy. It was a brilliant day as the two steamed up the Thames; by which highway every foreigner ought to approach London; and the miles of masts—the stir of shipping in active motion, a sight of wonder even to those most familiar with it—astounded the inland-bred German boy to a degree of rapture which it was precious to see.—Then the endless drive through the crowded streets of the City, and so up to the West-end, was more marvellous still.—Determined to keep his independence, so far as was possible,—Charles had, by letter, declined the chambers bedecked by Mr. Quillsey for his special use in the house of Countess Baltakis—and established himself in a hotel—greatly to the vexation of

that lady, who had intended to establish a complete monopoly of his time. He must work, he said, in the mornings; for, as we have seen, there were obligations to German publishers to be wiped off.—So the lavish and boastful leader of Fashion was compelled to confine herself to trumpeting his arrival and its object through the columns of courtly journals. In one point, he was spared annoyance by her exactions. “Not one note shall be heard,” she would say,—“no, Lady Load, no, Kitty,—save on our own Thursdays:—not one single note.—It is of no use to ask for his address; no, Colonel Vandaleur, of no use.—O yes, I dare say! a very old acquaintance. I wonder how many very old acquaintances of his want to find Einstern out already? He makes it a point of honour with us to keep quiet.—Baltakis wanted him to come here, for we have plenty of room for him, and that poor half-grown shrimp of a secretary of his:—but, as he said, there would be no security against in-

terruption. And if he practises at all (even *I* have not heard him touch a piano), he does so with the doors locked."

But the concealment of her discomfiture in not being able to take possession of the Lion, body and soul, though played off with unblushing ability, did not stand Madame Baltakis in stead. Charles had not been two days in England, when the hermetical seal of secrecy (in which, it may be hinted, he had never connived) was broken: and his chamber at the Beaumont Hotel was charged betimes one morning by a step and a voice which made him turn—reddening like a girl, and his heart leaping with delight. He was hardly able to speak for emotion, as he greeted his old Tübingen friend.—“Dear sir! what a pleasure! I did not even know you were in England!”

“Gad, my boy!—and I did not know whether you would speak to me; after your taking no notice of my letter! And to think of such a child as you being married,” continued the Colonel, eyeing Charles with

a complacency he made no attempt to disguise. Gad! but I must say you are twice the man you were when I saw you last; and, as you *are* married, why, I suppose we must allow you to be married, and make the best of it."

"Even so," said the Prodigy, with a touch of his old childish sauciness; "and you must be godfather to my first child."

"Whew!" and the Colonel pinched his under lip and looked archly considerate—"already!—We'll see!—but, nonsense apart, as you *would* marry her, I hope she makes you happy."

Alas! for the Pride that got the better of Truth!—"Perfectly happy," was the reply; but Charles crimsoned deeply as he uttered the lie.

"Good—good.—I can swear to her beauty, at least. Gad! my boy! 'tis just as well she is not with you. The women here would tear her in pieces.—Well, for her it is a rescue, if ever there was such a



thing: and now that she has done with that crew of wretched people, it will be all right, I hope . . . . though . . . .”

“ Though you think I might have done better.”

“ Why, with the ball at your foot as you have it! Gad, sir! a thousand pounds for one month! Who ever heard of such a thing?—You’ll make your fortune in five years.”

“ Ah! good friend!” cried the other, buoyantly, “ and so you give in at last, and so you, even you, admit that my art is worth something!—I declare that I should hardly have known you again—so fresh and so young do *you* look.” And again he grasped the Colonel’s hand.

“ If I do, it is not the fault of the tiresome life I have been leading.—I never heard of the Fountain of Youth being found in Lincoln’s Inn.”

“ Where?”

“ Gad, my boy!—O, I forgot, you don’t

know London!—among the lawyers: but they tell me they see their way straight before them, at last.—And this was what I wanted to talk to you about, as soon as you arrived: and so I made up to Countess Baltakis.—She’s a vulgar creature, but she’ll ask anybody to her parties—and everybody wants to go there—all manner of great ladies—the very proudest among them go there: some who know you,—and to whom you are related.”

His listener’s cheeks became of the colour of fire; and he breathed quickly. “Do not talk of . . . do not speak of any person belonging to me!—I am so delighted to see you again. It brings back the old Tübingen times again.”

“But, my boy,” said the other, gravely, “we shall find it hard to avoid family affairs—impossible, I may say.—I did not tell you why I left Tübingen in such a sudden hurry. Then the thing seemed to be such a mere

castle in the air:—but the lawyers who began the affair, Heaven knows why, wrote so pressingly, that though I have neither chick nor child to profit by me, I should have been culpable not to have looked into the matter.”

“ I hope the result, whatever it be, is to your satisfaction ?”

“ Gad, my boy! I believe so. It turns out that I am owner of a castle on earth, like a faëry palace—one of the very finest estates in England, of which I ought to have been in possession many a year ago, but for a forged will.—The forgery of the will is all but clearly proved—quite so, I should say—for we are only waiting the arrival from America of the man who was sent out there to obtain a testimony, and whose witness is detained by a broken limb.”

“ Indeed, with all my heart, I am rejoiced!” said Charles, with a half absent smile. “ What a famous landlord you will

make! Is there a house on the estate? Shall I not build an organ in it?—and will you not make me your organist?”

“Ah! there’s your old boy’s face again! A house!—Gad, sir! a faëry palace, I tell you.—But I am afraid I have something to tell you besides, that will give you pain, connected with it—great pain.”

“I can bear pain,” was the proud answer—“I have borne some.—But how can anything connected with it give me pain?”

“Gad, my boy! it must come out within a few weeks at the latest!—The name of the estate is ‘Caldermere!’”

“What!” cried Charles, with a vivacity which brought two waiters of the Beaumont Hotel into the room.

“Nothing is wanted.—Shut the door.—I knew I should shock you, my boy—and if once, I have had it twenty times in my mind, to write and prepare you for the news. But then I thought, ‘If it should blow over

—if it should come to nothing—what is the use of making the poor lad uneasy? ”

“ *You* laying a claim to Caldermere? ”

“ Gad, sir! I should think so: and a claim, I fancy, there will be no disproving. Even his lawyers own as much; or would do, if he were not what he is—and that you know as well as I do—the most obstinate of men.”

“ Then—my—then Lord Caldermere, you mean to tell me, is aware of the progress of the affair? ”

“ Perfectly, my boy—and holds out stupidously. You cannot imagine what the pride and indomitable wrong-headedness of that man have been. I suppose his impaired health and strength may have something to do with it.—His mind must be shaken. He was just and clear-sighted, they say, once; but he is now perverse on some points, and to a degree scarcely ever equalled.—Gad, sir!—it’s all well enough

to be resolute, whether it's you over your music and your matrimony (you dog!)—or he over his manufactory.—But there's such a thing as being too resolute.—Why, in very defiance of all the London physicians, my Lord has imported some foreign quack or other to put him to rights, and is to pay the fellow a thousand pounds for the job.—He'll die, depend on it, rather than own he is not cured.—He give up!—Gad! when I did enter into the matter, I thought it was only acting as one gentleman should act by another, to see that my Lord was apprised of every step as soon as it was taken.—Most perfectly well bred he has been, I must say; but as to convincing him—not a dream of such a thing!—My Lord knows that such a document as this confession has been brought forward, that its signatures have been attested. I tell you, we have in hand the confession of a man, a blackguard, cast-off game-keeper, one Paddox, sent off to America years ago, with hush-money, who witnessed

the false will.—Trouble enough there has been in fishing *him* out, and making him speak.—Well, sir, my Lord knows all this; and yet, only fancy! he declares he will maintain the title till the very last. — I had it put to him delicately, whether this was altogether just or gentlemanly?—whether, sure as he must be, after the evidence submitted to him, of being beaten, it would redound to his credit when it became known that he had been informed of our proceedings step by step, with a view of saving his pride as much as possible?—whether a law-contest, long or short, would not involve him in heavy expenses? (and, by the way, they say he is not in the best possible case for bearing them.—It is said that the concerns at Bower Mills have been anything but prosperous of late). Well, possibly to give a contradiction to any reports of the kind which may be flying about—no matter what for—go on he will: and is prepared to spend any amount of money before he

gives in. Give in he must, though.—Has your mother, Lady Caldermere, no influence over him?”

“I do not know . . . . my position with her . . . . with them, is what it was.”

“Gad, my boy! I think you should have made it up among you when you married. I saw her at yonder vulgar creature’s not very long ago. And I thought she looked very melancholy and careworn.—You must not hold out, should she get into trouble.”

“What?—and are you taking their part?—O, Colonel Vandaleur! you do not know how much I loved her, before she bargained herself away.—You do not know how much her worldliness has cost me. But for it . . .” he stopped abruptly, for he had professed himself to be perfectly happy in his married life. “I hope I shall never see her again. Is she always at Madame Baltakis’s?”

“No, my boy—nobody is there always,—no one would confess to going to that vulgar creature’s always: and I think I saw her



name (the name catches me, and no wonder, all things considered) among the Fashionable Departures this very morning. Charles, there is trouble hanging over Caldermere: and if it prove so, and if you show vengeance—remember, I am an old man and tell you so,—you will never prosper.—I think you should write to your mother, and acquaint her with your being in England.”

“ O, I dare say she knows that already, from the Fashionable Arrivals, and has departed to get out of my way. Write to her! Never!—Well, you see, good friend, she may be glad—who knows, after all?—to have my talent to fall back on.”—And feeling in all its intensity the desire of being alone, Charles turned towards the watch on the pianoforte with a compressed lip, which spoke of a fixed resolution as strong after its kind as Lord Caldermere’s.

The elder man, whose heart yearned towards the boy, and who was softened, as all

men of high nature are, by chances of prosperity, understood the scarce voluntary gesture.—“Well,” said he, rising, “I have told you; and we shall meet more easily, now that you know all. Come what will, *we* shall not quarrel.—God bless you.”—And he was gone, after a silent pressure of the hand, ere the other’s forced composure broke up.

But Charles could not hide his disturbances from any one save Becker’s sister:—and Gottlieb, when he came in, in place of being praised for the neatness of a score which he had already copied (even in delirious London!) from a stormy manuscript, blotted, and smeared, and cut through and through with trellises of black ink—gave back timidly.—His master rebuked him sharply for intruding when he was not wanted.

“O, master! I did not mean to fret you! Is it your head aching again?”

“No, Gottlieb, no! I did not mean to

be rough : but you must leave me to myself. Go out, and get a walk.—Go—go—I cannot talk to you to-day. It seems,” he cried, when the faithful retainer was shut out, “that I have come to England at a lucky time!”

## CHAPTER II.

## THE LOWER PAVEMENT.

ONE afternoon,—some days after the events which have been told, Susanna was struck by a slight change in the patient whom she watched so faithfully—by a little more light in her father's eyes,—a little more colour on his white cheek,—a little more alacrity of movement,—a little more clearness in his speech.—He called her to him with a gentle summons. “Child, I have a concern on my mind for thee.”

“Yes, dear father,” was the answer of

one who knew what such an intimation was intended to convey.

“It is borne on me,” Joshua went on, in the same peaceful way, “that I am going to thy mother—at no very distant period.—Who then is to care for thee?”

“I hope it is no trouble to thee, father” (Susanna had returned to the old quaint speech of the sect, to soothe him, even as she had laid aside all gay colours of dress).—“I am not afraid. I believe I shall be supported under whatever difficulty I may be called on to meet.—I have one or two real friends—the lady I travelled with for six years among the number.—I am sure that she will assist me and befriend me.—I wish to make thy mind easy, father,—but trust thou wilt be spared to me yet a while longer.”

“Thou art a good daughter, though thou hast overstepped Friends’ principles.—Bless thee!” and, on this, the attenuated figure in the elbow-chair dropped again into a doze; and Susanna drew down the blind.

Then she sat down and thought, and questioned herself. Had it not been, in some *dégré*, a pious fraud to allude to the protection and active assistance of Countess Westwood—with such a last letter from that lady as her pocket contained?—She must take it out and read it again. Her nerves had been more than usually disturbed of late; her walks to and fro on the Lower Pavement were quicker and more restless than formerly. So that Mistress Galatea had arrived at the pass of mutely holding up her teapot, in place of putting her head over her flower-box and asking Susanna to come in and taste her muffins.

That evening she was nearer her first calm pace,—for she read and walked, walked and read, for the twentieth time, what follows.

“ ‘ I have more reasons than one for being anxious about you,’ said the letter. “ I have no fear of your patience and faith wearing out, however long be the attend-

ance on your dear invalid which you may have to go through; and were I remaining in England, I should be with you from time to time, and near you, often.—But I am not remaining in England. Do you remember my old plan of travel, and the hankering I have always had for the grand scenery of the Himalaya Mountains?—Well, it is about to be indulged.—I have not been able to resist the temptation offered by two friends of mine—General and Lady Ann Robertson—who are going out. He is an enthusiastic naturalist: she is remarkable as an artist. Had you not left me, I dare say I should not have dared such an enterprise. You were in your duty, I know: but I am almost alone in the world: and feel as if I must see the East before I finally settle. I see you shake your head at the idea of *my* ever settling.

““ It will not be in London, though, whenever that dull time shall come to pass.—

I hate the place; I hate the waste of life and energy there, more and more every year I grow older.—I hate the utterly false tawdry society that keeps people in such a fever:—where no one comes really to know any one, and where the richest have the best of it.—*The* house this year is the house of Countess Baltakis. I would not keep a maid who was so vulgar as that woman is. Yet the first people ask to go to her parties.—It is her husband, you know, who is giving your old playfellow, Einstern, that enormous sum to come over for four concerts.

“ ‘I was there the other night—and met his mother, Lady Caldermere—looking more like a ghastly painted effigy from a tombstone than a human being. I never saw greater misery stamped on any face. And I met, too, a sort of old acquaintance of mine, who told me all about your old playfellow’s mad marriage at Munich: and more than we knew, then.—They had been



thrown together somewhere in Germany, and we had almost a quarrel about Einstein; for (I did not at first mean to tell you this) my friend, Colonel Vandaleur, still believes in him as much as you were disposed to do.—Charles married this girl out of some wild, romantic notion of friendship for her brother, a college mate.—Those about her did not bear the best of reputations; and there is madness in the family. I could be half sorry for him, if this be really the truth: though it may be Heaven's provision that you were not drawn into the whirlpool into which you might have been plunged by your admiration of Genius. You might have died on the wreck: and *you* would have died slowly.—Well: I should leave England with a lighter heart could I leave you in the hands of some honourable, upright man. I shall write to you constantly, of course, and often before we start. Don't forget me; and don't forget

how I did my best to make head against the spirit of Romance in you. Ah! I hope you will not live to be such a useless, homeless, restless, waif and stray, as

“ ‘ Your affectionate friend,

“ ‘ ROSAMOND WESTWOOD.’

Kind, incoherent being!—prudent enough in counselling others, and herself as wild as the wind. *She* cannot understand . . .” and then Susanna stopped impatiently, and curbed herself. Had she not torn up by the roots that possessing fancy of her girlhood?—Since her return to Blackchester, she had somehow inured herself to consider the whole subject as a matter of history.—She had renewed her acquaintance with Justin: and they had spoken together again and again of Charles,—of their hopes and fears on his behalf—about his chances of happiness in married life. In fact, they had talked of little else—for Justin showed a due reserve in alluding to any other

family concerns. — Susanna had gathered much concerning the Prodigy during her travels in Germany, — but that was no reason why he should confide to her in return his anxieties about Caldermere and Bower Mills: or explain how painful his position had become both with mother and father-in-law:—while as for any hopes and fears unconnected with them, his timidity, his sense of unworthiness, were so honest, that they had scarcely ventured to peep out, even to himself, however close under the surface they lay.

She put up the letter hastily, on hearing a well-known step behind her on the pavement.

“You are looking pale this evening, Miss Openshaw,” said Justin, himself not looking very brave. “I hope your father is not worse? I saw him sitting in the window as usual.”

“It is difficult to tell,” was her answer. “The change, if change there be since the

immediate breaking down on his arrival, has been so very slight that I hardly know how he is.—I trust you bring better news from Caldermere.”

Justin looked very uneasy; took off his hat, and wiped his forehead. Turning towards him in the bright sunshine, it occurred to Susanna that he might be a man of forty, so prematurely had youth faded from his face. As he turned, too, she saw that he was growing bald.

“I believe,” was his answer, “that Lord Caldermere thinks himself much better: and is perfectly satisfied with his foreign physician. But we are not to see him for a few days longer. You got . . .” with a slight hesitation . . . “the London papers I sent you.”

“Yes; I see your brother has arrived.”

“But who else, do you imagine, is coming, if not come, to England, Miss Openshaw?”

“Who?”

“That Doctor Orelus who brought him up, and with whom, as you know, I have been in correspondence. He intends to make a tour of observation in the manufacturing districts, and having heard much of Bower Mills as a model establishment, desires to visit it, if I will give him facilities.”

“Ah! . . . Are you thinking of going up to town?”

“I cannot, unfortunately,—I cannot be spared—I must wait, at least, till Lord Caldermere be visible again;—and then this strange estrangement!—I do not know how Charles would meet me. Though I love him so much! . . . and I”—(for now something rose which no reserve, no sense of unworthiness could longer keep down)—“I love so much those who love him! Dear Miss Openshaw—may I not say as much to you?—I have no one else to speak to,—no one else to rely on! I am alone in the world;—I have never found so kind a listener as you! I have never seen any one so infinitely above me

—any one, in any respect, your equal.—  
We have this strong bond of interest in  
common. If, when you know me better,  
you find you can trust me,—and if there is  
the least chance of my being able to stand  
by you, and to comfort you—may I not  
hope . . .”

Susanna turned and looked at him full in  
the face, with a serene and kind smile : but  
though he had little experience of women,  
and none of love-making, that smile arrested  
the other words which might have been  
rising to his lips. He might, or he might  
not, have been hardening himself up to the  
tremendous effort of going further—since,  
in place of quitting the field discomfited—he  
made still a few paces at her side in total  
silence. How little could Mistress Whitelamb  
dream of what was passing within the minds  
of those two calm figures!—Yet both were  
so engrossed as not to be aware that they  
were not alone and unseen from the Lower

Pavement—but that round the bend of the road which came up from Blackchester, a person was approaching rapidly.

He was upon them before they were aware of his presence—the changed visitor to The Hirsch—the wonderful artist for whom great ladies were fighting—the wild husband of the *ballet*-girl—looking years older, it seemed to Susanna, than when they had last met;—but handsomer than ever, and with a flush of affectionate excitement lighting up every feature, as he caught both her hands.

“Susanna! Good, dear, kind Susanna! What luck to find you here on the old flags!”

“O, dear Charles, how glad am I to see you!” she cried, able to say little more.—“What a surprise!—I was just thinking of you and your brilliant success,” she forced herself to add. “And here is . . .”

“But I must look at *you*,” was his eager

answer, as he eyed her with undisguised admiration. “Handsome than ever! How ill I behaved to you that night at The Hirsch! But you little know! . . . And have you gone back to the Quakers, and to their little mouldy old meeting-house, where I put the Geneva box under the bench?”

“No, no . . . but here is some one else you should speak to . . .”

“Yes—and see—you must speak to me!” cried poor Justin, rushing forward, and feeling as if his heart would burst.—“How have I offended you—that you will not own me? that you never write to me?—I cannot—and will not bear it! I have never loved any one so much as you in the world! I have never been so proud of anything in the world as you!—I have taken your part when they have tried to speak ill of you!—Don’t wrong me! don’t disbelieve me, because you are a genius, and I am but a poor business drudge.—Why should any-



thing come between us two? God bless you! Brother! Brother!"—and ere the Prodigy could resist, he was folded in the other's embrace.

But there was no more thought in Charles of resisting. The love and the truth of that welcome spoke to the love and the truth of his noble nature.—It flashed upon him that he had cherished resentment and perversity, as he felt that warm heart beating close to his—that he had turned away from fidelity and affection and service yearning for his acceptance.—He sobbed out, "O, I have been wrong! very wrong! Forgive me! I will tell you some day!"—and then, with one of his impulsive changes of mood, he held from him the other, red and panting and overwhelmed with other emotions besides those of the Prodigy's return.—"How complete a man you have grown, Justin!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, I have worked hard, and had

much anxiety . . .” was the reply; “and I am afraid more is to come. What a pity, dear Charles, she is not with you.”

“She?—You mean my wife!”—and then Charles went on, somewhat incoherently, to explain that he had taken advantage of a free afternoon and evening to run down and see dear old Gatty. “But I had not the least idea . . . I thought you always lived at Bower Mills.”

“Ah!—perhaps then, you would not have come, if you had known,” was Justin’s answer, not the most adroit in the world.—“No; I have been principally at Blackchester of late.—Our . . .”

“Not to-night! not to-night!—Let me hear nothing! . . . No family matters!—As I live there is Gatty’s dear old cap behind the mignonette.—I ought to have written—but I am always wrong! She will be so startled. Where is Susanna?—You knock gently at the door, Justin.”

Susanna had vanished.

“And go in first,” said the other, rapidly—with a touch of his old childish excitement and love of surprise and mischief—and as much at ease with Justin as if there had not been years of misunderstanding.—“Go in, and say that you have a message from London—from me.—Yes, that will be the best way.”

## CHAPTER III.

## COUSIN GATTY'S TREAT.

“O, IT is you, Cousin Justin?—I thought I saw you walking a while since with Miss Openshaw.—They say that her father is exceeding poorly—and could not eat half his jelly to-day; and so has taken to preaching again. I am sorry for her, for she is a good girl.—Any news?”

“Why, yes,—I have news from London for you.”

“From London! for me? . . .”

“A very particular message, Cousin Gatty.—Your favourite!”

“ Bless the dear fellow ! I have not had a moment's peace or quietness since I heard he was in the country. I dreamed of him all last night. . . .”

