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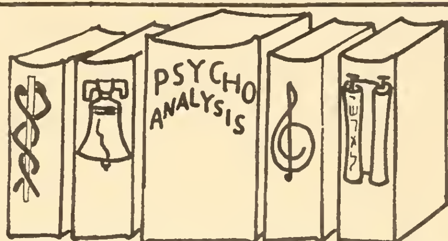

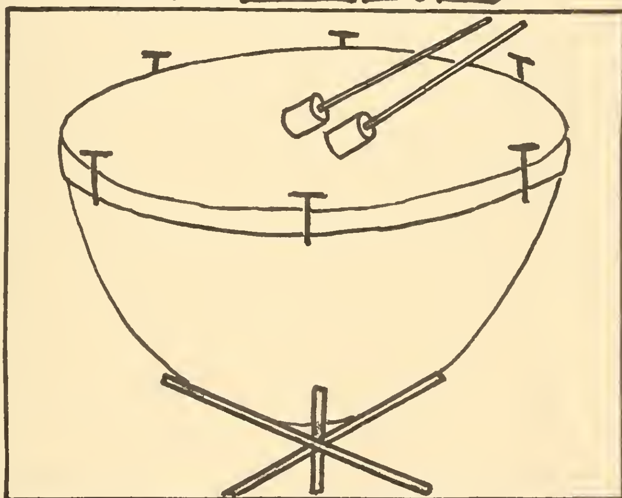

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THE THREE CLERKS.

A Novel.

BY ANTHONY TROLLOPE,

AUTHOR OF "BARCHESTER TOWERS," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE THREE CLERKS.

CHAPTER I.

THE HONOURABLE MRS. VAL AND MISS GOLIGHTLY.

The first eighteen months of Gertrude's married life were not unhappy, though, like all persons entering on the realities of the world, she found much to disappoint her. At first her husband's society was sufficient for her; and, to give him his due, he was not at first an inattentive husband. Then came the baby, bringing with him, as first babies always should do, a sort of second honeymoon of love, and a renewal of those services which women so delight to receive from their bosoms' lord.

She had of course made acquaintances since she had settled herself in London, and had, in her modest way, done her little part in adding to the gaiety of the great metropolis. In this respect indeed Alaric's commencement of life had somewhat frightened Mrs. Woodward, and the more

prudent of his friends. Grand as his official promotion had been, his official income at the time of his marriage did not exceed 600*l.* a year, and though this was to be augmented occasionally till it reached 800*l.* yet even with this advantage, it could hardly suffice for a man and his wife and a coming family to live in an expensive part of London, and enable him to "see his friends" occasionally, as the act of feeding one's acquaintance is now generally called.

But nevertheless Alaric and Gertrude did "see their friends." They kept a man-servant and lived altogether in a *comme il faut* way, considering that he was only a clerk in the Weights and Measures, without a fortune, and that her addition to their joint income was contingent on the death of uncle Bat. The thousand pounds which had been produced immediately had, of course, been expended in honeymooning and furniture; and, as far as any one knew, there were no other means forthcoming than Alaric's bare salary.

Gertrude, like most English girls of her age, was at first so ignorant about money that she hardly knew whether 600*l.* was or was not a sufficient income to justify their present mode of living; but she soon found reason to suspect that her husband, at any rate endeavoured, to increase it by other means. We say to suspect, because he never spoke to her on the subject; he never told

her of Mary Janes and New Friendships; or hinted that he had extensive money dealings in connection with Undy Scott.

But it can be taken for granted that no husband can carry on such dealings long without some sort of cognizance on his wife's part as to what he is doing; a woman who is not trusted by her lord may choose to remain in apparent darkness, may abstain from questions, and may consider it either her duty or her interest to assume an ignorance as to her husband's affairs; but the partner of one's bed and board, the minister who soothes one's headaches and makes one's tea and looks after one's linen, can't but have the means of guessing the thoughts which occupy her companion's mind and occasionally darken his brow.

On the whole, Alaric had hitherto done pretty well with his shares; he had made money on some, and had of course lost money on others; the balance, however, was still considerably on the right side. But the danger of such success is this, that a man, especially a young man, becomes elated by it, and loses his judgment in his elation. He uses as income that which he should have added to his capital, looks on success as easy, and leaves himself unprovided for a reverse.

Much of Gertrude's society had consisted of that into which Alaric was thrown by his friendship with Undy Scott. There was a brother of

Undy's living in town, one Valentine Scott—a captain in a cavalry regiment, and whose wife was by no means of that delightfully retiring disposition evinced by Undy's better half. The Hon. Mrs. Valentine, or Mrs. Val Scott as she was commonly called, was a very pushing woman, and pushed herself into a prominent place among Gertrude's friends. She had been the widow of Jonathan Golightly, Esq., umquile sheriff of the city of London and stockbroker; and when she gave herself and her jointure up to Captain Val, she also brought with her, to enliven the house, a daughter Clementina, the only remaining pledge of her love for the stockbroker.

When Val Scott entered the world, his father's precepts as to the purposes of matrimony were deeply graven on his heart. He was the best looking of the family, and, except Undy, the youngest. He had not Undy's sharpness, his talent for public matters, or his aptitude for the higher branches of the Civil Service; but he had wit to wear his sash and epaulets with an easy grace, and to captivate the heart, person, and some portion of the purse, of the Widow Golightly. The lady was ten years older than the gentleman; but then she had a thousand a year, and, to make matters more pleasant, the beauteous Clementina had a fortune of her own.

Under these circumstances the marriage had been contracted without any deceit, or attempt at

deceit, by either party. Val wanted an income, and the sheriff's widow wanted the utmost amount of social consideration which her not very extensive means would purchase for her. On the whole, the two parties to the transaction were contented with their bargain. Mrs. Val, it is true, kept her income very much in her own hands; but still she consented to pay Val's tailors' bills, and it is something for a man to have bed and board found him for nothing. It is true, again, the lady did not find that the noble blood of her husband gave her an immediate right of entry into the best houses in London; but it did bring her into some sort of contact with some few people of rank and fame; and being a sensible woman she had not been unreasonable in her expectations.

When she had got what she could from her husband in this particular, she did not trouble him much further. He delighted in the Rag and Famish, and there spent the most of his time; happily, she delighted in what she called the charms of society, and as society expanded itself before her, she was also, we must suppose, happy. She soon perceived that more in her immediate line was to be obtained from Undy than from her own member of the Gaberlunzie family, and hence had sprung up her intimacy with Mrs. Tudor.

It cannot be said that Gertrude was very fond

of the Honourable Mrs. Val, nor even of her daughter Clementina Golightly, who was more of her own age. These people had become her friends from the force of circumstances and not from predilection. To tell the truth, Mrs. Val, who had in her day encountered, with much patience, a good deal of snubbing, and who had had to be thankful when she was patronized, now felt that her day for being a great lady had come, and that it behoved her to patronize others. She tried her hand upon Gertrude and found the practice so congenial to her spirits, so pleasantly stimulating, so well adapted to afford a gratifying compensation for her former humility, that she continued to give up a good deal of her time to No. 5, Albany Row, Westbourn Terrace, at which house the Tudors resided.