“ Well, do you know, he says that as you will not go up to London to see him,—he must come down from London to see you.—And do you know, I should not wonder if he were to come sooner than you can possibly expect :—and do you know” (Charles could be no longer kept back)—“ here he is.”

The faithful creature did, what even she had not done on the day when Mr. Smalley had released her from her heart's most cruel anxiety, by assuring her that he was not going to marry Miss Belinda Ogg. She fairly fainted away.—The delight was too great for her.—But she came round with a surprising quickness : and I am sorry to say, the first thing she did was to swear at the dear boy for taking her so by surprise :—and “ not so much as a fresh tart in the house ! What a thing !—But it is my own

shameful fault. God bless you!" she went on to say, "I felt this morning I ought to make a chicken-pie—but I am growing old and lazy, I really do suppose.—Dear—dear Charles! and how *you* are grown!—yes, and rather handsome, sir"—and she put her arms round his neck and gave him a hearty kiss:—drawing back with a little blush, and "What would Miss Ann Ogg say, if she had been by!—But to think of your really coming all this way to see me!"—And she got up, and, on her way to the door, executed such a little demure dance of ecstasy as a parrot may be seen to soliloquise when its mind is at peace. The next instant she was heard clamouring in her store-room, at the very top of her small treble voice, "No subterfuge can be admitted, Betty. I *will* know who broke the mortar!—and to-night, of all nights! What a thing!"

In an instant she was back again, glistening with delight, though she could find

nothing newer to say to Charles than—  
“And have you really come all the way along the railroad from London to see me?”

“Yes, dear old Gatty! and to sleep in the spare bed; though it *was* too short for Miss Ann Ogg's legs, you said, when she wanted to come up here, and quarter herself on you—for the air, and to drink asses' milk.”

“Bless the boy! what a memory you have got still!—O, to be sure, and the bed is always aired;”—and out she flew to apprise the maid of the guest, and was back again in the twinkling of an eye.—“Yes, how delightful!”—(proud at her cleverness in not mentioning Caldermere)—“but where else *could* you sleep?—And we will have the carriage from The Blue Keys to-morrow, and take a nice little drive.”

“The next time, Cousin Gatty, the next time I come, the drive must be. I must be in London at twelve to-morrow, to play for the Queen.”

“For her gracious Majesty—to-morrow!—and will the Duchess be there?—I have spoken to the Duchess.—But how will you have the time to get the dust out of your hair, after that terrible railroad? It takes Mr. Ogg a week.—And what *will* Miss Ann say when they hear of Her Majesty?—And how tired you must be! Well, tea will be ready directly; though I cannot retrieve myself as I could wish.—And where are your things?”

“The porter from The Blue Keys will bring them up:—I saw that old Meggley, but she did not know me,—and I saw Miss Ann Ogg—prowling about; as she always did when the omnibus came in,—and she did not know me either.”

“Owing to your mustachio, my dear, I don’t doubt.—Poor Mr. Smalley used to say he did not understand fur on people’s upper lips.—I am glad you did not speak to her. As you express it, she always did prowl.”



“Gatty dear, and I have seen Susanna! Is she living here now?”

“In the old house—nursing her father, who has come home, and is dying, like the good, faithful girl she is—though not in the least of a genius.”

“Do send and ask her in to tea,—and I shall feel myself quite at home.”

“Who could deny him anything?” said Mistress Whitelamb to Justin, too happy to be aware of the strange expression of his countenance.

“Who indeed?” thought Justin, in no querulous spirit—though he was somewhat melancholy.—He had seen the bright, open expression of pleasure and surprise on Susanna’s face, as she greeted his brother. He remembered her steady look, as she had walked by his side in silence. Still, she had not refused his suit definitively. Perhaps that face might smile on him one day. Perhaps his newly-found brother

might be induced to plead for him. Who could deny *him* anything?

A message came back from Susanna, to the effect that she was unwell; and begged to be excused.

“Nonsense! unwell!—too unwell to come and meet me!—She looked capitally well just now.—She *must* come.”—And Charles scribbled on a card—“Am I to think that you have not forgiven my rudeness that mad night at The Hirsch?—Do come, dear, good Susanna. I want to talk to you so of old times—and I have to go away the first thing in the morning.”—“There—Gatty dear,—the card will bring her.”

The card did.

It had not been altogether on her own account that Susanna had done herself the violence of first refusing.—On receiving this second appeal she could not resist the opportunity of meeting her old playfellow—perhaps too readily persuading herself to forget (the best of women can be selfish and

self-deluded) how pitiless her serene presence might be that evening to another of the party.—It might, rather (so she reasoned with herself), have its use;—as preventing the two reunited relatives from touching, for a while at least, on delicate ground.

In spite of all the pleasure, then, of that unforeseen meeting—in spite of the relief to both brothers at the removal of the barrier between them—the amount of constraint and disquietude which sat at the tea-table was greater than could easily be told.—Even Cousin Gatty—though dreaming little of the sunken rocks among which she was sitting at her ease—had her own trouble, and let the same out. There might have been a scolloped Guinea chicken (“one of the plump Bower Mills Guinea chickens, — your thoughtful present, Cousin Justin”), had not the mortar been broken.—“Ah! well,” said she, “we have all our trials—And then, I could not have had so much of your precious company: as it is, the bird will eat cold.—But

come now, tell me about your wife, dear boy. I should so delight to see her. . . . She is a real beauty, we have heard.—Is she as tall as Susanna?”

“Not yet,” was the Prodigy’s somewhat uneasy answer.—“Let us hope she may grow.—They have told you, Gatty dear, have they not, why I was obliged to leave her at Dresden.—No?—Then stoop your ear, and I will whisper it.—Don’t be afraid! I shall not tickle you with an ear of barley this time.”

“O fie! Charles! I must say fie! Don’t ask me why I must say so, Susanna.—Well, to be sure! how Time does go on!—And have you been playing on the organ at Fulda lately?”

No—he had given up organ-playing—the noise and the exertion were too much for his strength.

“It is a pity—because how proud it would have made Mr. Ogg!—Dodd’s man always asks after you, and takes off his hat when—

ever he meets me.—And I have your picture on a piece of music which I saw in their window.—Not that it is like what you are now—with your mustachio.—Why, I declare, here comes Mrs. Meggley's Toby (I cannot ever call her by her married name) with your bag;—and here is Jacob, the Caldermere groom, I declare, with his civil face—though what has brought him up here at this time of the evening I cannot divine.”

The groom brought a note for Mr. Einstern Bower—*immediate*.—Charles frowned at the sound of a name to which he was not accustomed;—but his look of vexation, though more open, was not more intense than Justin's, as he broke the seal, and read.

“No bad news, Cousin Justin, I hope?” said Mistress Whitelamb, filling his cup.

“Thank you, I must go,” said the other, rising.—“I am ordered to Bower Mills tonight.—Some books I keep are wanted.—I shall have hardly time to catch the train.”

“I am glad,” murmured Mistress White-

lamb, resolved to make things pleasant, “to hear that my Lord is able to attend to business again.”

“Let me look at that direction,” cried Charles, eagerly—whom nothing escaped.—“Who wrote that note? . . . How comes that man’s writing here?”

“Lord Caldermere makes Dr. Mondor, his physician, write for him . . .” said poor Justin, searching for his hat, confusedly. . . “It is too hard, that now, of all evenings in the year, I am sent for, and in this way, too. Charles, be thankful that you are a free man.”

“Free!” cried the other, almost bitterly.—“But about that letter—I want to look at it. Doctor who, did you say?—I must know about this!—Cousin Gatty, excuse me. I will go down into Blackchester with Justin, and be back again directly, long before you have finished tea. Come along!”

“What a treat, my dear, to see those two

youths together!" said the sweet-tempered old maid—"though as to their looking like brothers, I am as much like Miss Scatters!—I should say he is more beautiful than ever—with those elegant, princely ways of his! And how old Mr. Justin appears beside him;—no wonder, ordered about as he has been; and now at the beck and call of an outlandish doctor!"

"Charles seems to know something about this physician," said Susanna.

"Yes, dear, and he will tell us when he comes back, I do not doubt."

It seemed long before Charles did come back—to all appearance as gamesome as ever.—He had learned to act.—But he *was*, in reality, glad to be in the old parlour, and to remind Susanna of many a game of mischief into which he had tried to inveigle her. They taxed him with knowledge of Dr. Mondor;—but his answer was, he knew nothing of any such man.—He had seen

a handwriting like the direction—that was all.

And it *was* all he had learned from Justin. For the elder brother could throw no light on the matter: never having seen the strange physician: not having been at Caldermere since his arrival: and having only two or three times heard from him.

“ I will write to you,” said Justin, rapidly, as he wrung his brother’s hand at parting.—“ We must not lose one another any more. We may have need of each other.”

It may have been that loving grasp which had lightened the Prodigy’s step as he mounted the hill again,—and his heart,—as he rattled away to dear old Gatty, just as he did when he was living at The Blue Keys.—But it may have also been, that he would not give her a moment’s time to talk to him about Aunt Sarah Jane’s daughter or the outlandish doctor.



## CHAPTER IV.

## THE PRODIGY IS SURPRISED.

“No, indeed! the Royal visit was nothing of a treat compared with this,” was Mistress Whitelamb’s comment on her happy evening, to Susanna next morning. “Only it was so short! I could have sat for a week to see you two talking in the window;—such good company one for the other. Ah! you see, Susanna, you have the better of me—for I am only a poor stay-at-home body—and you have had such advantages and have been everywhere, and can use the languages!—But to think of his coming

down by that dangerous and dusty railway, merely to see me—and before he has been to see Her Majesty! Quite right, on the Queen's part, though. Aye,—and to think he will be in London at twelve o'clock—and I, who never was there! I declare his smile, when he went off this morning, was treat enough to last one a week;—the very picture of prosperity.”

Well was it for Cousin Gatty's kind heart that she could not see beyond that smile! nor dream of the current of perturbed doubt and emotion beneath all that excitement which Charles had kept up to the last moment.—The flood-gates had been opened, it is true, by his unexpected meeting with his brother.—The truth had rushed in, that, in his passionate way, he had been as inexorable as any one of those by whom he had conceived himself maltreated. But towards his mother there was no relenting thought.—He might have known how such selfish love as hers dies out and turns to

avoidance and aversion.—He turned away from the thought of her, even,—while the woods of Caldermere, the domain for which she had sold herself, were in sight, as he whirled along. But there was more to think about than his brother—more than the revival of young fresh feeling on meeting the old playfellow in the old place (the scene at Munich being passed over)—there was the restless trouble wakened by that letter of recal which he had seen in Justin's hand.—What could it mean,—this turning up of its writer, Zuccaglio, under an assumed name? He had cut short the babble of Countess Baltakis, about the wonderful Greek physician whom Baltakis had secured for Lord Caldermere, by giving her to understand that any allusions to that household were intolerable to him.—Else he might have been treated to some distorted tale of the Princess Chenzi-koff's wound and its cure, which would have suggested the truth to him, and spared him surprise. As matters stood, all was dis-

agreeable uncertainty.—That a feeling of antipathy to Zuccaglio had grown in him ever since that mad night in Munich, was beyond doubt—but what was there to justify it, save his disappointment in the result of the random marriage into which he had been hurried?—It was a sullen, airless morning. He tried to clear his brain;—he tried to sum up the causes he had of mistrust from the very first; beginning with the morning after poor Becker's death, when there had been more of scrutiny than of sympathy in Zuccaglio's behaviour—then the serpentine yet wary attention which the other had always been ready to give, when the Prodigy alluded to his own history—then the look of satisfaction and intelligence which had passed across the man's countenance, after that stormy scene at Baden-Baden—then the closeness, amounting to jealousy, with which every relation betwixt himself and his Russian patroness had been watched. “Why,” ran through his mind, “but for

his piquing me, and putting me on my guard, I might have been married almost before I knew it,—and to *her!*”—Then came back the odd agitation Zuccaglio had testified at the sight of Meshek—the part he had taken in contriving (yes, there was no doubt it had been contrived beforehand) the Prodigy’s luckless marriage with Becker’s sister. There was a sequence, if not a purpose, in all these things.—And now, that the man should be here, in England (if it *was* he), in the midst of that strange, artificial household of Caldermere, and, it would seem, master of it!—what did it all portend? No good; that was certain.—“I must ask Madame Baltakis.—No, I will talk to Colonel Vandaleur about it—once I have got this morning over!”

Gottlieb was, as usual, waiting for his arrival at the hotel door, looking puzzled, if not anxious.

“Why, you frightened fellow! always fancying I shall be too late!—You know I

never am.—A good hour and a half to rest and to dress, and to get my fingers in order. No news, I suppose?”

“ Ah, Heaven! yes! honoured sir,” replied the boy, in great trouble;—“ and they would come in and wait for you, and said you would never forgive me if I sent such old friends away.”

“ Old friends!—Somebody has been imposing on you. What old friends have I in London, except Colonel Vandaleur? It must be some of those pushing people who want an autograph! Gottlieb, you have done wrong;—whoever they be, I must get rid of them, for I must be at the Palace by two.”

Gottlieb gave back distressed;—and our hero mounted the stairs in what Mistress Whitelamb would have called “a temper.”—Assuredly he was not prepared for the sight which greeted him in his own room.

It was the sight of his old tutor, Doctor Orelus, and the wife of Doctor Orelus, ob-

viously prepared to endure London to the very dregs of its pleasures—and that red, prosperous, fervent German girl—who but the true-souled and forward Minna Twiese?—Even in that first moment of confusion and astonishment, a ridiculous thought would make its way—a thought of what the rage of poor Marie would have been had she been his companion, and had found such visitors in his room!

It was not by a short and easy oration that Doctor Orelus explained, how, to cheer him up in his trials and losses, a few old friends had subscribed to give him the treat of a holiday in England—how it had come upon him quite as a surprise—how, having many observations and investigations of not-to-be-sufficiently-calculated importance to make—with the intention of writing a book—he was girding up his loins to see all manner of sights—having already improved the shining hours of that morning by analysing Bedlam—how, seeing that their

valued neighbour and excellent townsman's daughter—the true-souled Miss Minna Twiese—had set her heart on paying a visit to her substantial-and-altogether-homely-and-German-hearted Uncle and Aunt Fleischmann at Camburywell—and how, not hearing anything from the gracious Madame Einstern, Burgomaster Twiese had, with genial-liberality - and - entirely - meritorious prudence, requested Mrs. Orelius to be his substitute in caring for the greatly-desirous maiden—the Burgomaster having a terror of all that appertained to the sea—sea-fish excepted—and “*Ach!*” concluded the good Rector, “it is truly a terrible suffering, and one not to be conquered by the most philosophically-resigned sense of duty.—Mrs. Orelius, who is sore still, is already saying that she does not believe she will ever have the courage to go home again :”—to which that good and enduring housewife subscribed with something betwixt a groan and a grunt.

“*Ach!* yes! it was truly horrible,” cut in



the buxom Minna, tired of being silent so long: "and had it not been that I was coming to Camburywell, and to see London, and to hear you play, *I* would have turned back!—But how delightful it is to be here, and to meet!—We must go about together. Where can we go to-morrow, Charles? Mrs. Orelus and Aunt Fleischmann and you and I, while the Doctor goes to look at his prisons.—O, I long to visit some of the beautiful shops!"

Up to this time, our hero had not a moment's chance with those good-natured loquacious people: one of whom he was right glad to see again.—Yes, and to a certain degree, he was glad to see that loud, hearty girl, whose face was beaming with enthusiastic readiness.—It was necessary, however, on the spot, to acquaint them with his peremptory engagement. "I am truly sorry," he said, "that I must go out;" adding (perhaps not without some little self-importance), "since I am expected at the Palace almost imme-

diately, to play before the Queen.—I will find you to-morrow, and we will arrange something. If you want to hear me play, you must come to one of the Countess Baltakis's Thursdays. I am not permitted to play a single note for any one else, save her Majesty.—To-morrow week—say—I will see that you have a proper invitation.”

“*Ach!* yes! they would not intrude on his valuable-and-Court-commanded time.” And Doctor Orelus recollected that when he had been summoned to the presence of His Majesty of Saxony, it had cost good Mrs. Orelus one long hour and a half to shave him, and even then it was not accomplished in an unimpeachably satisfactory manner. “You have not to shave, Charles, I see, and so it is no matter that your gracious wife is not with you, as we have learned from Gottlieb.—And he told us, also, that you were awaited at Court,—as I shall write to some of those at the University, whose not-sufficiently-to-be-reproved animosity is still ac-

tive,—but I said, and so did Minna, that we *must* just have one look at you before we went to the Tunnel;—and Mrs. Orelus was thankful to sit down.—*Ach!* how far here it is from place to place! Come, Lotte, I will carry the map.—Come, Minna.—To-morrow we shall come at eight.”

It was not very easy for this matutinal appointment to substitute something more consonant with the hours of London,—and to settle how and when Charles should find them in the City, so many times did the good man return to explain that he was not going to stay. The Prodigy was left with but a spare measure of time to prepare himself for his interview with Royalty.

By the length of his visit, and a certain gratified look on his fatigued face when he came back, it might be divined that he had given and received satisfaction. He threw himself into a chair thoroughly fatigued; not, therefore, allowed to rest.—There was a note from Colonel Vandaleur.—“ I will read

this to-morrow ;”—another from the Countess Baltakis, bidding him to dine there that day—and as the lady had taken umbrage at his flight into the provinces, and, he felt, in her coarse way, virtually meant to be kind to him—her invitation must not be declined.

“ Nothing more, Gottlieb, I hope and trust ?”

“ Yes, honoured sir ;” and the boy handed him the cards of two publishers, who had had words on the staircase, he said, as to which should have the preference in the purchase of his compositions.

“ Let them fight it out their own way, Gottlieb. See for some coffee for me ! My head is splitting.”

“ But, honoured sir,” said the boy, coming back from the bell, “ there is still something else. I hope you will not be angry with me again : but I do not know what to do, and am afraid of not doing right, if I do not tell you at once : and I am afraid you will be very much surprised.”

“What is the matter? Nothing mysterious, I hope? Come, what is it? Speak out! or I shall be angry.”

“Honoured sir,—Madame Einstern is in London!”

“My God!—Gottlieb, you must be dreaming.—Are you drunk?—What do you mean? My wife in London!”

“Honoured sir, I have seen her!”

“Seen her?—Nonsense! Don’t let me think you are losing your wits! Seen her, where? When?” And he grasped Gottlieb’s arm impatiently. “Seen her!—Be quick!”

“In the Park just now, at two o’clock—in an open carriage.—She did not see me: they were driving so quick!”

“They . . . . You are dreaming, I tell you.—My wife in an open carriage in the Park?—It is impossible.—My God! What do you mean? Whom was it you saw—what did you see, really?”

“Madame, and another lady whom I do

not know, honoured sir, in an open carriage. She had her veil half down—but I should know her face anywhere. And she had the little dog with her. But what makes me quite sure is this . . . because of the gentleman riding beside the carriage.”

“Gentleman! what gentleman?” shouted Charles, now in a passion of agitation.

“The gentleman, sir, whom you sent for me, that first night at Kaisersbad! Count Foltz.”

He was seized with a deadly faintness, and fell back in his chair! . . . “Gottlieb,” at length he said, in a broken voice—“you would not jest with me, I know; you love me too much.—Tell it me over again. I am so worn out, I cannot have heard you right.”

“O, sir, it is as you say! As if I could jest with you at any time!—I swear to you that I *did* see Madame, as I told you, this morning,—at two o’clock, in an open carriage, with another lady whom I never saw

before: and Count Foltz was riding beside the carriage.”

“You believe it, at all events!” was the desperate answer. “Get me a carriage at once; I will go to the Embassy!”

“But, dear sir, tired as you are . . . .”

“As if I could rest for a second after what you have told me.—Marie in London, and with Count Foltz! and I not to know! It is not possible!”

And he recollected her last look—her last kiss—her last jealously-passionate embrace.—Ah! how much warmer than his own!—and he kept repeating to himself as he drove through the streets, again and again and again: “It is not possible! No; it cannot be possible!” Then he recollected the reputation of Count Foltz.

No; and it was clearly proved not to be possible—because at the Austrian Embassy not a word was to be heard of that young officer.—His name was well known there, but no such person had passed through their

hands, directly or indirectly.—Charles was promised instant tidings if any information should turn up.—At the Saxon Embassy, the same inquiries, with the same results ; and so, again, at the Bavarian Embassy.—The boy must have been under some monstrous delusion.

Charles came back, looking twenty years' older than he had done an hour before—but calm. “Gottlieb, my dear fellow,” said he, “you have frightened me for nothing.—However, I did write to Dresden at the Embassy—and my letter will go by to-night's mail.”—(In those days, the telegraph was not.)—“I cannot conceive what can have led you to dream such a dream.—Only, be careful, I beg of you, another time ; and take more accurate notice.—I am not angry, because I am sure you mean what you say ; but such things are no trifles.—And now, I must dress for this horrible dinner.”

It was declared by every one who met



Charles that day, that he had never been in such high spirits—never so brilliant. And that day, again, was revived the old silly charge against him of his using rouge—so dazzling was the fire on his cheeks. All this was turned to account, in her own way, by the Countess Baltakis.—“ You know, it was tantamount to a breach of his agreement with Baltakis.—And, at first, I said ‘ No,’ positively ‘ No,’—Queen or no Queen—nothing of the kind was to be thought of.—We would not, even, let him play at Caldermere—in his own mother’s house.”

“ I presume,” said Major Kentucky Browne, “ that Queen Victoria does not habituate to receive declensions of that kind, in the case of pianoforte players.”

“ Certainly not: and so when the dear Marquis (he’s one of my pets) came here, before I was up, though it is not his month of waiting, to intercede—Baltakis and I agreed to waive the point for once—and Court air agrees with Einstern, you see.

Does not he look divine? And you shall hear him,—if you will hold your tongue Mrs. Calder, on Thursday evening.”

Before Einstern left the house he had satisfied himself that the strange physician, imported to cure Lord Caldermere, was a marked man; with a deep scar across his face, amounting to a deformity.—He slept none the better for this among the other revelations of that crowded day.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE FACE AT CALDERMERE.

WHAT the great lady of Caldermere, whose former favourite had been so near her, without caring to announce his presence, had suffered since the evening of her arrival at home—language has insufficient power to express.—It is less hard to conceive the agonies of strength,—the bitterness of spirit from which truth and intelligence cannot escape,—than the inconsistent and unreasoning fears and distresses of weakness.

A woman of stronger character than Lady Caldermere would have braved the worst—and defied the foul fiend, no matter how great the risk. But she well knew that she

had entirely ceased to possess her husband's confidence—long before the last fatal fortnight had thrown him under the diabolical control of a vagabond impostor who had her secret in keeping.—If she were to call Justin to her aid . . . but Justin's favour with Lord Caldermere had also passed, and was gone—and she could not answer for the extremities into which so dull a fellow might be driven by so strange a revelation,—supposing he believed it.—The last words of the miscreant haunted her. He would deny everything and fall back on the story which she had arrested him in telling. He might carry out his further threat with regard to herself.—It was obvious that his power over his patient was such as he had described it.

There was another alternative: flight; but whither was she to fly?—She was without a relative in the world, her sons excepted, whom she could name; save Mistress White-lamb. She had not made a single friend

during her career as a great lady.—She was entirely devoid of means, save such as depended on Lord Caldermere's pleasure; and who could tell how her credit might stand with him now?—No, there she must remain—tied hand and foot—to see the dismal play played out to the end. In one thing alone was there a gleam of comfort—the chance of her husband's recovery and dismissal of his physician. If the man could gorge himself with money—he might possibly retire, at least for a while, so as to give her some breathing time—some chance of righting herself. To this cobweb-thread she must cling.

Therefore, day by day, she waited with a terrible avidity for the bulletin from Old Caldermere. It was always favourable. “Dr. Mondor's compliments, and can report progress.” “A good night.” “My Lord better, and able to transact business with his lawyers to-day.” “No further inquiries can be requisite.”—All this sounded excellently;

but how was she to divine what was really passing on the other side of the barriers? The physician favoured her with no more of his prescriptions; never paid his second menaced visit. She began to doubt whether it was more intolerable to see him or not to see him.—During that weary period, the last lingering relics of good looks which she had retained, faded out for ever. She issued from the crisis an old woman:—and was thenceforward to be painted, and her wrinkles to be stopped up, and her hair to be dyed.

It was in the afternoon of the day when Charles left Blackchester—at the very time when he was mid-way in that flattering interview with Royalty (afterwards to be described by the Countess Baltakis as fluently as if she had heard every word and every note of it)—that a visitor *did* arrive from Old Caldermere: not him whom she dreaded, yet still had so horrible a longing to see—but one who had never been wel-

come to her. Justin looked that day heavier and more dispirited, and more care-laden even, than he had done when she had been so feather-brained and light-hearted, and when he had drudged in charge of her trunks on the top of the Blackchester omnibus.

“What does this mean?” was her sharp greeting.—“I ordered Simmons to let nobody in!—Did he not tell you I had one of my wretched bilious headaches, and could see nobody, Justin?”

“No, mother, none of the servants were in the way, and I let myself in.”

“None in the way! This comes of spoiling them as I have done!—I might be robbed and murdered, and not one of those six men do me the favour of ever coming near me!—I cannot ask you to stay, Justin—I am not equal to the sound of any one’s voice to-day. Don’t you see,” she cried, almost hysterically, “how wretchedly ill I look?”

“I am sorry, mother,” was Justin’s sad answer, “if you are in pain—and all the more sorry, because there is something which you ought to know:—I saw Charles last evening.”

“Now, grant me patience, Justin! Do you wish to drive me mad? Saw him—not in this neighbourhood, I hope?”

“He came down to Blackchester last night, and took a bed at Miss Whitelamb’s.”

“What brings him here, and at this time, of all times?—What new wild scheme is he about? Has he not done us mischief enough?—He has, God knows!—*I* can’t, and I won’t see him. If he were to come out here, I would not answer for the consequences!”

“O, mother! I thought you loved him so; and would be glad to hear how he looked!—He will not come here.—He could not stay.—He wants nothing from any of us. He is commanded to the Palace to-day. The Queen has a great desire to hear him.”



“There! O, no doubt, after that pleasant scene here.—The story was sure to get about; and *you* took care his name should not be forgotten!—Lord Caldermere will never forgive it; though, as usual, he has never said a word to me on the subject. But he thinks I encourage him in all his mad freaks: as if I was not the person, on earth, who was the most distressed and disappointed by them! and well I may—being, as I am, the greatest sufferer!”

Justin was aghast. Of such an entire revolution in the nature of one who had apparently doted on her idol—he had never dreamed. That which had been love seemed now not far from hatred.

“You see,” continued the woman, pouring out her words passionately, “he has been the same from first to last! After my giving up everything for him!—why did I marry again except for his sake?—to brave decency as he has done! to insult Lord Caldermere as he has done! Where’s his

wife?—How do we know that he is married at all? He may be no more married than I was, when . . .” And she stopped herself as if stung by some deadly spasm. Another syllable, and she might have let loose all that had been writhing in her brain, like a nest of serpents, for days past.

“You are ill, mother,” said her unloved son, bending over her, seriously alarmed by a passion he could so little comprehend. “Let me call your maid.”

“Not for the world!—Ill! I told you I was ill; and you startle one with the very news of all others . . . For God’s sake, don’t breathe a syllable of the matter at Old Caldermere! Don’t go there!—Don’t let them know you have been to me!—Don’t give them anything to suspect . . .”

“I shall not call at Old Caldermere again to-day: I have just been there . . .”

“Been there! . . . Whom did you see?”

“Only the foreign physician, Dr. Mondor, mother . . .”

“ You saw him ? What did he say ? ”

“ A very good account. Lord Caldermere, he said, was able to attend to business to-day.—But I knew that already ;—for I had to go last night to Bower Mills for books and papers.” Justin did not venture, in her present mood, to remind his mother what one of those books contained.—He might, though, have done so, without irritating her fears. They were too busily pre-occupied with something else.

“ Did he send any message ? Did you tell him you were coming on to me ? ”

“ No, mother. — You have seen Dr. Mondor, of course ; what do you make of him ?—I never saw him till to-day. Do you know anything about him ?—Charles fancied that he has borne some other name, and said he would inquire into the matter when he got to town.”

“ Charles again ! O, for God’s sake, Justin, if you can, do keep that boy quiet ! He has caused wreck and ruin enough !—I

have no influence over him, of course. But, as you are his champion, in Heaven's name prevent him from inquiring or doing anything. Tell him I will not have it! How should I or he know anything of Dr. Mondor? If the man can cure my Lord, what matter is it who he is? And, as you see, he is curing my Lord. But you are killing me," she went on rapidly, though with a trifle more of composure, "by making me talk. Do leave me to myself! They might fancy we were plotting something, if they knew you were here.—And I cannot bear up any longer.—Simmons will get you a glass of wine.—I must go and lie down."

"Do not let me be the unwelcome visitor who drives you away," said Justin, with a coldness not clear of a touch of severity. "I thought I was bringing you comfort.—I will do you no harm, mother, be assured. Good-bye!—I shall walk into Blackchester."

He was gone, before she knew it. Her first thought was to call him back, to cross-

question him. Had she betrayed herself? Had the object of her terror given him ever so slight a hint of the cause of her agony? No; Justin had better go. She had sense enough not to be sure of her own composure, if he had come back.—She must consider by herself—so soon as she could collect herself, what lie it were best to frame, if not in self-defence, in mitigation of the disclosure, if the truth were to be known . . . .

Yes!—she was not far from hating her youngest son. It was by him that her life had been made so wretched. It was for him that she had neglected her other children. It was for him that she had married without insisting on due conditions. It was for him that she had lied when making that marriage. It was for him that she had urged her husband injudiciously. It was for him that she had concealed the truth again and again.—In the violence of her irrational passion, which staggered about, as it were, in quest of some

object to wreak itself upon,—it was to him that she ascribed the appearance of that formidable spectre in the midst of the family, and his possession of its strongholds.—And what had she got in return? How had the Prodigy repaid her? He had deserted her,—outraged her husband—set the two apart. The intensity of her selfishness, matured by years, and the necessities of a precarious position,—denied an outlet in what she had represented to herself as love, now turned her feelings as regarded her favourite, into a dark, dark channel.—She could have cursed the hour when he was born.

How the miserable day wore over—how long she had sat after dinner—she could not reckon. A tap at the door startled her to be aware that twilight had come down.—She screamed—it was . . . . A coarse voice, however, reassured her—and, to her surprise, there stalked into the grey drawing-room one who had never, till that evening, presented herself at Caldermere without a

formal invitation — Miss Scatters; with a small lantern in her hand.—The feeble light it threw made her appear more tall, more gawky, more witch-like than usual.—She would never have penetrated so far unmolested or unannounced, had not the household, fully aware that my Lady was “at a discount,” chosen to make away with the melancholy fact, by solacing themselves with billiards and tobacco in a distant wing of the mansion.

“Good Heaven! Miss Scatters, and so late! How you terrified me!”

“It’s naw choosing of mine,” said the visitor, in her broad Border dialect, “but there was nawbody to send oot. It’s high time you were down yon, at Old Caldermere. I hev sat quiet long enough, but I won’t sit longer when sec things are gawing on. Ye’d better come with me at once, and slip away withoot the servant-folk knawing.”

“What is going on? Is Caldermere worse?”

“ Much worse.—Set yon foreign doctor up. He’s a bad man.—Noo, daunt lose time.—Get your bonnet, and let’s be off.—If ye wish to speak with John Bower in life, come away.”

There was no jest here, at all events.—Lady Caldermere struck a light, made her way unnoticed to her own room (for her maid was one of the billiard party), and arranged herself to accompany her grim summoner—in feeling more dead than alive.

Miss Scatters did not spare her—she never ceased talking.—“ You knaw, my Lady, I was never a favourer of John Bower’s marriage—I never ped cwort to you:—but you are his wife, after all, and hev no business to be locked oot when he’s lying on his last bed, as if ye were a stranger.—And, poor man! he’s past reasoning with noo!—But Mr. Justin’s there. I sent into Blackchester for him, at five o’clock. He was idling at yon Gatty’s, I knew it. And I waited till he cum,—saw



there's safe to be naw fresh mischief while I'm oot. Losh me! if John Bower aunly knew—he's so set against that Justin—but since he signed his will, he has been in a trance like: and the last thing yon lawyer man, that Torris, said to me, gawing away—was, 'Lady Caldermere should be here,' and so, I cum up to fetch you,—I would not send.—There's been enough and to spare of talk among the servant fawk."

And while the vigorous woman went trampling on, through short cuts among the fern, at a rate which took away such breath as Lady Caldermere had left, she told how, up to that very day at noon, Lord Caldermere had insisted that he was recovering. "Aw, daunt I knaw John Bower? If he was in a battle and bauth legs were off, he'd never give in!" His lawyers from London had been with him that afternoon, and it appeared, that while they were with him, he had suddenly been aware of a great change. "Doctor was not there, ye see, to keep him

up, by sousing him with champagne wine ; for he had doctor baulted oot. Pity he had not done saw at first!—And there he was with yon Torris man and his two clerks: and they said he had but just strength to sign his will: and them witness it.—Doctor and me was called in to be present.—And then he fell back on the sofa dead like. He's in bed noo,—but he knaws nawbody.—Mr. Brudge from Blackchester should be there, by this time.—*I* sent for him, too — and Doctor laughed, and said it was naw matter noo! and could do naw harm.”

They were near the Old House by this time ;—almost on the very spot in the park, where, years ago, its master, then hale and assured, and with the world at his feet, had come upon the party, with the children playing on the grass.—Frivolous as she was, and now shaking with an uncontrollable terror, which increased at every step, Lady Caldermere still recollected the place and the scene.—Could it be that so strong a man could be stricken down? Could it be that

his life was really in danger? How, O how, was she to meet him?

The Old House bore that indescribable air which belongs to the presence of the mysterious Angel—when the very furniture has a look different from its wont:—when no one is in his usual place: when sense of Time goes for nothing.—It was evident that the imperious and resolved man, who had ruled every one so long, was laid low: and that there was no one to take command in his stead.—Doors were being opened and shut. Scared servants were whispering on the stairs. Lights were glancing to and fro.—“Where,” said the wretched woman, “am I to go?”

Miss Scatters grasped her by the arm: and got her up-stairs into a chamber strange to her: lighted as sick-rooms are lighted—with a pungent aromatic atmosphere. Three people were in the chamber, besides the patient.—Dr. Mondor, —the Esculapius of Blackchester—and Justin.

It was enough to give one glance at the bed. There lay Lord Caldermere, stricken down for ever:—with that awful change on his face which there is no mistaking. He would never domineer more.—“My Lady,” said the Blackchester doctor, “I cannot answer for what has been given before I was called in—but there is nothing more to be done now.—The pulse is almost gone.—It is a question of time.”

“What do *you* say?” said Justin, aloud, to the foreign physician. “He does not hear us.”

“Will he recover?” cried Lady Caldermere.

“He was recovering well,—till to-day,”—said the unblushing miscreant.—“He would have recovered, if he had been amenable. I told him that he let in his lawyers at the risk of his life—Miss Scatters heard me.—You see the consequences.—I cannot answer for a patient’s disobedience:—but I think he will not die for some hours.”

“I know somebody who will have something to say to you, if John Bower does die,” said the stalwart Cumberland woman, clenching her fist.

“I shall be charmed to hear it, madam,”—and Dr. Mondor sat himself down at the bed’s head with the most perfect composure; giving just one glance—only one—at Lady Caldermere.

She was almost too helpless in this new despair of hers to heed him: but crouched close to the side of Justin, holding both his hands fast.—He explained to her, that this was not so much a sudden stroke or seizure, so much as a crisis, which had been long coming on—though combated with by the indomitable will of the dying man—at last hastened by events and . . . He looked with meaning towards the miscreant.

“O, don’t speak to him! don’t provoke him! don’t aggravate him!” she kept murmuring, not daring to cast a glance across the bed,—and holding Justin’s hands tight.

—“What will Caldermere say if he should wake?”

“This is not sleep, mother!—You need not be afraid of any one.—I am with you.”

“O, but if he should be really going to die! I cannot bear it!—and it is all *his* doing!”

“Saw say I, my Lady!” was the comment of Miss Scatters, with another furious glance across the bed.—“Here’s the ice, Dr. Brudge.”

But the object of her fury did not heed or quail. Dr. Mondor sat still—as quiet as revenge and absolute triumph can afford to be—watching the death-bed. Miss Scatters declared, the next day, that he took a cigar from his pocket—moistened it—and then a flint and steel and tinder. It might have been that sight which made Justin start to his feet,—but Justin recollected nothing of the matter afterwards. — To tend his poor terrified mother, and to wait, gave enough occupation to his every faculty.

And so the night, with this unnatural vigil, wore on.—It needs not to say, that remedy after remedy, applicable in such cases, was tried—all in vain.—The foreign physician offered no comments—no protests:—but looked on with a civil coolness, after having once said—“It is of no use—nothing can be of use now. He would have it so.—I am not responsible for anything you try.”

And there unconscious did that strong man lie, drawing his breath with heavy labour, and that contraction of the brow which tells that the spirit is not passing without a struggle!—his large, vigorous hand quivering on the quilt—his eyes closed.

“Lady Caldermere had better go to bed,” said the foreign physician—“I will tell her when there is any change.”

She turned her eyes on him, without an answer:—and so they sat on till the short summer night was over—and the grey dawn began to appear.—It was not full

daylight when there was a slight motion in the bed: and a voice spoke from it which no one recognised.—The dying eyes opened.

“My wife ought to be here.—Where is she?”

“Here — here, Caldermere,” said the wretched weeping woman, supported betwixt Miss Scatters and Justin, and bending over him.

“I have been wrong—very wrong—and I was wrong about your Charles—but it is too late now! Forgive me!”—And the first and last Lord Caldermere gave a deep sigh, and expired peacefully.

Leaving Miss Scatters for an instant in charge of his mother, Justin passed to the other side of the bed—and laid his hand on Dr. Mondor’s wrist. “There must be an examination of the body,” said he, in a low voice.



## CHAPTER VI.

## WHAT NEXT ?

THE stature of the man who died, as has been told, might be measured by the shock which the news of his death spread throughout the kingdom. It seems taken for granted that men of his might are exempted from the common lot.—Those, the best versed in affairs, who had been aware for some time that matters were in a most precarious state at Bower Mills, had been used to say—“ Well, Caldermere will have no trouble in making a second fortune,—with ten years of work in him.” For once

those great organs of public opinion who are believed to keep tombstones cut in readiness for the graves of all persons of note or figure, were found unprovided. The surprise that a man of such iron will and sagacity could die, was as great as if his death had not been hastened by the failure of his sagacity beneath his iron will.—It could not be really true that Lord Caldermere was gone!

Most incredulous of all was the Prodigy in regard to his father-in-law's decease.—The antagonism betwixt them (as he felt it) had grown into the very core of his heart.—Justin had communicated the news to him in merely a few hasty words, undertaking to send a longer letter by the next post. Their mother, he said, had been in something like a state of delirium ever since the event took place:—and was not to be left for a moment.—There was to be a *post mortem* examination:—Lord Caldermere's death having been rapid and mysterious.

“Lord!” said the Countess Baltakis, “Dr. Mondor has got his thousand pounds easily! Not a month yet, Kitty! I wonder whether that woman has everything left her.—But it won’t interfere with my Thursdays. The two were not on terms—and Dr. Mondor shall tell us all about it when he comes up: for there’s nothing to keep *him* longer at Caldermere, I fancy.”

Great awe was cast on the Lower Pavement by the news brought fresh from Blackchester by Mr. Ogg. Dr. Brudge had been unable to leave the widow, who, it would seem, had no remarkable confidence in expensive foreign physicians.—Mr. Justin and the French doctor had had words:—and it was said that the latter might be put on trial for his life.—“So you see, Susanna, it is not all gold that glitters.—One thousand pounds thrown away (not that one thousand pounds was a matter of the slightest object to Lord Caldermere).—And then, to think of giving him zinc instead of

the right medicine. Mr. Ogg declares that they gave him zinc."

"We are in a dreadful state here," wrote Justin in his second letter to Charles. "Our poor mother seems unable to compose herself. Her anguish is terrible to witness—and takes strange forms.—It was proper that there should be an examination of the remains, specially after the secrecy observed by Dr. Mondor in his treatment of the case, and Lord Caldermere's fatal acquiescence.—Then old Miss Scatters was not to be pacified without its taking place.—But, it appears that his life could not have been prolonged much longer.—Internal disease had made great progress: and though the mad and strange remedies—principally stimulants—used, may have accelerated the catastrophe, there is nothing to be charged against the fellow, so far as he is concerned, save inefficiency of medical treatment—mistake, in short.—He went away, though he had been

paid the thousand pounds demanded, most reluctantly. I believe I should have disputed the claim—and so it is as well that I had not the option; since it was of first consequence to our mother that he should be got away from Caldermere: a delusion having possessed itself of her mind, of which it is my painful duty to apprise you.

“She persists that this man is a son of our father’s—the illegitimate son of whom we have heard so much too much—whose death by drowning in the Danube happened while we were on our way to England, and was officially proved in the Vienna Chancery. The man owns to having been in the same regiment, and intimate with that unlucky being—and to having been mistaken for him, owing to a strange likeness—and I cannot doubt has come hither to make capital out of the circumstance; and to intimidate our mother. This is bad enough; but she goes the length of accusing him of having administered poison—

and declares with a pertinacity which is hardly sanity, that Dr. Mondor is the person I allude to.—He is an artful, dark fellow, as it is ; and I wish it may not prove that he has abused Lord Caldermere's credulity.—In his room, after he went, I found the cover of a dirty old letter, directed to Signor Zuccaglio.—He left us very unwillingly—having, apparently, determined to be present at the funeral.—I believe he is in London—so, if he should make his way to you, be on your guard.

“ The funeral will be on Wednesday ; it will spare you a trying scene *not* to be present—and your coming would be a mere empty form. The good man who is gone (and he *was* a good man, though I stood up against him for your sake, as now, I may have to stand up against you for his) would have desired nothing less, could he have foreseen that you were so near him, on one of the last evenings of his life.—What is to come

disquiets me.—Lord Caldermere signed a new will on the day before his death. I had unfortunately been the cause of his deep displeasure against our unhappy mother. You remember the money I wrote to you about—a sum which, she told me at the time, you handed her at Baden-Baden, and which stood in her name, though it has always been considered as yours, and yours only. It has grown into a little fortune. I could not deny the existence of such money, when taxed with it by Lord Caldermere, who found traces of it in the books. He had been previously displeased by a totally insignificant offence in my behaviour, on your account—and displayed violent passion.—But he was already very ill and under the influence of stimulants. I cannot suppose that such an occurrence will have made him act revengefully by our mother; but I shall be more at ease on her account when we know the contents of the will,

which is in the hands of Mr. Torris.—I may be in town on Thursday, to acquaint myself with its contents.

“ I write to you with a full heart.—These are among the dark times in which brothers should stand by one another.—Yours,

“ JUSTIN.”