The young bride was not exactly the woman to submit quietly to patronage from any Mrs. Val, however honourable she might be; but for a while Gertrude hardly knew what it meant; and at her first outset the natural modesty of youth, and her inexperience in her new position made her unwilling to take offence and unequal to rebellion. By degrees however this feeling of humility wore off; she began to be aware of the assumed superiority of Mrs. Val's friendship, and by the time hat their mutual affection was of a year's standing, Gertrude had determined, in a quiet way, without saying anything to anybody, to put

herself on a footing of more perfect equality with the Honourable Mrs. Val.

Clementina Golightly was, in the common parlance of a large portion of mankind, a "doosed fine gal." She stood five feet six, and stood very well, on very good legs, but with rather large feet. She was as straight as a grenadier, and had it been her fate to carry a milk-pail, she would have carried it to perfection. Instead of this, however, she was permitted to expend an equal amount of energy in every variation of waltz and polka that the ingenuity of the dancing professors of the age have been able to produce. Waltzes and polkas suited her admirably; for she was gifted with excellent lungs and perfect powers of breathing; and she had not much delight in prolonged conversation. Her fault, if she had one, was a predilection for flirting; but she did her flirtations in a silent sort of way, much as we may suppose the fishes do theirs, whose amours we may presume to consist in swimming through their cool element in close contiguity with each other. "A feast of reason and a flow of soul" were not the charms by which Clementina Golightly essayed to keep her admirers spell-bound at her feet. To whirl rapidly round a room at the rate of ten miles an hour with her right hand outstretched in the grasp of her partner's, and to know that she was tightly buoyed up, like a horse by a bearing rein, by his other hand behind her

back, was for her sufficient. To do this, as she did do it, without ever crying for mercy, with no slackness of breath, and apparently without distress, must have taken as much training as a horse gets for a race. But the training had in no-wise injured her; and now having gone through her gallops and run all her heats for three successive seasons, she was still sound of wind and limb, and fit to run at any moment when called upon.

We have said nothing about the face of the beauteous Clementina, and indeed nothing can be said about it. There was no feature in it with which a man could have any right to find fault; that she was a "doosed fine girl" was a fact generally admitted; but nevertheless you might look at her for four hours consecutively on a Monday evening and yet on Tuesday you would not know her. She had hair which was brownish and sufficiently silky—and which she wore, as all other such girls do, propped out on each side of her face by thick round velvet pads, which, when the waltzing pace became exhilarating, occasionally showed themselves, looking greasy. She had a pair of eyes set straight in her head, faultless in form and perfectly inexpressive. She had a nose equally straight, but perhaps a little too coarse in dimensions. She had a mouth not over large, with two thin lips and small whitish teeth; and she had a chin equal in contour to the rest of her face, but on which Venus had not deigned to set

a dimple. Nature might have defied a French passport officer to give a description of her, by which even her own mother, or a detective policeman might have recognised her.

When to the above list of attractions it is added that Clementina Golightly had 20,000*l.* of her own, and a reversionary interest in her mother's jointure, it may be imagined that she did not want for good winded cavaliers to bear her up behind, and whirl around with her with outstretched hands.

"I am not going to stay a moment, my dear," said Mrs. Val, seating herself on Gertrude's sofa, having rushed up almost unannounced into the drawing-room, followed by Clementina; "indeed Lady Howlaway is waiting for me this moment; but I must settle with you about the June flower show."

"Oh! thank you, Mrs. Scott, don't trouble yourself about me," said Gertrude; "I don't think I shall go."

"Oh! nonsense, my dear; of course you'll go; it's the show of the year, and the grand-duke is to be there—Baby is all right now, you know; I must not hear of your not going."

"All the same I fear I must decline," said Gertrude; "I think I shall be at Hampton."

"Oh! nonsense, my dear; of course you must show yourself. People will say all manner of things else. Clementina has promised to meet

Victoire Jaquêtanápes there and a party of French people, people of the very highest ton. You'll be delighted, my dear."

"M. Jaquêtanápes is the most delicious polkist you ever met," said Clementina. "He has got a new back step that will quite amaze you." As Gertrude in her present condition was not much given to polkas, this temptation did not have great effect.

"Oh! you must come, of course, my dear—and pray let me recommend you to go to Madame Bosconi for your bonnet; she has such darling little ducks, and as cheap as dirt. But I want you to arrange about the carriage; you can do that with Mr. Tudor, and I can settle with you afterwards. Captain Scott won't go, of course; but I have no doubt Undecimus and Mr. Tudor will come later and bring us home; we can manage very well with the one carriage."

In spite of her thousand a year the Honourable Mrs. Val was not ashamed to look after the pounds, shillings and pence. And so, having made her arrangements, Mrs. Val took herself off, hurrying to appease the anger of Lady Howlaway, and followed by Clementina, who since her little outburst as to the new back step of M. Jaquêtanápes had not taken much part in the conversation.

Flower shows are a great resource for the Mrs. Scotts of London life. They are open to ladies

who cannot quite penetrate the inner sancta of fashionable life, and yet they are frequented by those to whom those sancta are every day household walks. There at least the Mrs. Scotts of the outer world can show themselves in close contiguity, and on equal terms, with the Mrs. Scotts of the inner world. And then, who is to know the difference? If also one is an Honourable Mrs. Scott, and can contrive to appear as such in the next day's "Morning Post," may not one fairly boast that the ends of society have been attained? Where is the citadel? How is one to know when one has taken it?

Gertrude could not be quite so defiant with her friends as she would have wished to have been, as they were borne with and encouraged by her husband. Of Undy's wife Alaric saw nothing and heard little, but it suited Undy to make use of his sister-in-law's house, and it suited Alaric to be intimate with Undy's sister-in-law. Moreover, had not Clementina Golightly 20,000*l.*, and was she not a "doosed fine girl?" This was nothing to Alaric now, and might not be considered to be much to Undy. But that far-seeing acute financier knew that there were other means of handling a lady's money than that of marrying her. He could not at present acquire a second fortune in that way; but he might perhaps acquire the management of this 20,000*l.* if he could provide the lady with a husband of the

proper temperament. Undy Scott did not want to appropriate Miss Golightly's fortune; he only wanted to have the management of it.

Looking round among his acquaintance for a fitting *parti* for the sweet Clementina, his mind, after much consideration, settled upon Charley Tudor. There were many young men much nearer and dearer to Undy than Charley, who might be equally desirous of so great a prize; but he could think of none over whom he might probably exercise so direct a control. Charley was a handsome gay fellow, and waltzed *au ravir;* he might, therefore, without difficulty make his way with the fair Clementina. He was distressingly poor, and would therefore certainly jump at an heiress—he was delightfully thoughtless and easy of leading, and therefore the money when in his hands might probably be manageable. He was also Alaric's cousin, and therefore, acceptable.