There was enough, it will be owned, in the foregoing letter, to make its reader think—but not to think as its writer thought.—He had older knowledge to go on:—and that instinct which drives quick-spirited people at once to conclusions such as no after reasoning can shake.—Mondor and Zucaglio were one:—no doubt of that,—and his mother’s frantic possession:—that might *not* be so frantic! He recalled every circumstance of those months when he had been fellow-inmate of the Russian house with that man,—the strangely-mixed fascination and repulsion which had always hung about him—his consistent and progressive insight



into the Prodigy's private home-griefs—his helpfulness (O Heaven! what helpfulness had it not proved!) in the discovery of Becker's sister, and in their wild instant marriage.—It was clear as day: though only the main facts were before him.—That man *was* his natural brother; and had come back from the grave to work his vengeance on his mother and her children!—Verily, he had succeeded in the case of her more gifted one.

He could see nobody—he would face no one. He scrawled a word to Colonel Vandaleur to this effect:—another to Countess Baltakis,—a third to Doctor Orelus, with an enclosure; and tossed with storm as he was, could not help smiling while he sealed it, as he said to himself, “Dear good man! what I send him will make up for my non-attendance.—Gottlieb, are you sure that this is the only letter to-day?—that no one has been here from the Embassies?”

“Honoured sir, certain. I have not

quitted the house since you came back : and the great score is finished—but,” timidly, “are you well, sir?”

“No, good boy! I am dying for air. This London is so like a furnace?” And he took his hat and hurried out.—The boy listened sadly to his departing steps—himself looking pale and oppressed, as he said: “Ah! how I wish we were out of this England!” And buttoning his coat over the letter, as tight as if it had been a mid-winter day, he prepared to trudge forth to deliver the Prodigy’s welcome to England to Doctor Orelus—and with it a card for the next Thursday’s music at the Countess Baltakis’s!

At that hour of the morning, betwixt ten and eleven, the Park was, in those days, deserted, save by a modest Amazon or two, riding for riding’s sake, followed by her sulky groom—and by nursery-maids solicitous about their charges,—seeing that the Guardsmen are then mostly busy in their barracks—and by invalid ladies, driving in

a fond superstition that fresh air is to be found by the Serpentine.—An empty place of popular resort does not invite meditation or inspire tranquillity.—The haggard and deserted air it wears, is apt to communicate itself to the imagination of the solitary loungee.—The child drawn in that little chair by the toiling dog, watched anxiously by the veiled woman who walked on slowly at its side, must be a languid cripple.—The shabby man who crossed the road at a quicker pace, obviously bore some unpleasant news.—The two females who stepped into a carriage, waiting at a little distance, had been disappointed of meeting some one—or their impatient motion might imply a fear of being chased, not common to those so vehement in their choice of colours as they, and whose equipage, even Charles could remark, had so equivocal a look.—All was vanity and vexation of spirit that morning: and he sat himself down on the bench they had left as wearily as if every hope of his life

had been drained out of him,—instead of the best days of young manhood being yet to come!

That dejected inertness was not to last long. But for it, he must have been in the first instant aware, that the last occupants of that bench had left on it a book.—His eye was caught by the German binding.—The volume had a home look,—aye, and in something besides its dingy cover.—He had seen that book before. It was an old volume of a German translation of Plutarch!—And the carriage of those to whom it had belonged was already out of sight.—It was of no avail to spring up as though shot, with a violent exclamation,—to examine the volume again and again, for name, word, or mark, which might decide its ownership.—Gottlieb, it was true, might be able to assist in the verification: but the boy was not with him: and he must wait on the chance of the carriage returning—the carriage in

which the owner of that book might be—and that owner, his wife.

It was but a chance.—Failing it, what was there to be done? He must wait, at all events. What could bring her to England in hiding?—Gottlieb had spoken of another whom he had seen.—The sweat burst to the brow of Charles, as the idea of Count Foltz forced itself forward. He had already learned, though so young, the easy Vienna creed concerning woman's virtue and man's freedom.—Foltz was very handsome; why should he be more scrupulous than ninety-nine hundredths of his order?—Charles was old enough, too, to know what manner of morals was attributed to the artist class by the world. Colonel Vandaleur had made no secret of it, as one of his many causes of contempt for musical life.—Why should Aunt Claussen's niece, though she *was* Becker's sister, be more temptation-proof than other girls as vain of their

beauty, and as exposed in position as she? Why should not all her endearments, all that openly professed jealousy of hers, have been a blind to throw him off his guard?—Who could be assured that she had not discovered the dreary secret of his life, that HE COULD NOT LOVE HER,—that she had not determined to act on such knowledge, and to make herself amends?—Then there was her love of luxury for its own sake,—quickenened by that womanly insolence which delights in mortifying women.

An open carriage was rapidly approaching from the right direction.—In it were two ladies.—He thought for a moment it might be . . . No, it was not his wife.

And to this shame he had linked himself!—and for this, had he flung away chances.—He did not only glance back to the Princess Chenzikoff,—not only to the bright eyes which had spoken as plainly as eyes could speak,—at Kaisersbad, at Dresden, at Prague,—wherever he had presented him-

self—but to that evening at The Hirsch,—to the welcome which had surprised him on the Lower Pavement; from that beautiful girl,—so serene, so accomplished, and yet not cold.—*Now*, he would admit, by way of fierce self-torment, what that affectionate greeting of hers,—what that colour in her cheek, when she had seen him approaching, had hinted!—He was vain, recollect; he had been encouraged to be vain from his cradle. The assurance he felt that Susanna would not have been hard to win, deepened the sense of his past impetuous folly, the bitter anger he felt towards one who might be dragging *him* into the mire by her own disgrace—the terrible self-pity—the feeling of vengeance against the false friend whose artful counsels had goaded him into that sudden flight—that mad marriage.—“No, I will wait no longer!” he exclaimed, rising hastily.—“Let Marie come back,—let her not come back—what is it to me?”

He was hailed, as he rose, by a cheery

speaker on horseback—" Charles, my boy —I want to speak to you. I must have a talk with you about something of consequence.—This is not the place. What time will you be at home?—I must go out of town to-morrow."

"Not to-day! I am not fit to speak to any one to-day,—I am very unwell.—Any time after you come back!—Good morning!"

"Gad, sir!" ruminated Colonel Vandaleur, looking after him,—a shade passing over his face the while—"that poor boy might have met the Wild Huntsman,—I never saw a face so white and so wild!—Well, it *is* hard for his mother to lose her husband and the great property at the same moment.—But I did not think he would have cared so much about the matter,—wrapped up as he is in his pianoforte, and that wife he makes such a fool of.—Poor boy!" and the Colonel rode on thoughtfully.

"I cannot tell him to-day! I cannot



own it, for him to triumph over me, and to remind me how he warned me at Tübingen! And this may not be her Plutarch! or she may have given it to some one!—She cannot be in London! I shall have a letter from Dresden to-morrow.”—And then Charles thought of calling Doctor Orelus into council; but what could he do,—a stranger in the place?—“And besides,” he repeated, grinding the pebbles under the heel of his boot, “it is merely some likeness—some coincidence.—It SHALL not be true.” He could not have put the devouring anxiety aside, even with that arrogant self-deceit which belongs to genius,—save for one sad reason. HE COULD NOT LOVE HER!

## CHAPTER VII.

## BROTHERS.

PUTTING the anguish aside, however, by no means implied, on the part of Charles, a culpable or cynical indifference to warnings which boded so ill. He flew eagerly on Gottlieb with the book.—“Whose book is this?—Is it not the Plutarch I asked you about, as we were coming back from Prague?”

Poor Gottlieb saw that his master was terribly shaken—perhaps the sight confused him—perhaps it occurred to the timid and affectionate nature of one ill educated, that a

subterfuge might allay this agitation—but he answered, “No, honoured sir,—this cannot be that Plutarch. It was bound in green.”—His lie,—if it *was* a lie,—was repaid by a sigh of relief; and the unconscious exclamation, “I have enough to bear without this;” and for a while, in very exhaustion, Charles allowed himself to be convinced.

But he did not tell even Gottlieb that that very evening he made again the round of the Embassies, to inquire for tidings—not of his wife (he could not bring himself to name her)—but of Count Foltz.

It was, as before, all in vain. No such nobleman had turned up. There seemed nothing to be done, when the disheartening fact was mastered that London has no police-books registering all who enter its precincts—but to wait for the morrow.

The morrow had duties and diversions of its own.

It was the morning of Countess Baltakis’s third Thursday, and Justin came up to

town ; his mother having given an inarticulate consent to his acquainting himself with the provisions of her deceased husband's will. The funeral, according to directions forwarded by Lord Caldermere's solicitors, who were also his executors, had been performed in the simplest manner,—to the great disgust of Blackchester ; which had looked forward to a black show and holiday on the occasion. “Plainer everything could not have been,” said Mistress Whitelamb, “had it been only poor me, who was to be laid with dear Mr. Smalley—and not great Lord Caldermere. But they do say that the poor are to get something.”

Justin had to tell how Lady Caldermere continued in the same state of abject prostration and distress. It was necessary to watch her night and day—a terror haunted her ; the dread of Dr. Mondor prescribing for her.—It was of no use to assure her that he had left the place.—“But I tell you,” she screamed, “you are in league against

me! He is in the house! I feel he is!—He is not dead! and he will poison me, as he poisoned Caldermere!”

Charles had to impart some of the reasons which disposed him to believe that his mother's terror was not in all points visionary.—If their natural brother, whatever he called himself, was in London, however, he had forborne from claiming his old companion—neither had he been to the Countess Baltakis's. It was to be hoped, therefore, that he had left the country with his ill-gotten money.—He could do them no more harm, now.

Some expression of the kind passed in the office of Mr. Torris, where the reading of Lord Caldermere's will was to take place.

“Dr. Mondor, you mean,” the man of law said, dryly.—“Yes, he has done harm enough,—yet, perhaps, not to the extent he intended. But he is not out of the country;—nor will he go till the contents of Lord Caldermere's will are known. He presumes

on the ascendancy which he exercised over his patient till almost the very last,—*almost . . .*” and the solicitor, as he repeated the words, looked at the brothers with a shrewd eye and a tightly-compressed lip, which they felt shut up a secret.—“And he has absolutely had the assurance to announce his intention of being present. It was best not to refuse him.—That is his knock, I have no doubt.—I thought so.—Bid the person come in” (in answer to a card presented).—“Come in, sir. Neither Baron Einstern nor his brother can have the slightest objection to your presence.”

Dr. Mondor, sumptuous in deep mourning, bowed silently to the young men, and sat down. His lip, too, shut up a secret—and there was something like a covert smile on it. Neither brother returned his recognition.—The gorge of the younger man rose as he recollected how they two had last parted, on that mad night in Munich, and when he saw,

by a sinister glance thrown towards him, that Zuccaglio recollected it too.

“ I have some observations to make, gentlemen,” said Mr. Torris, before unfolding the momentous document. “ I beg to say, that I drew this will—to replace a former one destroyed by my client some three weeks ago, with the provisions of which Baron Einstern” (bowing slightly to Justin) “ was acquainted—under the strongest protest:—and I assert this, in case any one shall see fit to dispute it, as a will having been made under influence, and when the maker was not in possession of his right senses.”

“ I will swear,” cried the quack, rising from his chair, “ in any court of justice, English or foreign, and I can bring evidence to any amount to prove, that Lord Caldermere was in his right senses at the moment when he made—at the moment when he signed the will.—Your clerks will prove it.”

“ Precisely, Dr. Mondor. Your testimony

may have its value :—and Mr. Torris fixed the charlatan with a gaze not easy to read : then continued :

“ I repeat it, gentlemen, I drew this will, under the strongest protest. I had known Lord Caldermere for many years, intimately and confidentially.—I knew him to be a man of no common justice and probity : and I represented to him, though it was in no respect my business so to do,—that the provisions of this document were those of exaggerated resentment, based on misrepresentation. I regret that I was unable, in a main point, to shake his purpose.—I am prepared further to state my strong impression, and I suspect his private papers will prove it, that during some years past a person or persons had been practising upon him, with communications detrimental to my Lady—which had led him narrowly to observe her, under the impression that she had concealed matters of importance from him. He thought, too, that she had a hoard of private savings. How far



he was right, how far wrong, is of no consequence. The effect, I am sorry to state, was produced and acted on. It is probable that the pressure of many anxieties from different quarters had its share in rendering him more averse to reason than usual.—So thoroughly was I aware of this, that I could not satisfy my conscience without seeking an interview with him, and urging certain considerations on him, very strongly, before the document was irrevocably signed. It appears that on the day preceding Lord Caldermere's death, he had, at last, become unable to deny, that, in place of recovery, he was becoming worse—rapidly worse, hour by hour—that the stimulants administered to him had ceased to be of benefit: in brief, that the treatment to which he had surrendered himself in an hour of infatuation, was reckless and ignorantly,—if not purposely, mistaken, to say the least of it.”

A smile flitted across the vagabond's lips, just for a moment.

“My earnest efforts,” continued Mr. Torris, “to induce Lord Caldermere to make a more righteous will, failed. In only one point, of comparatively minor importance, I succeeded.—It was proper, gentlemen, that you should be prepared for the shock which every man who loves Lord Caldermere’s memory must feel, on hearing that Lady Caldermere’s name is not in the document.—I will read it.”

A deep, long breath was drawn from the other side of the table.

The brothers looked one at the other in speechless amazement. Such an exercise of a vindictive spirit had not been dreamed of as possible by either.—“This is dreadful,” whispered Justin, with a groan. “How she will feel it when she recovers!”

The will was very brief: an unconditional bequest of all that Lord Caldermere had to bequeath, in estates, securities, funded property, to Miss Scatters (including a recommendation that Justin should

remain as manager at Bower Mills), followed by a codicil, indicating small legacies to servants,—some money to certain charities; one thousand pounds to Mistress Galatea Whitelamb:—and (here Mr. Torris read very slowly, and directed himself expressly to the person lounging in insolent satisfaction at the other side of the table) “ ‘ In consideration of the medical and other confidential services rendered to me by Dr. Mondor—which I hereby duly acknowledge—I bequeath to him the sum of fifty thousand pounds——’ ”

The brothers started up—Justin, I am afraid, with an oath.

“ Stop, gentlemen:—‘ in case he completes my cure and restores me, by God’s blessing, to health.’ *This* was the clause, gentlemen,” concluded the lawyer, severely, “ which, happily, I prevailed on my client to introduce on our last meeting.—My clerks, as Dr. Mondor has considerably assured us, are as perfectly aware as he is,

that Lord Caldermere was in full possession of his senses when the will was signed."

It might have almost recompensed any one who had suffered from that audacious schemer, now to see his face, in which concentrated fury spoke, and scheming hate baffled.—“Gentlemen,” went on Mr. Torriss, “this person can give you no disturbance, whether the will be quashed (in which case Lady Caldermere inherits) or be supported.—So, sir, as you perceive that you have no further interest in this will, I suppose you will forbear from any further attempts at molesting any one concerned in it. For your own sake, let there be no more scandal. Go . . . Platt, show this person out!”

The miscreant’s face would have served as a study for any painter of diabolical passions; but his hands—the limber hands of a gambler—were even more emphatic, as they quivered and clutched at some invisible prey. His voice, however, was as steady as usual, even then, when he was writhing in his own

infamous toils. "Well, gentlemen," said he, "I wish Lady Caldermere joy of her legacy." And he went out, first striking a light for his cigar on the heel of his boot.

Mr. Torris drew a deep breath when he was gone, and threw open the windows. "The abominable scoundrel!" was his exclamation, "and to think that he should have got that thousand pounds!—I will see that he is out of the premises."

"What do you now take him to be, Charles?" said Justin, in the moment while the two were alone.

"More than ever what I have said. He is what my mother told you—a very devil incarnate, who has nourished a fixed idea of vengeance against her.—If he be what she fancies, who can wonder?"

"O, hush! recollect how she loved you! You would not speak so, could you see how wretched she is."

"O, could you only know how wretched *I* am! and owing to her: owing entirely to that

selfish marriage of hers—and her husband's abominable tyranny!—You must come home with me, Justin; you must come home with me! and I must tell you all that drove me into my rash wretched marriage; and about my wife.”

“I have heard something of the story from Mr. Orelus,” Justin was beginning—when Mr. Torris returned.

“This is a monstrous will, gentlemen,” he said, gravely, “a truly monstrous will. We have no doubt, my partner and I, that Lord Caldermere forwarded us the instructions to prepare it under the influence of that quack.—We know that he was kept in a state of false excitement, by being drenched with champagne,—but in no respect so as to impair his reason—still less his self-will. To the last, he would not confess that he had been in the wrong. When I urged on him the clause which has disappointed yonder villain of his prey, he felt he was going, and yet he could hardly

prevail on himself to say, 'Well, to humour you, insert it.'—That very day, when I had informed him of the arrival from America of the witness—one Paddox—whose evidence settles the case of the Caldermere purchase on a false title, past reasonable doubt, as it was my duty explicitly and strongly to point out to him,—what did he answer? 'Give in? No, Torris, I'll fight it to the very last.'—He was very near the last then! So proud a man I have never seen, and that business of the estate was more than his pride could bear, in the weakened state of his body. It killed him—although, I suppose" (and here Mr. Torris looked keenly at Justin), "he could well afford even such an enormous loss."

The person mutely appealed to made no reply: simply requesting that Lady Caldermere might be formally apprised of the provisions of the will. Then the brothers took leave of the solicitor, and walked towards the West End.

It was more natural than considerate in the Prodigy to turn away from the great surprise which had so shocked Justin, and to burden that excellent creature (but who had ever cared how much Justin was burdened?) with the detail of the terrible and intimate trouble of his own married life.—Then, for the first time, did the elder brother learn that Charles had made no love-marriage—that he had found out how fatal was the difference which separated him, at heart, from his beautiful wife.—Then did Justin receive with terror the suspicion that Marie (about to become a mother) might be already playing the man false who had so chivalrously sacrificed brilliant prospects for her sake—who had denied her nothing.—And who could tell, where, and when, and how the mine would be sprung, and the horrible disgrace burst out to open day?

“I would stay with you, Charles, till at least you have some certainty,” said poor



Justin, "were it not for our mother. But I must be with her."

"O yes! go to her!" cried the Prodigy, not without a touch of irrational bitterness. "She wants you more than I!—My marriage, though, is already a wretched one.—She had her years of grandeur and happiness! I have my years of misery to come! And they would never, never have been, but for her! . . . O, Justin!" (and here he broke into another change of mood), "I have seen the world! Take warning by us. Never marry in haste! But you will not—you will choose wisely.—Ah! when I was down in Blackchester the other night, do you think I did not see? . . . She is better, a thousand times better, than all the other women in the world put together. You may be a happy fellow!"

Poor Justin! A happy fellow!—knowing, as he did, how utterly mistimed was this last congratulation; and who would have

had heaviness at heart enough, on account of his own disappointment, had there been time for him to spare from the troubles of others. Yet a bystander might have thought him— if not happy—at ease—to judge from the substantial justice which he did to dinner provided by the Beaumont Hotel cook:— whereas, to the poor fevered Genius, the sight and scent of food were little short of abominable.—Charles hovered up and down the room, restless in his wretchedness, to the great disturbance of the waiters (used as they were to the strange manners of Gauls, Americans, Medes, and Persians), and was only restrained by the presence of Gottlieb, who watched him with a mournful solicitude, from pouring out over again all that sad story of a wrecked life, which it had been such a relief to entrust to his newly-found confidant.—Well might a bystander have credited him with that torture of eager despair which can have but one dark end.

“I wish I could leave you in a better state,” said Justin, affectionately. “Not eating anything, as you do, no wonder you look so miserable.—And you might not have slept for a week.—Do, my dear fellow, go to bed, and try to get a good night’s rest—and make Gottlieb, there, take you some of that excellent soup, and you will get up a new man to-morrow.”

“Yes, I must lie down,” said the other, “or I shall not be able to play to-night.”

“To play—Charles?”

“O, you fancy every one as free as yourself! Yes, I must pay my quarter of a pound of flesh! You forget that I am a slave to the public! I wrote to the Countess Baltakis, and begged her to put it off. She said, and reasonably enough, that no one could suppose I cared for Lord Caldermere’s death. The Duchess, who had begged to be invited to hear me, could tell me how little he had cared for *me*—and *she* could not be put off. This is her last evening in London.

Of course they have not an idea—nobody has, except yourself, of what I have told you about my wife.—I could not bear to give *that* as an excuse!—It would be over the town in an hour; the women would like nothing better!—And the Baltakis *did not* remind me (though she might have done) that they have paid me already.—It is hateful; but, in honour I cannot fail her; I cannot fail myself!—Yes, play I must! And who knows? It may take me out of myself for a while!” And his face lighted up, with a rapid change which must have bewildered a bystander, because his farewell words were, “Thank God, you are not an artist!”

“Yes,” said he, when Justin was at last gone—“I feel as if I could sleep now—I must sleep.—Gottlieb, come and wake me at nine: unless some news should come! Or whatever news comes do not wake me till nine.”

## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE THIRD THURSDAY.

SUCH sleep as that of Charles, helped by an opiate, of which Gottlieb was not in the secret, stupifies rather than refreshes the sleeper. He woke, heavy, feverish, degraded, without a particle of spirit at his call.—“Had she been wise,” he said to himself, as he hurried on his clothes rather than dressed—“the Countess Baltakis would not have claimed her quarter of a pound of flesh this evening, but would have given me a week’s grace.”

That lady, so far from being wise, was in one of her bravest and most flourishing

humours,—to be heard in every corner, or from every corner, of her four drawing-rooms.—“No, dear! nothing more than usual—except just the red cloth laid down in the hall!—Why should I make any difference for Royalty?—Who did you ask about? O, that is Professor Orelus, from what’s its name university in Germany—the Professor of Dariology there—yes, of Dariology!—And fancy that daughter of his coming in a shrimp-coloured gauze, on this roasting July night!—Late! why, of course they will be late—not get here till after the opera—so Einstern will not play his *Dew fantasia* yet.—Here they come! Kitty, do stand out of the way.”

Countess Baltakis little knew what a narrow escape had been vouchsafed her, from an outfit of bright blue beads and bows, with which the fair Minna had entertained serious intentions of harmonising her shrimp-coloured robe. As matters stood, the true-souled German maiden was conspicuous

enough. — Spleen itself must have sympathised with the rapturous enjoyment, bursting from every pore, which her face displayed. She could not even pretend to care that dear Mrs. Orelus was providentially detained at home by a swelled face — (caught, “*Ach!* Heaven!” had the injured woman protested, “in one of those barbarous English draughts from their terrible open windows”) — so manifold were the sources of the maiden’s rapture, and so completely did she feel herself in her own element.

Of course the Prodigy was not to be spared.—The Royal ladies had not forgotten the table-talk at Caldermere of which he had been the subject. A new zest was given to his past adventures and his present attractions, by the late decease of the owner of that palace, and by the rumour which had got about—largely through the instrumentality of Mr. Quillsey—that grave doubts existed whether Caldermere was Lord Caldermere’s property to leave to his wife, or not—and by

its being declared that the mother and her son, the pianist (an illegitimate son, as many still persisted), were not on speaking terms.—But, so far as was possible, Charles extricated himself from the centre of attraction, and found relief and shelter by his old master.

At first, Doctor Orelus was disposed to more than usual endlessness. He had been with difficulty prevented from publicly embracing his pupil, and recounting to an audience the benefaction—“such a providentially unheard-of-and-undeniably-princely piece of munificence.” The surprise of the gift, even more than the awfully-and-strangely-rakish habits of London, had been too much for his homely wife:—and Minna, as her tearful eyes, and her obvious willingness also to embrace Charles, testified, had had her share in the splendid news.

But these ebullitions were cut short, to be continued more substantially some future day—by our Prodigy dexterously engaging



his old preceptor in disquisitions on the follies, vanities, and luxuries round them, prolix and edifying, such as would have done no shame to an Encyclopædia.—For himself Charles was sick at heart. That morning's explosion had shaken him dreadfully. He trembled lest the next arrival might be that of the evil, fearful man, who had so cruelly injured him : and whose vengeance, he felt a dismal presentiment, might not yet have spent itself.—Betwixt exhibition and exhibition he crept back to the same corner, soundly rated by the Countess Baltakis for not playing his best.—“ If you don't do yourself justice in the Dew *fantasia*, I shall be downright in a rage with you.—No, you silly fellow, don't flush up so ! I don't care a pin whether you play better or worse because Royalty is here ! They have heard of your airs and graces abroad already, so it's quite an understood thing.—Take an extra glass of champagne, if you are out of sorts.—Lady Load, see that he makes a good supper.—

You're looking at my rubies, Miss Orelus! I am sick of them already:—they are poor, cheap things. Marquis, push through. I follow you, somehow."

"*Ach!* Heaven! what spirit and fluency!" was the exclamation of the fair Minna, who conceived her hostess to be the mirror of fashion, and the type of English aristocracy, and promised herself to remember and apply certain of her ways, for the benefit of play-mates at home. "Is she always so lively?"

"I have never seen her otherwise," said Charles, with a sigh.—"Three pieces more!—Well, the weariest night comes to an end.—I have a terrible headache, Minna—Doctor, will you let me sit down in silence for ten minutes:—and then I will try to point out some of the people you were asking for."

The particular lateness of that party, commented on by Doctor Orelus, who took out his watch and his note-book, with a smile of wonder at every new arrival.—"Eleven o'clock and a half—three-quarters—twelve

o'clock—astonishing!”—aggravated Charles to torture.

After midnight a fresh horde of guests streamed in from the Opera.—So sharpened were the Prodigy's senses to feverish pain and excitement, that though all were talking at once—he was able to hear every voice separately; and to hear that they were all performing variations on one and the same theme,—some occurrence which apparently had just given every one no common entertainment.

“ He richly deserves it! High time that some one should put a stop to his tricks and impositions! Our public is far too good natured—but there are things which will not go down in any theatre.”

“ Come, be quiet! be quiet! good folks! If you want to talk about your opera riots, go down into the supper-room. I can't have them acted over here! I have been shouting myself hoarse to get silence for the last five minutes—and silence I must have;

Come, Einstern, begin at once,—‘The Dew *fantasia!*’ The Duchess is only waiting to hear it.”

But even the noise made by Countess Baltakis, in support of her own candidate, failed, in part, to produce the lull requested.—The new comers were in that state of high spirits which it is impossible to control.—They wanted to talk, and not to hear pianoforte playing at almost one o’clock in the morning:—and in spite of the “*Sh!*”—“*Sh!*”—“I say!” of the hostess—Major Kentucky Browne’s pervading twang was heard going on. “High time English managers should be brought to their senses.—It was a sight I would not have missed for a *rolio!* All those Italians screaming and making a noise like so many niggers at a frolic!—And the few who took the girl’s part, because she was so pretty, kept it up so stimulantly that I expected knives would be out every minute.—As it was, the curtain was only dropped

in the very nick of time.—The girl cannot dance, though, any more than my rifle.”

“*Sh!*”—cried the Baltakis—“Major Kentucky Browne, you have looked your last at my drawing-rooms, I can promise you! Einstern, I really must beg you to begin again.—Madam, this is his *Dew fantasia*.”

The piece of display was exhibited and received with rapture enough to satisfy the most rapacious of appetites.—Barriering out the talkers, a crowd closed round the piano-forte to enjoy and to flatter. The tide of ecstasy was at its height, the chorus of matrons and maids at its loudest:—and high, throughout, towered the triumphing enthusiasm of the true-souled Minna.—“*Ach!* Heaven! that is divine!—Just once again! one piece more!—Make him improvise, Countess Baltakis! They were wild about his improvising at Kaisersbad!”

There was no possibility of escape. The great ladies would not rise; anxious, like

all the rest, to witness one of those displays, which, by its apparent mystery and difficulty, captivates many beyond its real value.—The Prodigy vainly tried to excuse himself. He could make nothing worth listening to that night—one must be in the humour for such things. He had not a single idea.

“O, that shall be no difficulty,” cried the Countess Baltakis, producing her jewelled pencil-case.

“Some one find paper for everybody. You shall have themes enough and to spare in a second. Did you ever see any one so inspired,” she added, in her piercing whisper, “as the dear fellow looks at this moment?”

The dear fellow did not hear her. His hands were running fitfully over the keys, to prevent his being obliged to reply to compliments and questions—but his thoughts were far away—busy among the days of his youth—busy with that night,

when, flushed with expectation, and the pleasure of doing a kindness to a cherished friend—he had made that magnificent outbreak in the music-school.—What was left of the boy, then so full of hope and excitement—with the world at his feet? What was left for him—now already so old?—Incense that fatigued more than it intoxicated him:—treasure hardly worth picking up;—for whom was there that he cared to waste it on? And he saw that passionless, heavy face, in that dim, hungry chamber,—and he lived over again that helpless, rebellious distress which had stricken him down, by the death-bed of that friend in whom he had invested so extravagant an amount of love. It may be that objects and emotions so utterly discordant with the present time and place were conjured up by the quiet, fixed face of his old tutor—full in view.—He was giving himself up to the tide of recollections which surged in, uncalled for and irresistible. He was going to *play* these

things, when he was recalled to the scene and the moment:—by his hostess, who arrested his hand. The watchful Minna always declares that she saw the Countess Baltakis give it a little squeeze, as she cried, “Here, Einstern—here are plenty of themes to choose amongst:”—thrusting on him as she spoke a heap of twisted and folded papers.

He forced himself back to those lighted and scented rooms, and those artificial excited faces—back to those ridiculous requests and suggestions—back to the folly of the hour! Absurd enough were most of the requisitions traced on the papers.—One contained a few semibreves, with a figured bass—enough to make the hair of a Sanhedrim of pedants stand on end.—Another bespoke “A Prayer for the Dead”—another offered two bars of the last *galoppe*—a third proposed “Napoleon when meditating abdication at Fontainebleau”—a fourth, “The History of Music”—a fifth,



“Give us your opinion of the comparative advantages of married and single life.”

“Major Kentucky Browne, that proposition must be yours,” broke in the Countess Baltakis, with hot displeasure:—“but when did an American ever know anything of art? Come, Einstern, choose—and never mind reading out the titles. Try that sealed note,—there ought to be something in that:—though who can have got at sealing-wax in this room is a mystery to me.”

Charles broke the seal and read.—A change passed over his face, the like of which had been seen by only one of that circle—Doctor Orelus—on that evening in the music-school—as he started from his seat, crushing the paper in his fingers:—and, careless of Royalty, careless of Fashion, careless of all the loquacious inquiries which burst forth around him, broke through the circle with the fury of a wild animal, stung past all check and control.

The note had contained merely a few words, written in a disguised hand, in French, and not signed :

“ Your wife is at No. 3, Harrington Villas, Brompton,—with Count Foltz.—If you wish to see her alive, you had better lose no time.”

“ Who brought a note for me ?” he cried. —“ Is any one waiting ?”

It had been just handed to the groom of the chambers by one of their people, who had received it from a common messenger. —The man had left it without a word.

“ What is the matter, Einstern ?” cried the Countess Baltakis.—“ Good gracious ! don’t he look as if he was going to murder some one, Kitty ?—Are you ill ?—are you going to have a fit ? If you crowd about him so, good people, he’ll faint !—I said he looked like death when he came ! What a million of pities Dr. Mondor is not here !”

“ Nothing ! nothing is the matter !—It is only a passing attack ; I must get home as

fast as possible.—I must have a carriage.—  
Old friend,” to Doctor Orelus, who was at  
his side, “you will come with me, will you  
not?” and he added, in a rapid whisper—  
“It is too terrible!”

“Surely, surely, honoured madam, I will  
not lose sight of him till I see him in safety  
—and Miss Twiese will go home by her-  
self.”

“*Ach!* yes! *Ach!* Heaven! Certainly! I  
shall give no trouble!” cried the genial Minna,  
enthusiastically ready for any heroic part:  
but her asseverations, that all she required  
was any one with a lantern who would show  
her the way, were lost in matters of more  
immediate moment. Twenty carriages were  
at once placed at the Prodigy’s service,—  
for the urgency of his trouble spoke for itself  
—and he had made many friends,—and in a  
couple of minutes more, the two were beyond  
reach of the noise and confusion,—driving  
rapidly through the hot summer night—and  
Charles, in a few incoherent words, was ex-

plaining to his companion all that he knew, all that was to be dreaded.—It was excellent to see how, at such a moment of suspense and emergency, Doctor Orelus, as though he had been closing a dull book, could lay by his exhausting and involved tediousness of circumlocution—how, by a few feeling and simple words, the teacher, who had supported his pupil under the shock of poor Becker's sudden death, in some measure resumed his former ascendancy, and tranquillised the storm-tossed creature, during the few minutes which elapsed ere he could come face to face with Becker's sister.—“Remember, Charles, you are no child now,” said he, affectionately—“remember that you have an old friend beside you, who loves you dearly and gratefully—and remember that God is above us all!”

## CHAPTER IX.

## THE GLASS OF FASHION.

WITHOUT "The Glass of Fashion" duly laid on the breakfast-table, it is believed that the Quillsey household-could not have got on through a day of the London season.—One might as well be living in the bush, as not participate in all that the great ones of the West End of the Earth had been doing the night before, by studying, with fervent industry, the combinations reflected in "The Glass," which Luxury, Aristocracy, Official importance, Magnificence, Music, Terpsi-

chore, and Gunter at his best, had provided for rational enjoyment.

Nevertheless, the reflections in "The Glass" were not always satisfactory, for more reasons than one.—A solid melancholy possessed itself of Mr. Quillsey, as on the Friday morning he read aloud to the partner of his cares the list of the guests who had been gathered at the third Thursday *réunion* of the Countess Baltakis. "Poor woman!" said he, with a shrug of superiority,—“people don't get into society that way!—It's no distinction to go there!—A perfect Vauxhall, my dear, where every one can get in! But I have not heard of the manager of Vauxhall being, in turn, invited to any Royal parties.”—And with this solacing and conclusive sarcasm, Mr. Quillsey laid "The Glass" down—a little raised in his spirits.

“Nor is the Opera what it was,” resumed the bland censor of morals, “since those invasions of railway people,—coming up, and going down the next morning, as if

that was the way to enjoy music! And so—*of course*—anything and everything passes off at the Opera. Cleaned gloves in the stalls! We shall see cotton gloves there before all is over, Mrs. Quillsey!”

At this the lady moaned; and it was a moment or two ere she took heart to ask—“How the new ballet had gone off?”

“Well, of course,—everything goes off well on a Thursday night.—Those railway people don’t know the difference,—if only they pay enough for their boxes! One of them absolutely asked poor Pickersgill (it’s the Marchioness’s story) what became of Cleopatra after the burning of Troy.”

“What *did*?” was the comment of weak Mrs. Quillsey—but her lord was majestically adjusting his eye-glass, and composing himself for the Opera column—so her pertinent query passed unheard.—“What does the paper say of La Mazarine?” was more to the purpose.

“She did not dance, dear—did not ap-

pear! I was sure that my friend the Prince would not permit her to dance much longer. Bless me! there seems to have been quite a scene!—They would not have the new woman—and no wonder; who had ever heard the name before?—Where can he have fished her up?—A perfect beauty, O, we all know what that means—and of a noble Dalmatian family!—Her first appearance on the stage, too!—and in a new *ballet*—and in such a part as Cleopatra!—Read for yourself when I am gone, dear; it's quite a long story, and so interesting. I am late as it is, for Sir Philip,—and he is as troublesome as the Baltakis woman,—about that stupid orangery of his!”

The story was long and interesting, for “The Glass of Fashion” was written by a hand which was great at fiction—and as irreverent persons ventured to assert, not seldom in the cabinet of inscrutable secrecy, where the Grand Lama of musical drama veiled his wisdom from the vulgar gaze.



The romance told how, into a noble Dalmatian family of vast wealth and ancient ancestry, had been born, eighteen years ago, a Houri, more beautiful than the most beautiful of the long line of Houris who had made the race renowned since “burning Sappho loved and sung in those Isles of Greece,”—how the child had been renowned for grace, genius, and accomplishment, from the moment when she could speak, and had composed and acted plays in three languages before she was as many years old—Thalia and Melpomene having presided over her cradle,—how her haughty parents had been heart-broken at the development of tendencies and propensities so utterly at variance with every dream and purpose of inexorable ancestral pride. In vain. The independent young beauty preferred the free exercise of the gifts of Heaven with which she had been so mysteriously and munificently endowed (for the purpose of making her a benefactress and teacher)—to the galling

enthralments of Barbarian rank and splendour.—A marriage contract had been concluded for her, with another more noble Dalmatian, of more vast wealth and more ancient ancestry—by parental tyranny.—But she had openly, at peril of incarceration, defied the insolent yoke, glittering though it was with diamonds—and had bestowed her affections on a youth of the people,—whose burning sense of his country's wrongs had enrolled him in the list of those whose object was Liberty or Death.—To share his weal and woe had been the settled purpose of the beauteous and enthusiastic Morgiana's soul.—By perseverance in intricate stratagems, and a series of most romantic adventures (particulars of which would shortly be laid before the public), she had, with unheard-of courage, succeeded in emancipating herself from the state imprisonment to which she had been subjected in her parents' Dalmatian palace ;—and was on her way to join the *fiancé* of her soul, when

she was met and stricken to earth with fearful tidings. The manly, the brave Spiridion was no more. A foeman's bullet had precipitated him from the outpost of danger which he had occupied on a beetling rock.—“Those whom the Gods love die young.”—The condition of Morgiana— young, beautiful, unprotected—was desperate indeed.—Disowned by her inexorable parents,—scorned by the cold-blooded monster to whom they would have sold her— without means or subsistence, save such as were derived from a jewel or two, the stolen partners of her flight,—what was to become of her?—An inspiration from her good angel came to her rescue.—She be- thought herself of a preceptor of happier days, who had trained her fairy feet to thread the mazes of the *Romaika* in the splendid paternal halls, while applauding relatives had looked on in ecstasy.—She would show the world “how divine a thing a dancer might be made,”—and alone, and unaided, she, who

had been nurtured in luxury's lap, made her way to Belgrade,—where her old master was living in retirement; and for a year (during which time the rumours of her death were spread abroad) assiduously subjected herself to his counsels, preparatory to her appealing to the ordeal of public approbation.—By chance (a providential chance, it must be said, by all who followed the fortunes of a splendid Temple of Art), the romantic story reached the ears of that enterprising and far-sighted caterer whom no generous Briton could name without a suffusion of grateful pride.—Measures to secure such a treasure had been instantly taken.—The most profound secrecy on the subject was to be observed by all parties,—and how well the vow was kept all London knew, who till this morning was unaware of the existence of such an enchantress. “There can be no doubt,” concluded the paragraph, “that a being like herself,—thus mysteriously directed to the hospitable shores of

Albion,—where all the men are brave and all the women chaste,—must be reserved for the brilliant destiny of one of those bright particular stars, whose progress through its orbit of supernal triumph the lower world hails with plaudits of affection unalloyed and unassailed by envy!”

Thus far the symphony flowed sweetly ; —but the preamble bore no adequate proportion to the song which came after ; and which was this—“That last night’s performance of the new *divertissement*—‘Cleopatra on the Cyclades’—cannot justly be called an adequate revelation of the new danseuse, in all the fulness of her beauty and force of her genius, must be conceded.—The most gifted are, by the mysterious provisions of Nature, the most impressionable. Overcome by feelings not to be wondered at, the momentous nature of the ordeal taken into consideration—the wings of the Sylph were clogged,—the sensibility of the high-born maiden asserted its rights, and the fascinat-

ing *débutante* was conducted from the stage, in the midst of the regrets and plaudits of a sympathetic public. That she will assert her claims at no distant occasion, must be the unanimous wish of every witness, whose heart vibrates to the endearments of Beauty, and the magic associations of romance."

Thus was the history of that Opera Thursday night—the third Thursday of the Countess Baltakis—written in "The Glass of Fashion."

## CHAPTER X.

## BEHIND THE SCENES.

THE scene at the Opera had been more gravely tragical to some of our acquaintances than the dulcet journalist had recorded,—or than any of the midnight talkers at the party of the Countess Baltakis had dreamed. The failure of the poor dancer, so liberally fitted up with romantic antecedents, had not been a mishap brewed by the spite of a cabal. It was not referable to the emotion of one presenting herself for the first time to a strange public—

or to any public.—Neither was it ruthlessly to be ascribed to utter incapacity; though a sense of insufficient preparation rushing on the aspirant, when it was too late, had its share in the terrible disappointment. Something worse than any of these was interwoven with it. It was not merely a common spasm of mortification: a common refusal of overwrought nerves to support their owner one second longer—not merely the common confused terror of one scared by perils of which she had taken no account—which had given such poignancy to the cries of the poor creature, as, staggering from the stage, half supported, half forced (for she had to the last tried to dance down the storm of disapproval which had risen against her),—she fell in hopeless, acute misery, on the floor of her dressing-room:—an object which even the most malicious and unsightly among her rivals could afford to pity.

“This is worse than hysterics,” said one



of the dressers of the theatre, who had crowded in to stare rather than to help.

“Baptiste said she was flighty from the first. He’ll remember the blow she gave him, when they were rehearsing, for many a day to come!”—struck in another commentator on the exciting scene: “I would not be the young man she does favour for a good deal—pretty as she is.”

Will you stand out of the way, everybody,” cried the elder woman in French, leaning over her; “will you make less noise? How can she get any air if you crowd about her so? How can she recover in time? O, for Heaven’s sake!” as the paroxysm grew wilder and wilder, “if you will stay then, will no one call a doctor?—She is very ill! She has not eaten anything this three days.”

“What is the matter?” said a deep voice, whose owner made his way through the crowd; “I am a physician, and I believe I know the lady.—Is this her aunt?”

“*Oui, Monsieur!*”

“I knew your niece at Munich,” said the man, studying the prostrate figure. Perhaps the attitude brought the blood to his face; but never had the scar on it looked so ferocious and ugly, as he added in a low voice, with a smile meant to be reassuring, “and I knew Einstern, her husband.”

“*Ach!* hush! It makes her frantic to hear his name! She was so determined to keep it all a secret to surprise him.—She even made our great friend, Count Foltz, swear . . . .”

“Never mind all that,” said Dr. Mondor, with decision. “There is no time to be lost. I must have this room cleared, and some one must go immediately to the nearest chemist’s.—No—by good luck, I have it about me.—Collect yourself, my good woman,—or I will not answer for the consequences.”

His prompt but not uncivil tone of command did clear the room. In the compara-

tive quiet which followed after the door had shut out the starers, the violent agitation of the wilful and reckless beauty made itself heard more loudly than before. It was on the increase. She made one or two convulsive efforts to rise, tried to arrange her dress, like one dissatisfied with its disorder, and looked wildly and brilliantly forward into his eyes, without testifying the slightest recognition.

“Have you forgotten me, Marie Becker?” said he, returning her gaze; “have you forgotten my seeing you in Munich?—My name is Zuccaglio.”

“Who are you? I do not know you! I will not have any one here when Charles is away! Aunt Claussen, how dare you? It is some vile trick to put me out,—to prevent my dancing, —to shame me! . . . Go, man!—go, go!—I shall be wanted directly” (beating time with her head, as it were, to imaginary music), “and I am not ready! Where have you put my tiara and

my scarf?"—and out burst a new volley of violent exclamations, as she tried to take to her feet again, and again fell backward, almost bruising herself by her violence.