Undy did not exactly open his mind to Alaric Tudor in this matter. Alaric's education was going on rapidly; but his mind had not yet received with sufficient tenacity those principles of philosophy which would enable him to look at this scheme in its proper light. He had already learnt the great utility, one may almost say the necessity, of having a command of money; he was beginning also to perceive that money was a thing not to be judged of by the ordinary rules

which govern a man's conduct. In other matters it behoves a gentleman to be open, above-board, liberal, and true; good-natured, generous, confiding, self-denying, doing unto others as he would wish that others should do unto him; but in the acquirement and use of money—that is, its use with the object of acquiring more, its use in the usurer's sense—his practice should be exactly the reverse: he should be close, secret, exacting, given to concealment, not over troubled by scruples; suspicious, without sympathies, self-devoted, and always doing unto others exactly that which he is on his guard to prevent others from doing unto him—viz., making money by them. So much Alaric had learnt, and had been no inapt scholar. But he had not yet appreciated the full value of the latitude allowed by the genius of the present age to men who deal successfully in money. He had, as we have seen, acknowledged to himself that a sportsman may return from the field with his legs and feet a little muddy; but he did not yet know how deep a man may wallow in the mire, how thoroughly he may besmear himself from head to foot in the blackest, foulest mud, and yet be received an honoured guest by ladies gay and noble lords, if only his bag be sufficiently full.

"Rem * * * * *, quocunque modo rem!"

The remainder of the passage was doubtless

applicable to former times, but now is hardly worth repeating.

As Alaric's stomach was not yet quite suited for strong food, Undy fitted this matter to his friend's still juvenile capacities. There was an heiress, a "doosed fine girl" as Undy insisted, laying peculiar strength on the word of emphasis, with 20,000*l.* and there was Charley Tudor a devilish decent fellow, without a rap. Why not bring them together? This would only be a mark of true friendship on the part of Undy; and on Alaric's part, it would be no more than one cousin would be bound to do for another. Looking at it in this light, Alaric saw nothing in the matter which could interfere with his quiet conscience.

"I'll do what I can," said Undy. "Mrs. Val is inclined to have a way of her own in most things; but if anybody can lead her, I can. Charley must take care that Val himself doesn't take his part, that's all. If he interferes, it would be all up with us."

And thus Alaric, intent mainly on the interest of his cousin, and actuated perhaps a little by the feeling that a rich cousin would be more serviceable than a poor one, set himself to work, in connection with Undy Scott, to make prey of Clementina Golightly's 20,000*l.*

But if Undy had no difficulty in securing the co-operation of Alaric in this matter, Alaric by no means found it equally easy to secure the co-

operation of Charley. Charley Tudor had not yet learnt to look upon himself as a marketable animal, worth a certain sum of money, in consequence of such property in good appearance, address, &c., as God had been good enough to endow him withal.

He daily felt the depth and disagreeable results of his own poverty, and not unfrequently, when specially short of the Queen's medium, sighed for some of those thousands and tens of thousands with which men's mouths are so glibly full. He had often tried to calculate what would be his feelings if some eccentric goodnatured old stranger should leave him, say, five thousand a-year; he had often walked about the street, with his hands in his empty pockets, building delicious castles in the air, and doing the most munificent actions imaginable with his newly-acquired wealth, as all men in such circumstances do; relieving distress, rewarding virtue, and making handsome presents to all his friends, and especially to Mrs. Woodward. So far Charley was not guiltless of coveting wealth; but he had never for a moment thought of realizing his dreams by means of his personal attractions. It had never occurred to him that any girl having money could think it worth her while to marry him. He, navvie as he was, with his infernal friends and pot-house love, with his debts and idleness and low associations, with his

saloons of Seville, his Elysium in Fleet Street, and his Paradise near the Surrey Gardens, had hitherto thought little enough of his own attractions. No kind father had taught him that he was worth 10,000*l.* in any market in the world. When he had dreamt of money he had never dreamt of it as accruing to him in return for any value or worth which he had inherent in himself. Even in his lighter moments he had no such conceit; and at those periods, few and far between, in which he did think seriously of the world at large, this special method of escaping from his difficulties never once presented itself to his mind.

When, therefore, Alaric first spoke to him of marrying 20,000*l.* and Clementina Golightly, his surprise was unbounded.

"20,000*l.*!" said Alaric, "and a doosed fine girl, you know;" and he also laid great stress on the latter part of the offer, knowing how inflammable was Charley's heart, and at the same time how little mercenary was his mind.

But Charley was not only surprised at the proposed arrangement, but apparently also unwilling to enter into it. He argued that in the first place no girl in her senses would accept him. To this Alaric replied that as Clementina had not much sense to speak of, that objection might fall to the ground. Then Charley expressed an idea that Miss Golightly's friends might probably

object when they learnt what were the exact pecuniary resources of the expectant husband; to which Alaric argued that the circumstances of the case were very lucky, inasmuch as some of Clementina's natural friends were already prepossessed in favour of such an arrangement.

Driven thus from two of his strongholds, Charley in the most modest of voices, in a voice one may say quite shame-faced and conscious of its master's weakness—suggested that he was not quite sure that at the present moment he was very much in love with the lady in question.

Alaric had married for love, and was not two years married, yet had his education so far progressed in that short period as to enable him to laugh at such an objection.

"Then, my dear fellow, what the deuce do you mean to do with yourself? you'll certainly go to the dogs."

Charley had an idea that he certainly should; and also had an idea that Miss Clementina and her 20,000*l.* might not improbably go in the same direction, if he had anything to do with them.

"And as for loving her," continued Alaric, "that's all my eye. Love is a luxury which none but the rich or the poor can afford. We middle class paupers, who are born with good coats on our backs, but empty purses, can have nothing to do with it."

"But you married for love, Alaric."

"My marriage was not a very prudent one, and should not be taken as an example. And then I did get some fortune with my wife; and what is more, I was not so fearfully in want of it as you are."

Charley acknowledged the truth of this, said that he would think of the matrimonial project, and promised, at any rate, to call on Clementina on an early occasion. He had already made her acquaintance, had already danced with her, and certainly could not take upon himself to deny that she was a "doosed fine girl."

But Charley had reasons of his own, reasons which he could not make known to Alaric, for not thinking much of, or trusting much to, Miss Golightly's fortune. In the first place, he regarded marriage on such a grand scale as that now suggested, as a ceremony which must take a long time to adjust; the wooing of a lady with so many charms could not be carried on as might be the wooing of a chambermaid or a farmer's daughter. It must take months at least to conciliate the friends of so rich an heiress, and months at the end of them to prepare the wedding gala. But Charley could not wait for months; before one month was over he would probably be laid up in some vile limbo, an unfortunate poor prisoner at the suit of an iron-hearted tailor.

At this very moment of Alaric's proposition,

at this instant when he found himself talking with so much coolness of the expedience or inexpedience of appropriating to his own purpose a slight trifle of 20,000*l.*, he was in dire strait as to money difficulties.