"You will be ready in two moments," said the strange physician, fixing her glance by his, with a singular coolness;—and rapidly dropping into a glass some preparation from the phial he had produced. "Drink this, it will steady you.—Give her her tiara and scarf,—if she has set her heart on dancing in the next scene;" adding, in a lower tone to her miserable attendant, "Humour her; or it may become a fixed raving madness."

The poor creature, parched with burning thirst, desperately clutched the glass and drained its contents. The narcotic must have been of no common strength, or her bodily exhaustion must have been great; for, after groping distressfully here and there for a few instants, like a blind person, and making one or two harsh but half-

audible attempts to speak, she fell back insensible.

“She must be got home,” said the man with the scarred face; “and her husband must be sent to,” he added, with a look, dark, rather than betraying concern.

The old woman, who had neither truth nor falsehood ready for any emergency—maundered and protested. It would be as much, she declared, as her life was worth.—Her niece would never forgive her when she came to herself. Count Foltz would never forgive her! *Ach!* everybody was so hard on her!

“Then Count, who did you say?—Foltz?—answers for your niece here? It must be done, I tell you.—I will not take the responsibility of deceiving Einstern, and fortunately I know where to find him!—“Yes,” thinking aloud, as he wrote a few rapid words on a leaf of paper—“he will be beholden to me; and not for the first time either.—Now get everything together.

We must remove her while we can, and she is quiet. Where are you living?"

Still Aunt Claussen hesitated.

"If you will not tell me, you shall tell one of the police."

She grumbled as she muttered the required words — bewildering herself with a selfish cowardice for the wrath she was sure to draw down.

"*Ach!* what a wretched, wretched journey!—what an end of my poor dove's prospects!—He will kill her when he knows!"

"Are you ready?—Have you any servant below?" said the physician, throwing open the door of the dressing-room.

"Surely — surely, at the stage-door!" answered the woman incoherently, bundling together the treasure and trumpery belonging to her niece; who was still insensible. "And where is everybody? There is no one about. What a horrible noise!"

The corridor was deserted—the entire

service of the theatre having huddled itself together behind the curtain, in order to listen to the particulars of the reckoning that was passing betwixt an infuriate public and a caterer for their good will accused of tricking.—Under cover of the riot, poor Marie was half carried, half supported through the filthy passages, and down the crooked stairs, with none to question her departure. “For Heaven’s sake!” cried Aunt Claussen, bent, it seemed, on keeping up the deception, “call for Signora Morgiana’s servant.—He will not answer to any other name.”

The functionary thus called did not instantaneously answer. In the interim, the foreign physician had time, in the office of the stage door-keeper, to write, direct, and despatch a note.

“Coming up!” cried a voice at the door. “Stand by.—You really must not come in, sir, the Lady is so very ill. Now, if you please, my Lord. . . .” And Dr. Mondor, thus

adjured, came forward, with the helpless burthen half in his arms, and her little less helpless relative close behind. The servant held the door of the little carriage open. The light was full on the faces of both men.

They recognised one another: though the man with the scar had altered the garniture of his visage before his arrival in England, and much of it was now uncovered, which in the Munich days had been overgrown. The other, however, did not stir till the women were in the carriage,—and the physician's foot was on the step. Then he said quietly, "I must speak to you at once, Adalbert Einstern, or whoever you please to be called now. Drive home!" to the charioteer—"I will be there as soon as you," and the door was shut, and the carriage gone.

"I tell you I will speak to you, so surely as my name is Meshek,—I had a fancy it might be you, after all—and so I mentioned



it at the Embassy. You had better come away, and make no noise :” and jostling his way through the crowd, now pouring from the theatre and full of its affairs—keeping the while a grasp of iron on the elbow of the other, whom the neighbourhood of this man seemed to paralyse as with a fascination—Meshek and the miscreant crossed among the carriages which filled the wide street:—and disappeared in the quiet darkness of Suffolk-place.

“ Now, sir,” said the stage-door-keeper to Count Foltz, who had been charging that entrance,—and not finally in vain,—by the exhibition of gold—“ what Lady’s address was it you wanted ?”

## CHAPTER XI.

## HARRINGTON VILLAS.

MANY a day before "The Glass of Fashion" began its shining course to run,—almost from the beginning of this century, Brompton has been a neighbourhood frequented by actors, singers, and dancers,—a superstition being attached to its climate, which is sure to attract those who cross the Channel, under shadowy terrors of fogs. The house to which Charles and Doctor Orelus were bound—so bran-new that it was not easy to discover—was a separate villa ; in a lane off

the main road:—almost the last solitary house of an outlying district.

So dead and deserted did the neighbourhood seem,—that the two were tempted to imagine they had been misdirected, and to forbear attempting to announce themselves, till, on looking up, behind a cloudy curtain something moved,—the pale flame of a candle, telling of the presence of a watcher.—The address given them had been freshly painted on the gate-post.—This must be the house. The gate of the little court-yard was open: and, with a hand which trembled with fever, passion, and expectation, Charles rang the bell, which sounded loud at that dead hour.—A shuffling of feet on the staircase was heard: and, on the other side of the door, a voice which neither recognised, speaking in German. “Who is there?”

“Lives Madame Einstern here?” said Doctor Orelus, putting himself forward.

“*Ach!* yes! God be thanked, if you are a doctor. Is that Meshek with you?”

was the answer, and bolt and chain were undone; and a scared-looking woman, with a filthy candle in her hand, presented herself at the door.

Charles knew her again; the woman who had made her way to his wife that morning in Vienna, when he had introduced Count Foltz to her. Who else might be in the house?—Aunt Claussen recollected him too—for she gave back with a scream.

“Where is she?” cried the Prodigy, made none the more forbearing by the name called on by her. “Where is my wife? Orelus! I call you to witness . . . .”

“O, be still! be still?” cried the woman, in an agony of honest fear.—“She is at last asleep, after those terrible fits. . . . *Ach!* they are brutes in this country—and to be left alone in the house, with nothing in it, it is horrible? Tread very quietly.”

The villa was so tiny, that as the doors on each side of the narrow passage were staring

open—a neglected candle was seen smouldering away in the parlour, and the fierce glance of the Prodigy must have acquainted him with the presence of any one disposed to step aside.—But no such person was there: as Aunt Claussen had said. The two women were left alone in the house—the young wife flung on the bed: a truly pitiable spectacle.

That she had been flung there in haste and confusion was evident, as also, that there had been no one to take order or to minister to her comfort.—The floor of the room was littered with shreds of gauze and scraps of paper. Tossed down, beside a common bonnet and shawl, in which the little dog had coiled itself to sleep, were a tiara, a pair of bracelets—two tiny satin slippers, and other paraphernalia of a dancer's stage attire.—On the table were a few glasses—a druggist's bottle half filled with some dark mixture—a cup and a

spoon—a bottle of beer uncorked, and one or two Savoy biscuits tumbled out on a cracked plate.

Marie breathed heavily.

There had been rouge on her face, and some white colour, which had been only half washed away.—The story of the past night's miserable adventure was in part told, before a word was spoken. Yet it was hard for Charles to restrain his passion, and to moderate his voice, as he cried, "What wretched work is this?"

"*Ach!* great Heaven!" whimpered the old woman, "who could have expected such a calamity, after all they had promised her, and the great hopes they had held out! So sure she was of making a delightful surprise for you to-morrow morning!—So afraid of your knowing a minute too soon!—Yet she saw you every day; she would go and sit before your hotel in a *fiacre* till you came out:—and once, when some ladies came out too, she was beside herself with

passion—and I had to hold her!—She has never been well since,—and no wonder, rehearsing in the morning, among those French people—a parcel of savages! They were determined to destroy her.—She heard them say from the first that she knew no more how to dance than an old shoe.—And we had not money enough to bribe and to keep them quiet. How should we?”

“Who brought you here?” said Charles, in a hoarse and suppressed whisper.—“Who are you with here?—Whose house is this?”

“They took it for us at the theatre, before we came—as Marie wished to be out of the way, till all was over.—Such a wretched place! and that Meshek knowing nothing of London—though he pretended all the way we came that he had been here half a hundred of times.—And now, he will have lost himself—there can be no doubt of it—in place of bringing us a doctor.”

“Who was it, then, that sent for me? Who wrote *this*?” and he thrust in her face the crushed paper, the writing on which was now, indeed, scarcely legible.

“I cannot tell you,—I do not know,” was the woman’s terrified answer:—and this time Aunt Clausen did not lie.

“Then you were not expecting me! Whom is it that you were expecting?”

“O, speak more gently,” said the grave voice of Doctor Orelus in his ear. “The poor thing hears you.”

His voice had aroused Marie. She stirred uneasily in the bed, and made a motion as if trying to rise—moaning to herself, “O, I want rest! I want rest!” and the next instant, more loudly, “O, I want water! O, I want wine! I must have wine to steady me before I begin! or how can I dance? O, be quick, aunt! be quick!”

“I am with you, love! I am here with you!” said her husband, raising her on his arm, and steadying his voice with a desperate



effort. “ You will be better soon.—Orelius! What is to be done? Give me some water!” and he put it to her lips,—she turned and opened her eyes languidly.

“ O, Charles! my own Charles, is it you?” and she felt about him, again and again, as if still uncertain. “ What are you doing here, at this time of the day? I know now. Make them play in time!. How can I dance unless they play in time?—But you don’t want me to dance—or anybody, save that fat Miss Minna Twiese! I saw her! Yes! I saw her with you! You false, cruel—cruel creature! Take it away from my head! Take it away from my head!” and she lifted her hands powerlessly to her forehead, and fell back again into that melancholy stupor.

“ What is to be done? Is there nothing in the house?” said Doctor Orelius, trying to rouse the elder woman, who continued whimpering and rocking herself to and fro.

“ Nothing, sir. We took our meals always near the theatre; and Meshek has not come

back yet!—*Ach!* Heaven! and it is near two o'clock.”

“And the carriage has gone!—We must wait till daylight, and then I will find my way back to London.—If she will only sleep, Charles, that may be the best.”—And Doctor Orelus drew his old pupil away from the wreck of his beautiful wife, and removed the light, placing it where it should not disturb her.—There was already some hint of pale dawn on the sky, across the open ground.

“And now, shall I not go to bed?” said that worthless, helpless old woman.—“*Ach!* Heaven! and I want rest, too!”

“Rest!” cried Charles, made almost furious by her selfishness.—Come with me, below stairs,—I will know at once what brought you here! I will have your whole abominable story out of you. Orelus, if the slightest change takes place, let me know.—So long as she is still, there is no time lost.—Come with me,” and grasping Aunt Claussen’s arm with a force she could not

resist, Charles compelled her into the little parlour.—“Sit down and tell me what all this means.—Can you swear to me that there has been no one here save yourselves—that you have come to London alone?”

“*Ach!* yes!—except with that Meshek—whom we engaged with at Dresden. He was to have gone with us to Vienna. I thought you knew all about it! Marie told me” (with some little quickening of confidence) “that you knew all:—that you knew she was engaged to dance at Vienna.”

“Marie! You are putting off your own lies on her! If you hope for pardon—if you hope to lie quiet in your grave!—tell me the truth! tell me as much truth as you can, poor debased creature. For Becker’s sake, I will forgive you!”

*Ach!* how could she know what she told—truth or untruth—terrified as she had been last night, and with that poor dove lying in such a state above-stairs. If her niece died, however, God be thanked! no

one could blame her aunt! the only blood relation left her in the world!—But he had known—*had* he not known?—that Marie had refused to come to England with him because she had engaged to appear in the ballet at Vienna.—Her aunt had been delicate, she confessed, and it was a pity!—and had not presented herself to him at Dresden—because he had been so munificent to her family; to her poor dear nephew—and her unfortunate brother!—She was sure she could not be welcome to him,—but she had been always her niece’s best friend—and had always had her confidence!

“Marie engaged herself to dance at Vienna!—in her state, about to become a mother!”

*Ach!* Heaven! what did he mean?—That her niece was about to become a mother?—No (and the miserable woman kissed a dirty cross that she drew from her breast), nothing of the kind could be known to her.—And if it could be proved that Marie *had* made such an invention

a pretext to linger behind and surprise him—was her aunt to blame?

“Surprise me! What did you mean, then, by telling me you thought I knew she was staying behind, to dance?”

*Ach!* she really did not know what she said. There was one way at looking at everything, and there was another.—But she *did* know that her niece could never have had the slightest hope of becoming a mother. “Or else,” said she—becoming indignant in her virtuous experience—“should I have let her dance?—I who have been a dancer myself.”

“Deceit on deceit,” muttered the poor fellow—inexperienced in such ways—within himself. “But what has your being here to do with dancing at Vienna?”

That was glibly explained.—The Austrian manager had been applied to by the great London manager, in distress how to rid himself of a member of his company, whose exactions were becoming too serious. Marie’s

engagement had been transferred from Vienna to London—and, “*Ach!* Heaven! how she rejoiced in surprising you! because she knew you wanted money!—and because she was so proud to earn some for herself—and so she would have surprised you!—if it had not been for that French party in the theatre.—They would not yield her one instant’s chance. They saw how beautiful she was! They began to hiss her from the very first moment! I know what it is!—I was a dancer myself—and so she lost courage, poor dove! and she could hardly get to the side-scenes, when she fainted.—I don’t know what we should have done, had not there been by chance a celebrated physician on the stage:—Dr. Mondor is his name.—He gave her something, and it quieted her.—He was gone before we could thank him—and that Meshek promised to bring us a doctor—and so I got her home. And there he is, at last” (the sound of wheels grating on the pebbles making itself

heard); "I will run and let him in before he rings."

Charles was close behind her.—The light in the sky was beginning to be a trifle less indistinct.—There was a carriage: and out of it already were two persons—and one of the two was Count Foltz.

## CHAPTER XII.

## THE MAN WHO HAD LOVED HER.

“ YOU have saved me trouble, Count Foltz—though, doubtless you did not expect to find me here!”

“ God be thanked that I do!” was the eager answer. “ I was at my wits’ ends where to find you—but I dared wait no longer, for her sake. This is Doctor ——,” and he named one of the medical celebrities of London.—“ Is Madame Einstern worse?”

“ Which is the way?” said the physician, speaking German, and obviously possessed with the idea that the case was not one to



be trifled with.—“Where is her woman servant?”

“I am here with her,” was Aunt Clausen’s answer.

The physician threw a sharp and anything but respectful look at the woman. “Come with me, then,” he said; “I shall want to ask you some questions. Not you, sir—I will see you after.”

“But you should know——” and Charles whispered a word in the physician’s ear.

“The more need, then, that no time should be lost, and that I should see her alone”—and led by Aunt Claussen, he went up-stairs.

The sound was heard of a chair drawn across the floor, and Doctor Orelus came staggering down, hardly able longer to make head against sleep. Then the door closed above.

“I could not stay away, Einstern!” cried the young Austrian, almost with tears of earnestness, grasping the other’s hand ere

it could be prevented—"I have done you wrong enough as it is!—Forgive me! forgive me! for her sake."

"Forgive you!" cried poor Marie's husband, haughtily.—"You make a strange request,—at a strange time,—in a strange way.—I suppose you fancy that because I am a musician and not a soldier, my wife is nothing to me, and that you can carry everything off with a few smooth words!—But my father was as noble as yours: and I can fight you, though I am a pianoforte player. You do well to be afraid, and to try to make peace!—I will not strike you now,—here in my own house!—Or, I am wrong, perhaps.—Is it yours? Tell me!"

The Prodigy's insulting tone was not lost on the young Austrian: who was no coward. But for the presence of Doctor Orelus there might have been immediate mischief.

"Charles!—Count Foltz!—with Death, for aught we know, up-stairs, restrain your passions here!—Is there not some mistake

between you?—Is there not something to be explained?”

“To be explained!—This man’s presence here,—at this hour of the night—and he to help! and he to give orders! . . . There can be only one explanation!”

“O, less loud! less loud!” interposed the clergyman.—“Your wife can hear every word that passes here. Think of her before your own passion!”

“As you loved her, and as she loved you,” said Count Foltz—“listen to me!—I have been to blame in doing her a pleasure—yet who could refuse her anything?—but never was any man so faithfully loved as you are by your wife;—and that she has not wronged you, I swear to you by my own mother’s honour.”

There was a sincerity in the speaker’s accent, beyond the unintentional reproach in his words, “*As you loved her,*” which modified the tone in which the Prodigy put the plain question,—“How is it, then, that my

wife is here in London : hiding from me—and with you ?”

“Hiding from you, I know : and I have been to blame—but not with me!—Hiding from me, too!—Had it not been so—had I known how or where to find her, do you think she should have been deserted in such a wretched place as this?—I had to pay before I could get the address where she lived, at the Opera House to-night, after I saw her driven away from the door!—I had reason to think she was in bad hands.—Could I help, then, breaking my promise to her, and coming to find you?—When you were not to be found, could I help bringing a physician, after what they had told me in the theatre?—And what a hole for them to have put her in !”

The direct and earnest concern, working in every feature of the young Austrian's face, gave weight to his words—though they increased the listener's perplexity.—“Did you not bring my wife to London,

then?—Did you not come with her?—Why did you keep out of my way else?”

“I will tell you,” said the other, “in three words.—Because I loved her! Now, do you fancy I am frightened of you, and am lying to get out of a scrape?”

Charles would have sprung up, with a violent and menacing gesture:—had not Doctor Orelus forcibly restrained him. “You must hear this gentleman to an end.—You must hear all, and quietly.”

“Yes,” repeated Count Foltz.—“I loved her, I tell you, from that first night in the theatre at Vienna: from that morning afterwards when you presented me to her.—And then, I will tell you plainly, I thought that you had made an artist’s marriage, if you were married at all!—It was put about among us that you were not married to her!—Persons who had known you when you were with the Prince Chenzikoff said so.—If this was the case, why should not I try my luck? I do not pretend to be

better than other fellows.—Your fancy for her, I thought, was sure to pass—run after as you were by all the women.”

“He is long,” said Charles, listening. “Hark! surely . . .”

“No, it is not her voice,” interrupted the other,—“and I must have a moment or two more.—Then, at Kaisersbad—you recollect Kaisersbad?—every one could see you were tired of her.—The Schilkenstein said so, if once, a thousand times.—Well, all this was so much encouragement. One day, I let her see I thought so . . .”

“O, young man! young man!” began Doctor Orelus, gravely,—“can you look us in the face, and tell us of your bad doings?”

“Do you fancy I am afraid of him?—Yes, I can tell you,—for her sake! And I can tell you of the utter downright contempt with which she cut me short before I had finished! No princess could be more insolent.—‘You must be mad! you must be

drunk, Count Foltz!' she cried (I hear her voice in my ears now), 'before you could dare hint at such things to Charles Ein-stern's wife! I despise you too much to tell him! for I have no need of any defence!—There are plenty of other women in Kaisersbad for you to buy!'—I had taken her in a nosegay.—Heavens! to see the look with which she stood up and, trampled on it!—I tell you she made me afraid of her.—If I had stayed two minutes longer, she would have done herself a mischief.—I did not see her again at Kaisersbad."

Charles had buried his forehead in his hands—not only because it burned and throbbled with pain, but also to hide the blush which covered it, as he thought, "This man *did* love her."

"I never thought to see her again," continued Count Foltz, like one careless of the effect his words produced.—"I did not know where she might be—till the other day at Cologne.—I met her on the stairs

at the Rheinberg, in bad company—an old woman with her, well known about the theatres of Vienna; and a cunning Jew fellow, who called himself her theatrical agent and secretary, as ready to take a bribe as those people always are.”

“Meshek? . . .”

“Yes, that is his name.”

“We know too much about him,” said Doctor Orelus.—“He had been connected, and not creditably, with some of her family.”

“So I gathered. . . . What was I to think *now*?—I had no difficulty in getting the story out of Meshek. You and she had not agreed, he said; and she had for some time been determined to resume her old profession; and had been practising at Dresden, under engagement to appear at the Vienna Opera House.—It turned out, that on the moment of her starting for Dresden, she had received a letter acquainting her that her services were made over to the manager at London; where her appear-



ance must take place immediately—‘Unless,’ said the scoundrel, ‘some unforeseen circumstance make it worth her while to alter her plans.’—But she was very difficult, he warned me, to deal with; as well as out of health. — He would not for the world she should know he had told me so much as he had told me.

“ Well, I sent in my name to her; putting on my card ‘*en route* to London,’ and asking if she would see me. . . . I was kept waiting an hour before any answer came back. —Then it was, that she would receive Count Foltz for ten minutes.

“ I saw, by a glance, that she had been in a terrible state of excitement.—The other woman would have left her when I went in.—‘No, Aunt Claussen, I wish you to stay.—Now, Count Foltz, will you tell me why you asked to see me?’—There was that fierce, commanding look in her face again! —I durst not allude to what Meshek had just told me; so I said, that having met her

on the stairs, I simply wished to know, if she had any message or other commands for her husband, in London. I would see him immediately on my arrival.

“‘*Ach!*’—broke in the old woman, ‘is the gentleman going to London? Could we not all go together? That would be delightful!’

“Your wife darted a furious look at her aunt; and bade her leave the room, since she was not to be trusted.—‘I will speak with you alone, Count Foltz,’ she said.

“I told her, when we were alone, that she was perfectly right;—that the people about her were not to be trusted,—that if she would only allow me to be of use . . .

“‘I will,’ was her answer, interrupting me, with such a smile!—I mistook it, however, when she asked me to promise—to swear on the word of a gentleman—that I would render her the important service she required. For the moment, she had no one

about her to rely on, I had told her so. Might she rely on me?

“I promised—I swore.—Can you wonder?”

“‘That is right,’ she said, springing up from the sofa, and clapping her hands!—‘Then my secret is safe! You have promised to keep it.—Then you will not let any living creature know I am in London—you will not go near my husband, or let him know you are there, till after I have danced at the Opera.—I am to dance in ten days; and he does not dream of such a thing.—You could not keep it from him! He thinks I am safe in Dresden! Poor fellow! I cannot let him work so hard, and not take my share.—He would not permit it, if he knew. (You see, I *do* trust you.) It would half kill him: so I have changed my name. It will be only for a few days,—and then!—and then it will be too late to hinder me!’—And she danced round

the room, perpetually stopping herself short to say—‘You have sworn, Count Foltz.’

“I was fairly entrapped—but I had promised—and who knew what might happen?—‘And now that I am safe in your honour,’ she continued, with her princess air, ‘I will not detain you;—for I need not point out to you, that while I am alone and in concealment, I can admit no visitors.—You will make no attempt to follow, or to find me in London.—Accident has put you in possession of the dearest secret of my life!—I do not rely on your oath,—but on your honour;’ and she bade me good evening—and fairly bowed me out.—I left Cologne that very night.—Since then I have not seen your wife—save for a few moments one morning in the Park—when she would hardly allow me to speak to her—till to-night, at the theatre.—I could do nothing but keep my word; so I have been living at Richmond—in no very enviable position, as you will believe—though how could one

have foreseen such a terrible business?—Einstern, I admire, I love your wife—but I have not wronged you, save in keeping her secret—and you, now, know to the utmost all that has passed between us.”

That is almost as terrible a moment when passion is suddenly balked, as when the cataract leaps into the abyss.—But there was no time for Charles to be aware of the extent to which he had been stunned by the plain, yet not passionless tale he had just heard—still less to try it by such knowledge of facts and characters as he possessed.—Though the floor seemed to reel beneath him, as he rose, aware of the tears in the eyes of Count Foltz—aware of his frank outstretched hand—he had to recal himself to instant composure. The physician was in the room, looking grave.—“Is my wife seriously ill?” said Charles.

“Very,” was the reply: “and, for the moment, it is impossible to see my way. Till she recovers entirely from the effect of

the medicine given to her, yonder woman informs me, at the theatre, I can hardly form an idea what we have to meet.—I could not disturb her too much—but once or twice when she spoke, and looked as if she wanted somebody—I tried to ask her a question or two—but could get no answer.—Her pulse is in a sad state of irritation; and there seems to be unusual bodily exhaustion.—For the moment, nothing is to be done, save to wait, and to keep her as quiet as possible. But she should have better attendance. That woman would have given her the rest of the opiate that was in the bottle, to keep her quiet.—I must test it.—There is something stronger than mere laudanum.—I must see what it is! One is no match for these foreign quacks—and this was the very man who killed Lord Caldermere.—I do not wonder he did not come to see the effect of his medicine.—Shall I send you a nurse, Herr Einstern?—And she ought to have more

comforts about her!—I shall be back in a few hours.”

“If you will graciously let me go with you into London,” said Doctor Orelus,—“two of her countrywomen shall be with her as soon as possible:—my wife, who is used to sickness—and a young friend of ours.—*Ach!* if these English distances of yours were not so unmanageable,”—and the good man would have lost ten manageable English minutes in bemoaning the fact, had not the physician, more prompt after his kind, cut the matter short. As it was, the divine returned to say, “Also, comes the gentleman with us?” casting a look of some uneasiness towards Count Foltz.

“No,” said the other,—“I will walk into town; but I am coming.”

“Walk! it is a league at least,” was the comment of the Rector, as he spread himself in the carriage by the side of the physician.—“And permit me, honoured sir,—about

that poor lady. I fear she is in greater danger, because she shall become a mother?"

"She become a mother!—It's a dream! Yonder old woman (more like a procuress she is, than any decent person's relation) confessed that she had instructed the niece so as to enable her to set up the pretence. There is no chance of the kind there never has been; but the people who could be taken in by it, must have known nothing of the matter."

"Do you think she will recover?"

"I fear! if she do,—she will not recover her reason.—There has been madness in the family, I find. But there is no need of troubling that poor boy (he's hardly a man yet) with such an affliction as that.—He wants some one to take care of him, himself."



## CHAPTER XIII.

## DAY DAWN.

CHARLES EINSTERN did, indeed, stand in need of care. There was fever in every drop of his blood: there was irritation in every pore of his skin. There was a storm brewed of every conceivable hope, fear, memory, and self-reproach, mingling as in a wicked witch-dance, careering through his brain; and withal, an exaggerated sensitiveness to every passing detail; as he took up his watch by the wreck of Becker's sister—now stretched in the bed: drawing her breath sorrowfully—and from time to

time, mechanically opening her eyes—poor, dreary eyes which took note of nothing.

Yes, to this his dream had come! to this the great mistake of his life! to this his fierce self-assertion, which had seemed so generous! Could it have been, also, a little selfish? He would display himself—he would bear down obstacles—and be bounteous—and revenge himself on those who had thwarted him.—He would make the happiness of another living creature.—And there before him lay the result—the answer.—As he sat by her bed—Aunt Claussen twitching in her chair, with efforts to keep awake, and forbidden to stir from the spot by his stern face—how everything came back to him that regarded that ill-starred, wayward creature!—every turn of Marie's temper,—every freak of her jealousy,—every instance of her undisciplined, idolatrous love. And with these *would* recur the question: “Have I not been to blame? Did I not do by her what *they* would have done by

me?—Did I not thwart her in the dearest wish of her life—all because of my own vanity?—Why was I to play—and why was she *not* to dance?”—He tried to pacify himself with the answer: “It was Becker’s doing.—*He* would not have let her dance.” But then came the thought (for Charles had within himself the very soul of truthfulness) that he had not followed, but habitually overruled Becker. The poor fellow’s death had been in part owing to a suggestion of his.—Ah! how hard it is not to be morbid—not to be over-subtle in questioning the past,—when a man, be he genius or not, has hidden during years, months, days, even, such a secret as the one which had burst on Einstern that evening, when the young husband and wife were walking under the pine-trees on the short thymy turf of Kreuth,—and when that secret is only one among others of a prematurely entangled life!

Further, that wreck on the bed was not to

be seen without a sudden and fearful glance back to the night at Munich, and to the evil genius who had brought the two together, under pretext of service. Must it not have been for a reality of revenge? The story which Justin had imperfectly told him, derived<sup>1</sup> from their mother, with all her reserves and colourings, received a strange meaning and verification from every experience of his own.—He had been marked out, and followed up, by a miscreant, from that eventful evening of his life—of Becker's death!—The wretch had included him in a great scheme: of which his mother had been in part one victim—and of which that brilliant, incomplete, perishing creature, might be another.—The death of Lord Caldermere had been hastened by Dr. Mondor.—Was that of his wife to come from the same hand? “And it *might*” (so ran the ghastly thought), “because he could not know that I did not

love her!"—If the quack had really meant service to poor Marie, what could be the meaning of his unaccountable disappearance?

Then, rose the question how far the miscreant had instigated his wife's flight to London?—how deeply his hand had been in every proceeding of her family, since he had reappeared—and every step of the painful ground of doubt and difficulty which the Prodigy had travelled over on the morning of his return to London from Blackchester was retraced;—and, with some of these, curiosity to ascertain how far Meshek was mixed up with the affair.—He did not appear; and Aunt Claussen bewailed his absence every quarter of an hour, because he had money of theirs.—But Aunt Claussen had been already proved guilty of so many lies, that from her nothing could be gathered deserving a moment's trust.

The day was not long in breaking: and

as the paltry candle died out—extinguished by the fresher light of the dawn—the haggard misery of the sick-chamber became more and more evident—every detail seeming to pierce like an acute spear, one whose nerves were so over-wrought, that he was unable to admit possible comfort, or to plan relief.—Scarcely knowing what he did, yet cautiously, Charles opened the window to let in the blessed air.

He was startled by the balmy freshness, which the neighbourhood of London had not yet tainted—by the tender and rapidly glowing yellow light—as it fell across a flat of market-gardens, from behind a ridge of ragged trees, which the builders had doomed. He was startled by a sight at the corner of the lane without an outlet,—which brought back an odd thought of the flags on the Lower Pavement.—It was merely a man leaning against the rails and smoking.

The man—so breathlessly quiet was yet the hour—had heard the window opening,

and he turned sharply, and approached a few steps. "Is there any change? Is she still asleep?"

"Count Foltz! There still?"

"Here still. You see," was the other's light answer; "what would have been the good of going into London before the houses are open? And who could tell but you might want a messenger? So I thought I would wait,—at least, till that Meshek came back."

Who can wonder that such a simple act of thoughtful kindness drew tears from the eyes burning with fever of the miserable watcher, over his broken dream?—It had been a matter of course; for every one knew that Count Foltz had not the smallest capacity. If he had, he might not have owned his love for Einstern's wife to her husband.—And now he stood there, serious enough: but to all appearance, none the worse for his vigil.—"Don't mind me," he said; "unless I can be of any use. I knew that

scoundrel would play her some trick :” and, as if it were to avoid conversation, or being thanked, he began to whistle the “*Rosen ohne Dornen*” waltz, and moved beyond the reach of Einstern’s voice.

Presently, the day began to waken ; and some change was observable in the invalid. She became, not more conscious, but more restless.—The effects of the narcotic might be passing off, and then some recollection of time and place might return.—She began to beat with her little hand on the head of her bed, as if it had been a tambourine, and to sing in a shrill false voice, at which in merrier days the two had laughed, a tune of her husband’s making,—and to rock her head to and fro, in time.—Suddenly she raised herself and cast her eyes about the room, — but the eyes, bright and wide open as they were, took small note of any object.

“ Are you better, love ?” said Charles, ap-



proaching her tenderly. "Try to sleep a little more. It is very early yet."

"Not to please you, Count Haugwitz," was her harsh and voluble answer. "Nor you, Count Foltz.—No harm can happen so long as people are awake—and Herr Einstern will expect to find me when he comes back—though why he must always be walking and wasting his time with that vulgar red-faced girl!—O Charles! where are you?—It is cruel, cruel usage! I have never given you any cause.—Jacob knows I have never given you any cause—and he is ready enough to find fault with me, when there is no cause.—I must, I will get up and be dressed:" and Marie would have suited the action to the word, had not her husband prevented her with his encircling arms—only just strong enough to restrain the strength of delirious fever. Aunt Claussen remained throughout the scene worse than useless—able to do nothing save to whimper

her wonder at that Meshek for never coming back. "And he has carried off all our money."

"You shall go and find him, wretched woman!" cried Charles, irritated past all patience; "and not come back, too!—But for your accursed meddling, this would never have happened."

The Prodigy's raised voice provoked Marie's distress. "Who are you? What are you that are holding me! Because you are to dance with me, do you fancy that you are to take liberties with Charles Einstern's wife?—that you are to keep him away from me?—that I cannot defend myself?—Let me go, I tell you!—Let me go, I tell you! or else—*What?* you will not?"—and with that, the weapon was withdrawn from her bosom by a struggle, for the violence of which he was unprepared: and stricken by Semler's niece, as he had been by Semler, the unhappy Prodigy, faithful to the last in his ward over Becker's sister, relaxed his

grasp, and fell from beside her down on the floor, heavily wounded; perhaps mortally. What did she care?

The screams of her helpless aunt were shriller than her own:—and they brought to their immediate aid the lazy watcher at the corner—poor Marie Becker's one real lover—Count Foltz.

## PART THE SEVENTH.

ODDS AND ENDS.



### CHAPTER I.

MISTRESS WHITELAMB IN LONDON.

THE Lord of Eternal Rest be thanked, who, even when disease lies heavy on body and soul, can still temper sickness and pain with oblivion.—The sleep of the Prodigy was no real sleep, such as the reaper knows after his long day's work in the sun; such as <sup>it</sup>relieves the watch of the sailor, till his call shall rouse him again to duty;—but it was, nevertheless, a pause, a forgetfulness—a respite—a chasm bridged over:—and

when the poor feeble body rose up, poorly and feebly, and the poor feverish mind awaked,—weak as were body and mind, there was still a feeling of some calm and relief.

“ Ah ! the old ring,” said the boy. “ Alas ! Daphne !—Colonel Vandaleur, again.”

“ Yes, my boy, again ! There is your brother, too.—Mr. Justin, I will not let you talk to him ; but, you see, Charles will know us all, presently.”

“ Me, too ?” cried a cheery little voice. “ O, Charles ! my dear boy—to see you, and to see you sitting up and better, is such a treat !”

Yes, by the side of the elbow-chair into which he had been lifted, there was not only Colonel Vandaleur, sharp, serious, yet not unkind ; not only Justin ; but also—a wonder of wonders—as neat as if she had been only just making one of her redoubtable chicken-pies on the Lower Pavement—who, but Mistress Galatea Whitelamb ?—In spite of

all her neatness, however, she was crying like a child—"like an idiot," Miss Ann Ogg would say,—“but, bless the boy!” ran her song, “what a treat to see him sitting up again, there — and his mother hardened against him, as is the case!”

“O you, capital, dear old Gatty!” faltered the invalid.

“O but, you should notice Mr. Justin first.”—The elder brother of Charles loitered in the shadow, till he was put forward by Colonel Vandaleur; and then, Mistress Galatea was suppressed, since — considering that as the first return of Charles to consciousness,—it was to be feared she might have warbled too long.

He was very weak; and his memory, it seemed, for the moment staggered;—but he was aware that friends were around him—friends besides that devoted adherent, the boy Gottlieb.—The first thing he did, was to ask for the day of the week; but what week?—He could hardly fix his mind on

the answer. Perhaps they put him off without satisfying him : and he sank back, and dozed—it may be, contented to wait—because, as consciousness returned, there returned, too, a sort of dim presentiment that bad news was to be heard and trouble was in waiting. He had never loved his wife, and therefore, not strangely, the impression that her presence was missing seemed to dawn upon him, remotely as it were, from a distance. — It might be cold, it might be cowardly; but he shrunk from asking for tidings concerning the Brompton house, and lay wondering on what had been, and on what might be, while quiet feet trotted to and fro.—It was clear that nothing German was in the sick-room, save Justin and Gottlieb : and on these two Colonel Vandaleur had managed to impose silence.

A day and a half passed (how many days he could not count) in this strange, dreamy plight :—the mind, however, beginning to be more and more astir, as the revival went

on.—The absence of Justin, for some hours at a time, began to be noticed:—then the splendour of a nosegay of flowers, “from the Countess Baltakis,” was Colonel Vandaleur’s account.—“She has not missed a day to come or send for these three weeks past; and she left these herself, yesterday, before she went out of town. Her endless voice would have killed you—but she has really been anxious about you; coarse creature though she is.”

“And I call that a bunch of grapes,” was Gatty’s complement to the story, advancing with her dimpled face lit up with satisfaction. “Now, pray taste two or three, Charles, do.”

“But I am not at Blackchester—how is it?”

“He means me, bless the boy! I saw his eyes following me up and down the room. Let us satisfy him by slow degrees.—You know, dear Charles——”

“Pray, dear Miss Whitelamb,” interposed



Colonel Vandaleur, "he has no strength to bear being too much talked to. Poor boy—he will need it all, when the news has to be told him."

"And so, dear sir, I should like to cheer him up a little, if I might have been allowed—though you know best: for laugh he would—yes, I know him of old—if he heard how, coming in that terrible railroad, when we got into those awful dark tunnels, I sat down in the bottom of the carriage, put my fingers in my ears, and said my prayers. But for Mr. Justin, I could never have gone through it—and the bare idea of ever going back makes me quiver.—Mr. Ogg, I am persuaded, will not believe it yet, that I am in London. And what would dear Mr. Smalley have said?—And so," sinking her voice to a whisper inaudible to the dull ears in the bed, "is the poor thing really given up—her mind, I mean?"

"Nothing can be worse than to-day's account: and we must prepare ourselves—

to prepare him, when he asks after her.—But you see *his* mind is not clear.—He has neither missed his wife—nor his mother—and small matter” (was ground out between Colonel Vandaleur’s teeth). “But, in any case, Lady Caldermere has quite too much on her hands to care if she be missed or not.—Gad! she’s the same woman, for all she has gone through, as she was the day when we came all down together, with that dear boy there, to Ostend—and, if cunning could do it” (here again he spoke like one thinking aloud), “she would not be dispossessed of Caldermere—no matter who owned the place.”

“Dear me, sir,—dear! dear!—but after such prosperity; and when I think of those two outriders, whom I was always afraid to speak to,—and the Caldermere desserts, when there was nobody at dinner but Mr. Justin and our two selves!—I was talking about them to Susanna Openshaw,—only ten minutes before Mr. Justin came tearing

up that day, like a wild creature, with the news of the dear boy's seizure.—I am sorry for Lady Caldermere;—though why her loss should turn her against her own flesh and blood, whom she used to profess to love so (and such a precious creature as he is), what power can fathom?"

"She never loved him really. She never really cared for anything save her own self and her own ambition.—She wanted to get on in life by playing off her boy——"

"What a thing, Colonel Vandaleur!"

"—and having failed, she is selfish and frivolous enough to blame him for what has happened to her. And now, like what she is,—since I will not understand any of her overtures (absolutely not a month a widow!)—I hear she intends to dispute every inch of my claim till the very last:—though Lord Caldermere was satisfied that he had not a shadow of a chance—and that was what killed him, really—that, and mistaken medical treat-

ment. Dr. Mondor is off, with his thousand pounds."

"And a shame too,—as I was saying to Susanna, that very express day.—Mr. Brudge has a very strong feeling on the subject. 'Any doctor,' he remarked to Mr. Ogg, the day after the inquisition (the examination, I mean), 'could order any patient to drink as much champagne as the patient wished—but is that practice?' And Mr. Brudge's belief is that he did not care whether my Lord got better or not.—And Miss Scatters, she thinks the same. Yet Mr. Brudge was the gentleman who brought Miss Ann Ogg through her pleurisy."

"Take my word for it, there is more in the matter than we know. But, provided the fellow gives nobody any more trouble—or any more medicine—we are well rid of him."

"And so Mr. Justin thinks also. He is longer at Brompton than usual:—and fancy his accepting to dine there, day after day,

off those unwholesome German messes.—  
But he prefers them.”

“ Ah! but you forget the German young  
lady . . . .”

“ Fie, sir,—though I don't like saying so  
to you!—and so lately as he was making  
up to Susanna—not that they could have  
ever been happy, had she . . . . Susanna  
is much improved from the prying child I  
recollect her. Might not she have been a  
comfort to Lady Caldermere now?”

## CHAPTER II.

## DISAPPEARANCE.

“GAD, sir!” said Colonel Vandaleur to Justin, “as this sad affair was to be, your brother may think himself fortunate that it happened in England, with real friends about him. So that that vulgar creature, the Countess Baltakis, *has* done some good: little though she meant it!—And, after all, she has shown feeling in her own way. Her man has been here, only half an hour ago—with all these flowers and fruit, sent up from the country, Mr. Bower.”

“And Count Foltz, too,” rejoined Justin,

whose unreadiness in response no commerce with life had improved—"has been like a brother on the occasion."

"Gad, sir! yes!—more's the pity, as she wounded them both, that they did not change hands.—I never encouraged Charles in his pianoforte playing,—as he will tell you: and once or twice he was high with me about it—but now I am as sorry as if the accident had happened to myself. Poor dear boy, he set such store on it!—There's no chance of the sinew coming to rights.—After all, it might have been his right hand.—He can put down music—if he can't play it. But now, Mr. Bower,—Baron Einstern I ought rather to call you,—that we are at ease as to his recovery, let us have some talk about other matters. What is to be done with your brother's wife?—Sooner or later he must be told of the hopeless state she is in. What a mercy that there is no chance of a child!—But it will kill him.—He doted on her so."

Justin could have set the other right—remembering the outburst of his brother's confidence; but while he was considering how far it would be right and loyal in him to undeceive the Colonel, the latter went on.

“Madness! incurable madness there was in the family, from the first. Every child in Tübingen knew that! And, on my honour, I never took so much pains to impress any one with anything—as I did to divert Charles from his fancy for her. Gad, sir! *his*, too, was a case of temporary insanity.”

“And he was terribly played upon,” said Justin. “Sir, you have been so true a friend to my poor brother, and so considerate throughout all this sad law business, that I feel as if I could not resist confiding to you our whole family misfortunes. I am satisfied that Charles was hurried into that marriage, by a man bent on ruining him. He tied my poor brother fast; and it was easy, with such a glorious, unsuspecting, chival-



rous nature. Doctor Orelus will tell you how Charles protected Becker, — Marie's brother!"

"I know—I could see that by what he let out when we were at Tübingen together."

"The man hates our family like an evil spirit. He made his way to Caldermere, not merely to enrich himself—but to injure my mother.—He succeeded only too well with Lord Caldermere, whose mind was not what it had been. When he was himself, he was a just man, however prejudiced—I am sure his death was hastened by the wild way in which that man treated him—and I verily believe on purpose—as part of his terrible schemes."

"Lord Caldermere was a strong man, but, as you say, obstinate to the very death.—But do you mean to tell me that yonder quack, Dr. Mondor, had anything to do with our Einstern's marriage?"

"The man was called Zuccaglio when he was in Prince Chenzikoff's family."

The Colonel got up, and began to tramp about the room, swinging his arms behind his back. “Gad, sir!—Charles ran headlong to meet mischief!—wrote to that very fellow from Tübingen, when he wanted to find the girl!—Tempted his fate, he did, with a vengeance! Gad, sir!—I see it all, yes—yes—yes.—A serpent! a real serpent!—What can have been his motive?”

“He was the doctor who got to poor Marie that night behind the scenes at the Opera—what he gave her was enough to unsettle the brain of any strong, healthy woman.—He was the person who summoned my brother to that Brompton house—with a villanous insinuation.—Poor Marie had had it in her mind to dance,—and Charles would not hear of it:—and so she planned to deceive him: and Dr. Mondor tried to make him believe she was false to him with Count Foltz.—He wrote, mind—from the theatre—see!—Ah, sir!—It is too shocking.—I

will now tell you whom I believe him to be.—An illegitimate son of my father's.—My mother says so."