He had lately, that is within the last twelvemonths, made acquaintance with an interesting gentleman named Jabesh M'Ruen. Mr. Jabesh M'Ruen was in the habit of relieving the distresses of such impoverished young gentlemen as Charley Tudor; and though he did this with every assurance of philanthropic regard, though in doing so he only made one stipulation, "pray be punctual, Mr. Tudor, now pray do be punctual, sir, and you may always count on me," nevertheless in spite of all his goodness Mr. M'Ruen's young friends seldom continued to hold their heads well up over the world's waters.

On the morning after this conversation with Alaric, Charley intended to call on his esteemed old friend. Many were the morning calls he did make; many were the weary, useless, aimless walks which he took to that little street at the back of Mecklenburg Square, with the fond hope of getting some relief from Mr. M'Ruen; and many also were the calls, the return visits, as it were, which Mr. M'Ruen made at the Internal Navigation, and numerous were the whispers which he would there whisper into the ears of the young clerk, Mr. Snape the while sitting by, with

a sweet unconscious look, as though he firmly believed Mr. M'Ruen to be Charley's maternal uncle.

And then too Charley had other difficulties, which in his mind presented great obstacles to the Golightly scheme, though Alaric would have thought little of them, and Undy nothing. What was he to do with his Norfolk Street lady, his bar-maid houri, his Norah Geraghty, to whom he had sworn all manner of undying love, and for whom in some sort of fashion he really had an affection. And Norah was not a light-of-love whom it was as easy to lay down as to pick up. Charley had sworn to love her, and she had sworn to love Charley, and to give her her due she had kept her word to him. Though her life rendered necessary a sort of daily or rather nightly flirtation with various male comers—as indeed for the matter of that did also the life of Miss Clementina Golightly—yet she had in her way been true to her lover. She had been true to him, and Charley did not doubt her, and in a sort of low way respected her; though it was but a dissipated and debauched respect. There had even been talk between them of marriage, and who can say what in his softer moments, when his brain had been too weak or the toddy too strong, Charley may not have promised.

And there was yet another objection to Miss Golightly; one even more difficult of mention,

one on which Charley felt himself more absolutely constrained to silence than even either of the other two. He was sufficiently disinclined to speak to his cousin Alaric as to the merits either of Mr. Jabesh M[c]Ruen or of Miss Geraghty, but he could have been eloquent on either rather than whisper a word as to the third person who stood between him and the 20,000*l.*

The school in which Charley now lived, that of the infernal navvies, had taught him to laugh at romance; but it had not been so successful in quelling the early feelings of his youth, in drying up the fountains of poetry within him, as had been the case with his cousin, in that other school in which he had been a scholar. Charley was a dissipated, dissolute rake, and in some sense had degraded himself; but he had still this chance of safety on his side, that he himself reprobated his own sins. He dreamt of other things and a better life. He made visions to himself of a sweet home, and a sweeter, sweetest, lovely wife; a love whose hair should not be redolent of smoke, nor her hands reeking with gin, nor her services at the demand of every libertine who wanted a screw of tobacco, or a glass of "cold without."

He had made such a vision to himself, and the angel with which he had filled it was not a creature of his imagination. She who was to reign in this ethereal paradise, this happy home, far as

the poles away from Norfolk Street, was a living being in the sublunar globe, present sometimes to Charley's eyes, and now so often present to his thoughts; and yet she was but a child, and as ignorant that she had even touched a lover's heart by her childish charms as though she had been a baby.

After all, even on Charley's part, it was but a vision. He never really thought that his young inamorata would or could be to him a real true heart's companion, returning his love with the double love of a woman, watching his health, curing his vices, and making the sweet things of the world a living reality around him. This love of his was but a vision, but not the less on that account did it interfere with his cousin Alaric's proposition in reference to Miss Clementina Golightly.

That other love also, that squalid love of his, was in truth no vision—was a stern, palpable reality, very difficult to get rid of, and one which he often thought to himself, would very probably swallow up that other love, and drive his sweet dream far away into utter darkness and dim chaotic space.

But at any rate it was clear that there was no room in his heart for the beauteous Clementina, "doosed fine girl" as she undoubtedly was, and serviceable as the 20,000*l.* most certainly would have been.

CHAPTER II.

A DAY WITH ONE OF THE NAVVIES.—MORNING.

On the morning after his conversation with Alaric, Charley left his lodgings with a heavy heart and wended his way towards Mecklenburg Square. Now this was a very circuitous route by which to reach his office, seeing that he still lodged in Davies Street with Harry Norman. But not on this account did he leave home earlier than usual; in the first place, as he never went to bed very early, he did not find it practicable to get up sooner than was absolutely necessary; then he considered that it was highly inexpedient that Norman should suspect that he had any such calls to make as these, which so frequently took him away, and therefore he always managed to let his companion start before him; and lastly, why should he trouble himself to go early, when it was so very easy to make any excuse to Mr. Snape?

At about half-past nine therefore, Charley started for Mecklenburg Square. At the corner of Davies Street he got an omnibus, which for fourpence took him to one of the little alleys near

Gray's Inn, and there he got down, and threading the well-known locality, through Bedford Place and across Theobald's Row, soon found himself at the door of his generous patron. Oh! how he hated the house; how he hated the blear-eyed, cross-grained, dirty, impudent, fish-fag of an old woman who opened the door for him; how he hated Mr. Jabesh McRuen, to whom he now came a supplicant for assistance, and how, above all, he hated himself for being there.

He was shown into Mr. McRuen's little front parlour, where he had to wait for fifteen minutes, while his patron made such a breakfast as generally falls to the lot of such men. We can imagine the rancid butter, the stale befingered bread, the ha'porth of sky-blue milk, the tea innocent of China's wrongs—and the soiled cloth. Mr. McRuen always did keep Charley waiting fifteen minutes, and so he was no whit surprised; the doing so was a part of the tremendous interest which the wretched old usurer received for his driblets of money.

There was not a bit of furniture in the room on which Charley had not speculated till speculation could go no further. The old escritoire or secretaire which Mr. McRuen always opened the moment he came into the room; the rickety pembroke table, covered with dirty papers which stood in the middle of it; the horse-hair-bottomed chairs, on which Charley declined to sit down,

unless he had on his thickest winter trousers, so perpendicular had become some atoms on the surface, which, when new, had no doubt been horizontal; the ornaments (!) on the chimney, broken bits of filthy crockery, full of whisps of paper, with a china duck without a tail, and a dog to correspond without a head. The pictures against the wall, with their tarnished, dingy frames, and cracked glasses, representing three of the seasons; how the fourth had gone before its time to its final bourne by an unhappy chance, Mr. McRuen had once explained to Charley, while endeavouring to make his young customer take the other three as good value for 7*l.* 10*s.* in arranging a little transaction, the total amount of which did not exceed 15*l.*

In that instance, however, Charley, who had already dabbled somewhat deeply in dressing-cases, utterly refused to trade in the articles produced.

Charley stood with his back to the dog and duck, facing Winter, with Spring on his right and Autumn on his left; it was well that Summer was gone, no summer could have shed light on that miserable chamber. He knew that he would have to wait and was not therefore impatient, and at the end of fifteen minutes Mr. McRuen shuffled into the room in his slippers.

He was a little man with thin gray hair, which stood upright from his narrow head—what his

age might have been it was impossible to guess; he was wizened, and dry, and gray; but still active enough on his legs when he had exchanged his slippers for his shoes; and as keen in all his senses as though years could never tell against him.

He always wore round his neck a stiff-starched deep white handkerchief, not fastened with a bow in front, the ends being tucked in so as to be invisible. This cravat not only covered his throat but his chin also, so that his head seemed to grow forth from it, without the aid of any neck; and he had a trick of turning his face round within it, an inch or two to the right or to the left, in a manner which seemed to indicate that his cranium was loose and might be removed at pleasure.

He shuffled into the room where Charley was standing, with little short quick steps, and putting out his hand just touched that of his customer, by way of going through the usual process of greeting.

Some short statement must be made of Charley's money dealings with Mr. M'Ruen up to this period. About two years back a tailor had an over-due bill of his for 20*l.* of which he was unable to obtain payment, and being unwilling to go to law, or perhaps being himself in Mr. M'Ruen's power, he passed this bill to that worthy gentleman—what amount of consideration

he got for it, it matters not now to inquire; Mr. McRuen very shortly afterwards presented himself at the Internal Navigation, and introduced himself to our hero. He did this with none of the over-bearing harshness of the ordinary dun, or the short caustic decision of a creditor determined to resort to the utmost severity of the law. He turned his head about and smiled and just showed the end of the bill peeping out from among a parcel of others, begged Mr. Tudor to be punctual, he would only ask him to be punctual and would in such case do anything for him, and ended his visit by making an appointment to meet Charley in the little street behind Mecklenburg Square. Charley kept his appointment and came away from Mr. McRuen's with a well-contented mind. He had, it is true, left 5*l*. behind him, and had also left the bill, still entire; but he had obtained a promise of unlimited assistance from the good-natured gentleman, and had also received instructions how he was to get a brother clerk to draw a bill, how he was to accept it himself, and how his patron was to discount it for him, paying him real gold out of the Bank of England in exchange for his worthless signature.

Charley stept lighter on the ground as he left Mr. McRuen's house, on that eventful morning, than he had done for many a day. There was something delightful in the feeling that he could

make money of his name in this way, as great bankers do of theirs, by putting it at the bottom of a scrap of paper. He experienced a sort of pride too in having achieved so respectable a position in the race of ruin which he was running, as to have dealings with a bill-discounter. He felt that he was putting himself on a par with great men and rising above the low level of the infernal navvies. Mr. McRuen had pulled a bill out of the heap of bills which he always carried in his huge pocket-book, and shown to Charley the name of an impoverished Irish peer on the back of it; and the sight of that name had made Charley quite in love with ruin. He already felt that he was almost hand-and-glove with Lord Mount-Coffeehouse; for it was a descendant of the nobleman so celebrated in song.—"Only be punctual, Mr. Tudor; only be punctual, and I will do anything for you," Mr. McRuen had said, as Charley left the house; Charley however never had been punctual, and yet his dealings with Mr. McRuen had gone on from that day to this. What absolute money he had ever received into his hand he could not now have said, but it was very little, probably not amounting in all to 50*l*. Yet he had already paid during the two years more than double that sum to this sharp-clawed vulture, and still owed him the amounts of more bills than he could number. Indeed he had kept no account of these double-fanged little

documents; he had signed them whenever told to do so, and had even been so preposterously foolish as to sign them in blank. All he knew was that at the beginning of every quarter Mr. McRuen got nearly the half of his little modicum of salary, and that towards the middle of it he usually contrived to obtain an advance of some small, some very small sum, and that when doing so he always put his hand to a fresh bit of paper.

He was beginning to be heartily sick of the bill-discounter. His intimacy with the lord had not yet commenced; nor had he experienced any of the delights which he had expected to accrue to him from the higher tone of extravagance in which he entered when he made Mr. McRuen's acquaintance. And then the horrid fatal waste of time which he incurred in pursuit of the few pounds which he occasionally obtained filled even his heart with a sort of despair. Morning after morning he would wait in that hated room; and then, day after day, at 2 o'clock he would attend the usurer's city haunt—and generally all in vain. The patience of Mr. Snape was giving way, and the discipline even of the Internal Navigation felt itself outraged.

And now Charley stood once more in that dingy little front parlour in which he had never yet seen a fire, and once more Mr. Jabesh McRuen shuffled into the room in his big cravat and dirty loose slippers.

"How d'ye do, Mr. Tudor, how d'ye do? I hope you have brought a little of this with you;" and Jabesh opened out his left hand, and tapped the palm of it with the middle finger of his right, by way of showing that he expected some money; not that he did expect any, cormorant that he was; this was not the period of the quarter in which he ever got money from his customer.

"Indeed I have not, Mr. M'Ruen; but I positively must get some."

"Oh—oh—oh—oh—Mr. Tudor—Mr. Tudor! —How can we go on if you are so unpunctual? Now, I would do anything for you, if you would only be punctual."

"Oh! bother about that—you know your own game, well enough."

"Be punctual, Mr. Tudor, only be punctual, and we shall be all right—and so you have not any of this?" and Jabesh went through the tapping again.

"Not a doit," said Charley; "but I shall be up the spout altogether if you don't do something to help me."

"But you are so unpunctual, Mr. Tudor."

"Oh d— it! you'll make me sick if you say that again. What else do you live by but that? But I positively must have some money from you to-day. If not, I am done for."

"I don't think I can, Mr. Tudor; not to-day,

Mr. Tudor—some other day, say this day month; that is, if you'll be punctual."

"This day month! no but this very day, Mr. McRuen—why, you got 18*l.* from me when I received my last salary, and I have not had a shilling back since."

"But you are so unpunctual, Mr. Tudor," and Jabesh twisted his head backwards and forwards within his cravat, rubbing his chin with the interior starch.

"Well then, I'll tell you what it is," said Charley, "I'll be shot if you get a shilling from me on the 1st of October, and you may sell me up as quick as you please. If I don't give a history of your business that will surprise some people, my name isn't Tudor."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Mr. McRuen, with a soft quiet laugh. "Well really, Mr. Tudor, I would do more for you than any other young man that I know, if you were only a little more punctual—How much is it you want now?"

"15*l.*—or—10*l.*—10*l.* will do."

"Ten pounds!" said Jabesh, as though Charley had asked for ten thousand—"Ten pounds!—if two or three would do!"

"But two or three won't do."

"And whose name will you bring?"

"Whose name! why Scatterall's, to be sure." Now Scatterall was one of the navvies; and from him Mr. McRuen had not yet succeeded in ex-

tracting one farthing, though he had his name on a volume of Charley's bills.

"Scatterall—I don't like Mr. Scatterall," said Jabesh; "he is very dissipated, and the most unpunctual young man I ever met—you really must get some one else, Mr. Tudor, you really must."