"Lady Caldermere!—Does he know who his mother was?"

There was a moment of dead silence, which the elder man was the first to break—like the considerate gentleman he was—by changing the subject.—“But this does not bring us nearer a decision about that poor lunatic wife of your brother's.—Her German friends,—kind and indefatigable as they have been—cannot stay out of their own country for ever.—It stands to reason they can't.”

The Colonel did not know Justin's face well enough to understand a solid sort of a smile which passed behind—rather than over it.

“Gad, sir,” he drove on—“I honoured that young fresh-coloured girl, when I saw how she rattled out that abominable old

Claussen—I know *her* by heart!—aye, and searched her boxes first!—But she can't devote herself much longer.”

“Miss Minna Twiese,” interposed Justin, “has a true soul.”

The energetic Colonel started off again. “True or false will not settle our question. If this poor wife of your brother's is to have a chance of recovery, it will not be in Germany (excuse me, Baron Einstern). *That* is no country for mad people to get better in,—and, as I understand, she has no relations, save yonder old wretch—who would be always coming after her, and trying to make a livelihood out of her, somehow.—And, as to his being tied to her, the idea is preposterous—a fine fellow like that.—We must not hear of such a thing! He might come to me at once, if he were like other people—but, Gad, sir, your geniuses! And he will want to wander about, and to make love.—Why! how young, and how hand-

some he is—not fairly begun life yet;—and to make himself of consequence—real, musical consequence. That he can't do here—if twenty such women as the Countess Baltakis were to buy him for good and 'all. It's all a mere rage!—No, by Jove! he can't, sir! not in any way that would satisfy him.—And somehow, as I have accidentally been thrust into the midst of your family affairs—and as I love your brother, though he was a pianoforte player,—what I have to say is,—I will undertake that his wife shall be well cared for:—and here will be better than there.—There's Old Caldermere, for instance,—*I* shall not live at the great house, —I shall not sell it, for a while, but shut it up.—It's a palace, fit for a Mazarin,—but, as I say, there's Old Caldermere.—Your mother" (with studied respect), "I am told, is going abroad.—Miss Scatters, I think you said, means to build at Lockerby.—Gad, sir! she may be not so far wrong—except as to

building at her time of life!—So there the place is, I repeat, and, with all my heart, put at your disposal for the use of your brother—or rather for the use of his wife.”

“Sir, you are honourably generous,” said Justin—melted; though unable to express feeling, save in handsome, ceremonious language.

“Gad, sir,—nothing of the kind! I am what I am,—and your brother is what your brother is!—But now, as we are about it, tell me, — what has become of Dr. Mondor?—And, by the way, what has become of the man who brought over that poor creature to this country?—Since that night at the Opera!—(Gad, sir!—there has been more dirty work mixed up with that night than either you or I know—be satisfied of it!)—neither the one nor the other has been heard of.—Dr. Mondor’s luggage is packed up, and ticketed for Lisbon—and there it lies at Bevillon’s, and the bill not

paid—these three weeks.—The two were in confederacy, be sure.—He will give more trouble,—and so will the other man,—Meshek, the Jew.—But hush!—Charles is talking.—Go in.”

## CHAPTER III.

## THE EVIL GENIUS OF THE STORY.

BEVILLON'S HOTEL was not troubled by many inquirers for Dr. Mondor — the Countess Baltakis having given up a fancy which had for a week possessed her—namely, of travelling on the Continent, with the mysterious mediciner as her state physician.—“It's beyond all doubt, Kitty, that he drove our poor dear thing's wife mad, by what he poured down her throat that night at the Opera.—Let us be charitable, and hope it was a mistake. Yet Sir Matthew shakes his head about Lord Caldermere.—Doctors dare



not do more, my dear, one about another, or there would be no end of law and libel cases.—No, thank you! fancy his making an end of Baltakis, by giving him corrosive sublimate or burnt caustic, or something of the kind; and he might very easily, because Baltakis believes everything every doctor says, and never utters.”

But Dr. Mondor did not come back to Bevillon's;—and his name ran a fair chance of being forgotten, save by the cashier of that establishment, and the wretched Lady Caldermere, of all the persons of my story (severely stricken as some of them were) the most wretched,—because perverse, and not penitent, under her trials,—because nourishing, for the relief of her own conscience, a dark, vindictive spirit. She had long been encouraging herself to ascribe all the unhappiness and failure of her life to the wilfulness of her youngest son.—The scandal he had brought on her name!—The manner in which, as if on purpose, he had divided her

from Lord Caldermere! She had to thank her favourite that she was a beggared widow, dependent on the charity of Justin—Justin, with whom she had never, from the hour he was born, had anything in common.—And now there was to be an end of all the Prodigy's music; and he would come upon them to be a burden,—she saw it all clearly.—Yes, and that poor mad wife of his, too.

In the selfishness of her irritability, she allowed a part of feelings like these to escape in the presence of Mistress Whitelamb.—“Now, fie!—I say boldly, fie—cousin, Lady Caldermere! I am sorry your troubles have not made you more submissive. Shifting off the blame on him—the dear, generous being! It is not the part of a Christian. It is not the part of a mother—and you in weeds, too, which ought to make one meek: Mr. Ogg would agree with me!—I am afraid we must be two people after this!—And so I got up, Susanna,” was the conclusion of Cousin Gatty's account of the scene,—“for

who could bear it?—to let her see that she had sat longer than was welcome.—And glad I shall be when she leaves the neighbourhood—even though I shall never set foot within the gates of Caldermere again!”

Mistress Galatea might, peradventure, have been less irate, had she been aware of the extremity of the misery that was torturing her relative. To Lady Caldermere, the miscreant's disappearance, unaccounted for, brought such a terror, as none but the weak and guilty can feel. She was possessed with the idea that Adalbert was lying in wait somewhere or other, to do her some further mischief.—She did not feel her life safe so long as she was ignorant of his motions. He might be propitiated, it was true,—but she had no longer the means of doing so: and on such a hint being dropped in the presence of Miss Scatters, to whom, it was artfully suggested, Dr. Mondor was sure to feel inimical,—that fiery old north-woman, so far from expressing alarm, broke out into a

strain of contumely and defiance—“ He come where I am, troubling. — Let him ! I’ll soon show him what Abby Scatters has to say to yon scratched chafts of his !”

The same view was taken by Justin—though he was less animated in his phrases. On him, too, fell a large share of his mother’s displeasure. In one breath, my Lady reproached him bitterly for the turn which the great Caldermere suit was taking, though in the next she rejoiced that that old Border woman was not going to sit on the throne where she had queened it.—He had managed, she declared, to put her wrong with Colonel Vandaleur, who would otherwise, she was sure, have shown more consideration under the circumstances.—As it was, on all matters of business he communicated with her through his solicitors : and had been formally laconic from the moment when she had expressed herself as too utterly shattered in health and spirits to take part in tending the poor Prodigy. Here, once again, her old

favourite, and the interest he had inspired, did her disservice. Could she have dreamed of Colonel Vandaleur's strong prepossession, she might have tried to get up a show of maternal devotion: but her nerves were unhinged, and the days of her dramatic behaviour were over.—Her second married life had weakened and worsened her. She had less courage, less sense of abiding by what is right—even now than in her first unmarried days, as Aunt Sarah Jane's daughter, when her only thought was to fascinate the brute, Wolf Einstern, so as to induce him to make her his wife.

It was a part of the unhappy woman's malady, that she clung to Caldermere and its splendours,—as though, in the clutching of them to the very last possible moment, there might be found some magical chance of her reversing her fortunes. Colonel Vandaleur had entreated her to consult her own conscience; and had requested her to accept any objects in the house to which she was

attached, in addition to those which were her own by right; and for many a day after, was it told in Blackchester by the industrious tongue of Miss Ann Ogg—how my Lady had taken advantage of this liberality, and had sent off crates on crates of things to which Miss Scatters had a far better right.—Mr. Quillsey, too, with whom Lady Caldermere's day of pride was over (and who was heard over "The Glass of Fashion" now to say, "that she had been always *postiche*"), had many items to add to the catalogue.—The establishment had been broken up some weeks ago. Miss Scatters had taken flight—and yet there were rumours that Old Caldermere was not to be dismantled. Colonel Vandaleur was an eccentric: who knew but that he might find that fragment of a house more manageable as a residence for a single man than the palace?—She would not tear herself away till the last moment.—Her first move was to be to Bath: out of the reach of the Quillsey and the Baltakis tribe.

There, on the contribution freely undertaken by Justin—and the hoard of money brought home from a night's work at Baden-Baden, — some appearance might be maintained by her, for the time being, at least. “And then,” she said, thinking aloud, “though it is not likely—if I *should* make a third marriage——”

As she spoke, Lady Caldermere was standing on the precise spot in the park where the boy in the velvet coat, with the harebells and feathers in his hat, and the grey Quaker girl, had sat on the grass ;—the Old House before her : looking a little—only a little—more awake than it had done on that day, when the great Mr. Bower had opened its doors to receive her. It was now October,—the fresh day of a genial autumn : but if she had been ever penetrable by the influences of Nature—she was no longer so : and had merely aimlessly rambled out to escape the desolation of a home from which Justin was to take her away that evening.

An upper window or two which she had been used to see closed were so no longer. One of these was decked with fresh plants in flower. She did not remember the white curtain-hanging having been there before. There was clearly some inhabitant in Old Caldermere—and as she drew nearer, fresh tracks in the gravel told her of a late arrival. “If it should be Colonel Vandaleur; well, and what can be more natural?—Natural enough that I should come to take a last look at the poor old place.”

If it was Colonel Vandaleur—he had not come to the Old House alone; but with companions of the strangest kind. The curtain moved; and disclosed a staid, respectable female in a bonnet, obviously of superior quality to any domestic who had belonged to Miss Scatters; and then there flashed out by her side a younger female face.—What a face it was!

Dazzling in its whiteness,—set off in violent contrast by a fantastic heap of flowers



and ribbons,—with eyes, the piercing brilliancy of which could even be remarked from below, and a beautifully turned and emaciated neck, with which a bare and taper arm and hand agreed—its owner's demeanour was as singular as her almost spectral beauty. She seemed to be wantonly tearing the asters newly placed on the sill from their branches, and trying fancies with them round her cheeks,—her head sinking and rising, as though belonging to some one answering an unseen musician—and her lips arranged in a smile anything rather than the smile of gaiety or nature.—As suddenly as she had shown herself, she disappeared from the window—and the wild sound of unrestrained sobbing was to be heard.

Such an apparition on a bright autumn morning might have shaken steadier nerves than those of Lady Caldermere!—Nor was her surprise diminished when the door of the Old House opened; and when, at the top of the flight of grey steps, appeared one

whom she had not expected for some hours, whom she had never seen without a feeling of self-rebuke—her son Justin.

The amazement was mutual. “Good God! mother!—I thought I should have found you up at the house,” said he, closing the door—and coming down the steps rapidly towards her.

“May I ask what this means?” said she; not without some sharpness of tone. “You seem established at home here.”

“You would have been told weeks ago—before dear Charles left England—only . . . . and Colonel Vandaleur thought it would be best to spare you, and hoped you might not hear of it just yet. We only arrived here a few hours ago.”

“Colonel Vandaleur may rest assured, that his coming or going cannot be of the slightest consequence to me.—The house is his own: and he may fill it with any strange company that suits him.—But I may be excused for thinking of my beloved husband’s

death, when I see a painted creature making antics in yonder window ; and I may be forgiven for wondering what your respectable part may be in an affair which I was to know nothing about.—Is that gay lady, pray, the German acquaintance you are so mightily taken with—and whom I shall never be surprised at having the honour to call my daughter-in-law ?”

“ O mother ! mother ! hush ! and be more compassionate and gentle. She is your daughter-in-law already.—Did you not guess ?—The poor unfortunate wife of Charles.”

Even Lady Caldermere, steeped in narrowing selfishness as she was, was not proof against an announcement so utterly unexpected.—Under her rouge she became whiter than the face she had seen in the window, and grasped Justin’s arm to support herself—then, suddenly returning to her new antagonism, “ Good God ! and so he has gone roaming away on the Continent

again, and left her to other people's charity!"

"You are not fair," said Justin, with a touch of the tone he had used at the Royal visit.—"You are set against Charles!—I cannot tell why.—He must carry on his profession—and as he will never be able to play any more, he must do what he can with composition.—It has been ascertained that the sight of him only makes his wife worse. She does not know him.—She fancies he is a dancer who wanted to take liberties with her at the Opera—there was such a man—and she tries to hurt him whenever she sees him. She cannot be with him. Here she will be under my eye,—as my business will be more in Blackchester than formerly—and Cousin Gatty will see after her, and Miss Openshaw—and perhaps a countrywoman of her own. Out of England, she has not a friend that they know of—and Colonel Vandaleur—a most generous man, mother!—says that she can-

not have better air or more complete retirement than here; and wishes to try, at least, whether total change and gentle treatment will not do some good.—You would have been told all this two months ago, had it not seemed as if you could not bear to hear of Charles, or anything belonging to him. And that is wrong! and that is cruel!”

They were on the way to the New House, as this explanation went on—Lady Caldermere preserving a sullen silence. “And there is something else, mother,” continued her worthy son, “which you must know one day, and which I may as well tell you now—and which, also, you would have known earlier,—had not everything seemed to exasperate you—I can tell it you better walking than sitting still.”

“Some new misery?—some new mystery.—Now, grant me patience, Justin:—you are more than I can bear.”

“A mystery, yes,” was the calm answer, for his mother’s flights and fevers were losing

their power over the upright man—"a deliverance, perhaps.—That last night at Old Caldermere. You recollect that night?"

"I have reason to do so."

"And after?—You know that no one knows what has become of *him*—since the day when we met him, as I told you—in the office of Mr. Torris."

"I know!" burst from the woman—"I know that till I am laid in the grave he will torment me! He has gone out of the way on purpose. He will come back again to revenge himself—and for what?"

"Whatever his will may have been, mother—whatever his birth may have been—this is a most painful subject—his power to injure you may be over."

Lady Caldermere stood still, and began to cry hysterically.

"Dr. Mondor was seen the last time," the other went on, "on the stage of the Opera House—that unfortunate Thursday night.—He had only stayed in England, I have no

doubt, to do mischief—for his bill was made out at the hotel, and his clothes were packed.—He carried the poor creature yonder” (pointing as he spoke) “to her carriage.—And since that hour he has been missing. And Marie’s servant, whom I have every reason, so far as I can make out, to believe a thorough rascal, was seen speaking to him at the carriage door.—Count Foltz saw them. Well: the servant has been missing too, from that hour.”

“But they are not gone, really?” she cried. “He is not gone, really?”

“No one knows precisely,” was Justin’s answer, “what has come of either of the two.—But Meshek, her servant—his name was Meshek (that I have learnt from Count Foltz, our good friend)—has disappeared entirely.—And a few weeks ago there was a body washed on shore, low down the Thames.—The body had been in the water for many days—and creatures from the bank had eaten its face—but they could see, on

what was left, marks of a great scar. The body had on some ragged clothing, a pair of black trousers, and in one pocket of these was something (they must dry these things) which turned out to be a card of Lord Caldermere's.—And so, it was sent up to Torris, as his agent: and so Torris told me.—The body was all but decomposed.—I believe you are set free.”

“O no! no! — He was drowned once before! and it all came to nothing!” burst from the frivolous woman.

After that speech, Justin believes that Lady Caldermere never opened her lips again till she was deposited in Bath.



## PART THE EIGHTH.

### ONE AND THE LAST CHAPTER.

SUSANNA, and her firm friend Countess Westwood, were to be found, on a certain warm summer evening, sitting late in the dusk on a bench by the sea-side.

And where but at Drearmouth? — the place which had first brought the one to the knowledge of the other.—But since the days when the girl had so wistfully tumbled over the few forlorn novels of the Paddox library, and had read to the imprisoned lady there, as much change had come over Drearmouth as over any other one of the scenes and persons with whom we are so

soon to close acquaintance.—A speculator had seen or fancied capabilities in Drearmouth, and had laid hold of it :—and, being a man of fortune, and, also, of good fortune (unlike the contriver who had planned the incomplete wonders of Blackchester), had succeeded in attracting attention to the charming sands and the salubrious climate.—Drearmouth had been written up in “The Glass of Fashion.” The Countess Baltakis had been induced to patronise it ;—and there was her flaunting villa with its four minarets, —“a fancy, a *bizarre* fancy,” Mr. Quillsey would say, with that inimitable smile and shrug of his—“but what can you do?—She’s a good creature, though coarse—and patronises the Arts : when one only understands how to manage her.”

So there sat the two friends at Drearmouth : now an accredited retreat, as yet not overrun—but frequented by choice guests.

The quiet wash of the tide on the shingle, the deliciously genial air, the mystery of

boat and ship as they silently slid past on the wide water, all helped to enhance the spirit of the hour, which was one of repose and confidence. And long, long had it been ere the younger of the two had found any one to whom she could speak, concerning deep matters very dear to her heart.—That sweetly-natured woman, Susanna's only neighbour on the Lower Pavement, Cousin Gatty—notable as she had proved herself to be in sickness or in sorrow, commanded but a tiny range of experience; and ever since that tremendous adventure of hers,—her journey up to London by rail, so splendidly shaded off by Colonel Vandaleur sending her down to Blackchester in his own carriage—had become less and less able to dwell on any subject, save that noble journey.—Also, though Time was kind to Mistress Whitelamb, as Time is to all of placid nature, and who have done their best to be kind to others—she was growing old:—“not hard of hearing,” she maintained, “but

she liked people to speak up—as Mr. Smalley did”—and to “speak up” is just that feat which is the least possible to those who have the concerns which Susanna had on her mind.

“And to think,” said she, “of you seeing so much,—and realising your fancy, half jest, half earnest, of visiting the Himalayas, and the cave-temples of Ellora—while I have been so still—pacing to and fro on the Lower Pavement!”

“Ah! my child!”—and the Countess Westwood pressed the hand of the other with real tenderness—“it is not going about among snow-peaks, or rhododendrons,—nor having a heap of brown people to light up a strange sepulchre for you, which means seeing and feeling.—I do not doubt but that in your quieter path your heart has seen and felt more than mine has done, during these past few years.”

“Well, that may be true,”—and here Susanna dropped into abrupt silence.—It was

as easy, for her listener as for herself, to stop as to speak.

But her listener knew, with the tact of a true and tender woman, that, after the tide had murmured up on the shingle, and a few more gliding boats had darkened the water for a while longer—the other heart so pent in, and delicately reserved, must be made to speak.

“Do you ever go to Caldermere now?—As there is no one living there, the grounds must be a resource to you.”

“O, that day in the park, when he came in among us all, while we were sitting on the grass!—Yes, I *was* a good deal at Old Caldermere,—after my father’s death set me free—so long as she was there.—Poor, poor Marie! She was so full of life to the last, even in her worst moments of wildness: and so full of love for Charles when he was away: and yet the one time when he came to see her, she would not know him—and flew at him with a terrible frenzy,—like that

other time, you know!—It was evident, that her one chance was *not* to see him. The fire wore out so frail a body as hers was. She had strength of will to keep her alive; for fifty years, even. When she was weak and dying, she used to try to sing dance tunes.—Why, she made attitudes with her hands in bed, ten minutes before the spirit passed. Since then, I have not been at Old Caldermere.—It is now to be pulled down, as I wrote to you—and fancy that strange Countess Baltakis buying the place!—They buy everything—Colonel Vandaleur found the house out of all proportion to the estate.”

“I know,” was the answer; “though I know, too, that with the house he might have succeeded also to Lady Caldermere. Conceive that woman making advances to him!”

“Well, poor miserable woman! there is a Nemesis for everybody—and her ambition may have found out as much in the advances which I am assured Mr. Quillsey

made to *her*, only six weeks after the death of his wife!"

"*No!* Susanna. Are you growing satirical?—That man! But he was always aristocracy-bitten.—What an escape *I* have had!—Mr. Quillsey used to like to sit by me! Depend on it, that if Count Baltakis dies, Mr. Quillsey will propose to his widow!—What changes! And where is Lady Caldermere?"

"What changes, indeed!—No one can tell precisely. Abroad somewhere.—They say that she haunts German watering-places; and gambles."

"Ah well!—but it seems only like yesterday when I met her on the Dyke at Ostend—with that capital Justin behind her, carrying all manner of shawls.—Have you not been wrong, Susanna,—unjust to yourself?—That man would have made you a good husband."

The younger speaker laughed—though the laugh was quiet.—"But could I have

been as good a wife to him as Miss Minna Twiese? O, dear friend, no!—and both have grown so fat, and so red in the face! They eat all the day long; and so does the baby.—Justin is worthy of a much better wife than I could ever have been.—Dear friend . . .” And then came a sudden stop—and a choking of the breath.

The elder woman paused again.—After a while—after a little more of the murmuring of the tide on the shingle, and of the shadows crossing the water—she asked: “Are you to marry Charles?”

“God knows!” was Susanna’s reply, with a burst of tears.—“He writes to me long—long letters—and he sends me every sort of foreign journal in which his music is mentioned—and . . . . You never liked him.—You would not continue to love me, if . . . . But, dear friend, he has been the influence of my life.—He says he has grey hairs on his head, and on his heart.—He will never appear in public again in England: and the



Countess Baltakis is very much pleased at this ; because, she says, she did what nobody else could do, and got what nobody else could get :—and she says she is sure he will end his days as a monk.”

“ Ah, then ! I see how it will be !—You will not permit that.”

And the tide murmured up on the shingle a little higher—and the crescent moon crept out, and made a pale thread of light on the water.—And the two speakers were still.

THE END.

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