"Oh, that's nonsense—Scatterall is as good as anybody—I couldn't ask any of the other fellows—they are such a low set."

"But Mr. Scatterall is so unpunctual. There's your cousin, Mr. Alaric Tudor."

"My cousin Alaric!—Oh, nonsense; you don't suppose I'd ask him to do such a thing—you might as well tell me to go to my father."

"Or that other gentleman you live with; Mr. Norman. He is a most punctual gentleman. Bring me his name and I'll let you have 10*l.*—or 8*l.*—I'll let you have 8*l.* at once."

"I dare say you will, Mr. McRuen; or 80*l.*; and be only too happy to give it me. But you know that is out of the question; now I won't wait any longer; just give me an answer to this: if I come to you in the city will you let me have some money to-day—if you won't, why I must go elsewhere—that's all."

The interview ended by an appointment being made for another meeting to come off at 2 p. m. that day, at the Banks of Jordan, a public-house in Sweeting's Alley, as well known to Charley as

the little front parlour of Mr. McRuen's house. "Bring the bill stamp with you, Mr. Tudor," said Jabesh, by way of a last parting word of counsel; "and let Mr. Scatterall sign it—that is if it must be Mr. Scatterall; but I wish you would bring your cousin's name."

"Nonsense!"

"Well then, bring it signed—but I'll fill it; you young fellows understand nothing of filling in a bill properly."

And then taking his leave the infernal navvy hurried off, and reached his office in Somerset House at a quarter-past 11 o'clock. As he walked along he bought the bit of stamped paper on which his friend Scatterall was to write his name.

When he reached the office he found that a great commotion was going on. Mr. Snape was standing up at his desk, and the first word which greeted Charley's ears was an intimation from that gentleman that Mr. Oldeschole had desired that Mr. Tudor, when he arrived, should be instructed to attend in the board-room.

"Very well," said Charley in a tone of great indifference, "with all my heart—I rather like seeing Oldeschole now and then. But he mustn't keep me long, for I have to meet my grandmother at Islington at 2 o'clock," and Charley having hung up his hat prepared to walk off to the Secretary's room.

"You'll be good enough to wait a few minutes, Mr. Tudor," said Snape. "Another gentleman is with Mr. Oldeschole at present. You will be good enough to sit down and go on with the Kennett and Avon lock entries, till Mr. Oldeschole is ready to see you."

Charley sat down at his desk, opposite to his friend Scatterall. "I hope, Mr. Snape, you had a pleasant meeting at evening prayers yesterday," said he, with a tone of extreme interest.

"You had better mind the lock entries at present, Mr. Tudor; they are greatly in arrear."

"And the evening meetings are docketed up as close as wax, I suppose. What the deuce is in the wind, Dick?" Mr. Scatterall's christian name was Richard—"Where's Corkscrew?" Mr. Corkscrew was also a navvy, and was one of those to whom Charley had specially alluded when he spoke of the low set.

"Oh, here's a regular go," said Scatterall. "It's all up with Corkscrew, I believe."

"Why, what's the cheese, now?"

"Oh! it's all about some pork chops, which Screwy had for supper last night." Screwy was a name of love which among his brother navvies was given to Mr. Corkscrew. "Mr. Snape seems to think they did not agree with him."

"Pork chops in July!" exclaimed Charley.

"Poor Screwy forgot the time of year," said

another navvy; "he ought to have called it lamb and grass."

And then the story was told. On the preceding afternoon, Mr. Corkscrew had been subjected to the dire temptation of a boating party to the Eel-pie Island for the following day, and a dinner thereon. There were to be at the feast no less than four and twenty jolly souls, and it was intimated to Mr. Corkscrew that as no soul was esteemed to be more jolly than his own, the party would be considered as very imperfect unless he could join it. Asking for a day's leave, Mr. Corkscrew knew to be out of the question; he had already taken too many without asking. He was therefore driven to take another in the same way, and had to look about for some excuse which might support him in his difficulty. An excuse it must be, not only new, but very valid; one so strong that it could not be overset; one so well avouched that it could not be doubted. Accordingly, after mature consideration, he sat down after leaving his office, and wrote the following letter, before he started on an evening cruising expedition with some others of the party to prepare for the next day's festivities.

"Thursday morning,—July, 185—

"MY DEAR SIR,

"I write from my bed where I am suffering a most tremendous indiggestion, last night I eat a stunning supper off pork chopps and never

remembered that pork chopps always does disagree with me, but I was very indiscrete and am now teetotally unable to rise my throbing head from off my pillar, I have took four blu pills and some salts and sena, plenty of that, and shall be the thing to-morrow morning no doubt, just at present I feel just as if I had a mill stone inside my stomac—Pray be so kind as to make it all right with Mr. Oldeschole and believe me to remain,

"Your faithful and obedient servant,

"VERAX CORKSCREW.

"Thomas Snape, Esq., &c.,
Internal Navigation Office,
Somerset House."

Having composed this letter of excuse, and not intending to return to his lodgings that evening, he had to make provision for its safely reaching the hands of Mr. Snape in due time on the following morning. This he did, by giving it to the boy who came to clean the lodging-house boots, with sundry injunctions that if he did not deliver it at the office by ten o'clock on the following morning, the sixpence accruing to him would never be paid. Mr. Corkscrew, however, said nothing as to the letter not being delivered before ten the next morning, and as other business took the boy along the Strand the same evening, he saw no reason why he should not then execute his commission. He accordingly

did so, and duly delivered the letter into the hands of a servant girl, who was cleaning the passages of the office.

Fortune on this occasion was blind to the merits of Mr. Corkscrew, and threw him over most unmercifully. It so happened that Mr. Snape had been summoned to an evening conference with Mr. Oldeschole and the other pundits of the office, to discuss with them, or rather to hear discussed, some measure which they began to think it necessary to introduce, for amending the discipline of the department.

"We are getting a bad name, whether we deserve it or not," said Mr. Oldeschole. "That fellow Hardlines has put us into his blue-book, and now there's an article in the Times!"

Just at this moment, a messenger brought into Mr. Snape the unfortunate letter of which we have given a copy.

"What's that?" said Mr. Oldeschole.

"A note from Mr. Corkscrew, sir," said Snape.

"He's the worst of the whole lot," said Mr. Oldeschole.

"He is very bad," said Snape, "but I rather think that perhaps, sir, Mr. Tudor is the worst of all."

"Well, I don't know," said the Secretary, muttering *sotto voce* to the under secretary, while Mr. Snape read the letter—"Tudor, at any rate, is a gentleman."

Mr. Snape read the letter, and his face grew very long. There was a sort of sneaking civility about Corkscrew, not prevalent indeed at all times, but which chiefly showed itself when he and Mr. Snape were alone together, which somewhat endeared him to the elder clerk. He would have screened the sinner had he had either the necessary presence of mind or the necessary pluck. But he had neither. He did not know how to account for the letter but by the truth, and he feared to conceal so flagrant a breach of discipline at the moment of the present discussion.

Things at any rate so turned out that Mr. Corkscrew's letter was read in full conclave in the board-room of the office, just as he was describing the excellence of his manœuvre with great glee to four or five other jolly souls at the Magpie and Stump.

At first it was impossible to prevent a fit of laughter, in which even Mr. Snape joined; but very shortly the laughter gave way to the serious considerations to which such an epistle was sure to give rise at such a moment. What if Sir Gregory Hardlines should get hold of it and put it into his blue-book! What if the Times should print it and send it over the whole world, accompanied by a few of its most venomous touches, to the eternal disgrace of the Internal Navigation and probable utter annihilation of Mr.

Oldeschole's official career. An example must be made!

Yes, an example must be made.—Messengers were sent off scouring the town for Mr. Corkscrew, and about midnight he was found, still true to the Magpie and Stump, but hardly in condition to understand the misfortune which had befallen him. So much as this however did make itself manifest to him, that he must by no means join his jolly-souled brethren at the Eelpie Island, and that he must be at his office punctually at ten o'clock the next morning if he had any intention of saving himself from dismissal. When Charley arrived at his office Mr. Corkscrew was still with the authorities and Charley's turn was to come next.

Charley was rather a favourite with Mr. Oldeschole, having been appointed by himself at the instance of Mr. Oldeschole's great friend, Sir Gilbert de Salop; and he was, moreover, the best-looking of the whole lot of navvies; but he was no favourite with Mr. Snape.

"Poor Screwy—it will be all up with him," said Charley. "He might just as well have gone on with his party and had his fun out."

"It will, I imagine, be necessary to make more than one example, Mr. Tudor," said Mr. Snape with a voice of utmost severity.

"A-a-a-men," said Charley.—"If every thing else fails, I think I'll go into the green line.—

You couldn't give me a helping hand, could you, Mr. Snape?" There was a rumour afloat in the office that Mr. Snape's wife held some little interest in a small greengrocer's establishment.

"Mr. Tudor to attend in the board-room, immediately," said a fat messenger, who opened the door wide with a start, and then stood with it in his hand while he delivered his message.

"All right," said Charley—"I'll tumble up and be with them in ten seconds;" and then collecting together a large bundle of the arrears of the Kennett and Avon lock entries, being just as much as he could carry, he took the disordered papers and placed them on Mr. Snape's desk, exactly over the paper on which he was writing, and immediately under his nose.

"Mr. Tudor—Mr. Tudor!" said Snape.

"As I am to tear myself away from you, Mr. Snape, it is better that I should hand over these valuable documents to your safe keeping. There they are, Mr. Snape; pray see that you have got them all;" and so saying, he left the room to attend to the high behests of Mr. Oldeschole.

As he went along the passages he met Verax Corkscrew returning from his interview. "Well Screwy," said he, "and how fares it with you? Pork chops are bad things in summer, aint they?"

"It's all U-P," said Corkscrew almost crying. "I'm to go down to the bottom, and I'm to stay at the office till seven o'clock every day for a

month; and old Foolscap says he'll ship me the next time I'm absent half-an-hour without leave."

"Oh! is that all?" said Charley. "If that's all you get for pork chops and senna, I'm all right. I shouldn't wonder if I did not get promoted;" and so he went in to his interview.

What was the nature of the advice given him, what amount of caution he was called on to endure, need not here be exactly specified. We all know with how light a rod a father chastises the son he loves, let Solomon have given what counsel he may to the contrary. Charley, in spite of his manifold sins, was a favourite, and he came forth from the board-room an unscathed man. In fact, he had been promoted as he had surmised, seeing that Corkscrew who had been his senior was now his junior. He came forth unscathed, and walking with an easy air into his room, put his hat on his head and told his brother clerks that he should be there to-morrow morning at ten, or at any rate soon after.

"And where are you going now, Mr. Tudor?" said Snape.

"To meet my grandmother at Islington, if you please, sir," said Charley. "I have permission from Mr. Oldeschole to attend upon her for the rest of the day—perhaps you would like to ask him." And so saying he went off to his appointment with Mr. M^c^Ruen at the "Banks of Jordan."

CHAPTER III.

A DAY WITH ONE OF THE NAVVIES.—AFTERNOON.

"The Banks of Jordan" was a public-house in the city, which from its appearance did not seem to do a very thriving trade; but as it was carried on from year to year in the same dull monotonous dead-alive sort of fashion, it must be surmised that some one found an interest in keeping it open.

Charley, when he entered the door punctually at two o'clock, saw that it was as usual nearly deserted. One long, lanky, middle-aged man, seedy as to his outward vestments and melancholy in countenance, sat at one of the tables. But he was doing very little good for the establishment; he had no refreshment of any kind before him, and was intent only on a dingy pocket-book in which he was making entries with a pencil.

You enter the "Banks of Jordan" by two folding doors in a corner of a very narrow alley behind the Exchange. As you go in, you observe on your left a little glass partition, something like a large cage, inside which, in a bar, are four or five untempting looking bottles; and also inside the

cage, on a chair is to be seen a quiet-looking female, who is invariably engaged in the manufacture of some white article of inward clothing. Anything less like the flashy-dressed bar-maidens of the western gin palaces it would be difficult to imagine. To this encaged sempstress no one ever speaks unless it be to give a rare order for a mutton chop or pint of stout. And even for this she hardly stays her sewing for a moment, but touches a small bell, and the ancient waiter, who never shows himself but when called for, and who is the only other inhabitant of the place ever visible, receives the order from her through an open pane in the cage as quietly as she received it from her customer.

The floor of the single square room of the establishment is sanded, and the tables are ranged round the walls, each table being fixed to the floor, and placed within wooden partitions by which the occupier is screened from any inquiring eyes on either side.

Such was Mr. Jabesh McRuen's house-of-call in the city, and of many a mutton chop and many a pint of stout had Charley partaken there while waiting for the man of money. To him it seemed to be inexcusable to sit down in a public inn, and call for nothing; he perceived however that the large majority of the frequenters of the "Banks of Jordan" so conducted themselves.

He was sufficiently accustomed to the place to know how to give his orders without troubling that diligent bar-maid, and had done so about ten minutes when Jabesh, more punctual than usual, entered the place. This Charley regarded as a promising sign of forthcoming cash. It very frequently happened that he waited there an hour, and that after all Jabesh would not come; and then the morning visit to Mecklenburg Square had to be made again; and so poor Charley's time, or rather the time of his poor office, was cut up, wasted, and destroyed.

"A mutton chop!" said McRuen looking at Charley's banquet. "A very nice thing indeed in the middle of the day. I don't mind if I have one myself," and so Charley had to order another chop and more stout.

"They have very nice sherry here, excellent sherry," said McRuen. "The best, I think, in the city—that's why I come here."

"Upon my honour, Mr. McRuen, I shan't have money to pay for it, until I get some from you," said Charley, as he called for a pint of sherry.

"Never mind, John, never mind the sherry to-day," said McRuen. "Mr. Tudor is very kind, but I'll take beer;" and the little man gave a laugh and twisted his head, and ate his chop and drank his stout, as though he found that both were very good indeed. When he had

finished, Charley paid the bill and discovered that he was left with ninepence in his pocket.

And then he produced the bill stamp. "Waiter," said he, "pen and ink," and the waiter brought pen and ink.

"Not to-day," said Jabesh, wiping his mouth with the table-cloth. "Not to-day, Mr. Tudor— I really haven't time to go into it, to-day—and I haven't brought the other bills with me; I quite forgot to bring the other bills with me, and I can do nothing without them," and Mr. M'Ruen got up to go.

But this was too much for Charley. He had often before bought bill stamps in vain, and in vain had paid for mutton chops and beer for Mr. M'Ruen's dinner; but he had never before when doing so, been so hard pushed for money as he was now. He was determined to make a great attempt to gain his object.

"Nonsense," said he, getting up and standing so as to prevent M'Ruen from leaving the box; "that's d—— nonsense."

"Oh! don't swear," said M'Ruen,—"pray don't take God's name in vain; I don't like it."

"I shall swear, and to some purpose too, if that's your game. Now look here—"

"Let me get up, and we'll talk of it as we go to the bank—you are so unpunctual, you know."

"D— your punctuality."

"Oh! don't swear, Mr. Tudor."

"Look here—if you don't let me have this money to-day, by all that is holy I will never pay you a farthing again—not one farthing; I'll go into the court, and you may get your money as you can."

"But, Mr. Tudor, let me get up, and we'll talk about it in the street, as we go along."

"There's the stamp," said Charley. "Fill it up, and then I'll go with you to the bank."

McRuen took the bit of paper, and twisted it over and over again in his hand, considering the while whether he had yet squeezed out of the young man all that could be squeezed with safety, or whether by an additional turn, by giving him another small advancement, he might yet get something more. He knew that Tudor was in a very bad state, that he was tottering on the outside edge of the precipice; but he also knew that he had friends. Would his friends when they came forward to assist their young Pickle out of the mire, would they pay such bills as these, or would they leave poor Jabesh to get his remedy at law? That was the question which Mr. McRuen had to ask and to answer. He was not one of those noble vultures who fly at large game, and who are willing to run considerable risk in pursuit of their prey. Mr. McRuen avoided courts of law as much as he could, and preferred a small safe trade; one in which the fall of a single customer could never be ruinous to him; in

which he need run no risk of being transported for forgery, incarcerated for perjury, or even, if possibly it might be avoided, gibbeted by some lawyer or judge for his mal-practices.

"But you are so unpunctual," he said, having at last made up his mind that he had made a very good thing of Charley, and that probably he might go a *little* further without much danger. "I wish to oblige you, Mr. Tudor; but pray do be punctual;" and so saying he slowly spread the little document before him, across which Scatterall had already scrawled his name, and slowly began to write in the date. Slowly, with his head low down over the table, and continually twisting it inside his cravat, he filled up the paper, and then looking at it with the air of a connoisseur in such matters, he gave it to Charley to sign.

"But you haven't put in the amount," said Charley.

Mr. M'Ruen twisted his head and laughed. He delighted in playing with his game as a fisherman does with a salmon. "Well—no—I haven't put in the amount yet. Do you sign it, and I'll do that at once."

"I'll do it," said Charley; "I'll say 15*l.*, and you'll give me 10*l.* on that."

"No, no, no!" said Jabesh, covering the paper over with his hands; "you young men know nothing of filling bills; just sign it, Mr. Tudor, and I'll do the rest." And so Charley signed it, and

then M'Ruen, again taking the pen, wrote in 'fifteen pounds' as the recognised amount of the value of the document. He also took out his pocket-book and filled a cheque, but he was very careful that Charley should not see the amount there written. "And now," said he, "we will go to the bank."

As they made their way to the house in Lombard Street which Mr. M'Ruen honoured by his account, Charley insisted on knowing how much he was to have for the bill. Jabesh suggested 3*l.* 10*s.*; Charley swore he would take nothing less than 8*l.*; but by the time they had arrived at the bank, it had been settled that 5*l.* was to be paid in cash, and that Charley was to have the three Seasons for the balance whenever he chose to send for them. When Charley, as he did at first, positively refused to accede to these terms, Mr. M'Ruen tendered him back the bill, and reminded him with a plaintive voice that he was so unpunctual, so extremely unpunctual.

Having reached the bank, which the money-lender insisted on Charley entering with him, Mr. M'Ruen gave the cheque across the counter, and wrote on the back of it the form in which he would take the money, whereupon a note and five sovereigns were handed to him. The cheque was for 15*l.*, and was payable to C. Tudor, Esq., so that proof might be forthcoming at a future

time, if necessary, that he had given to his customer full value for the bill. Then in the outer hall of the bank, unseen by the clerks, he put, one after another, slowly and unwillingly, four sovereigns into Charley's hand.

"The other—where's the other?" said Charley.

Jabesh smiled sweetly and twisted his head.

"Come, give me the other," said Charley roughly.

"Four is quite enough, quite enough for what you want; and remember my time, Mr. Tudor; you should remember my time."

"Give me the other sovereign," said Charley, taking hold of the front of his coat.

"Well, well, you shall have ten shillings; but I want the rest for a purpose."

"Give me the sovereign," said Charley, "or I'll drag you in before them all in the bank and expose you; give me the other sovereign, I say."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Mr. M'Ruen; "I thought you liked a joke, Mr. Tudor. Well, here it is. And now do be punctual, pray do be punctual, and I'll do anything I can for you."

And then they parted, Charley going westward towards his own haunts, and M'Ruen following his daily pursuits in the city.

Charley had engaged to pull up to Avis's at Putney with Harry Norman, to dine there, take a country walk, and row back in the cool of the evening; and he had promised to call at the

Weights and Measures with that object punctually at five.

"You can get away in time for that, I suppose," said Harry.

Well, I'll try and manage it," said Charley, laughing.

Nothing could be kinder, nay more affectionate, than Norman had been to his fellow-lodger during the last year and a half. It seemed as though he had transferred to Alaric's cousin all the friendship which he had once felt for Alaric; and the deeper were Charley's sins of idleness and extravagance, the wider grew Norman's forgiveness and the more sincere his efforts to befriend him. As one result of this, Charley was already deep in his debt. Not that Norman had lent him money, or even paid bills for him; but the lodgings in which they lived had been taken by Norman, and when the end of the quarter came he punctually paid his landlady. But poor Charley had always been somewhat backward in providing his portion of the account due; and latterly, since his acquaintance with McRuen had grown into a close intimacy, he had made no such payments at all.

He had once, a few weeks before the period of which we are now writing, told Norman that he had no money to pay his long arrear, and that he would leave the lodgings and shift for himself as best he could. He had said the same thing

to Mrs. Richards, the landlady, and had gone so far as to pack up all his clothes; but his back was no sooner turned than Mrs. Richards, under Norman's orders, unpacked them all, and hid away the portmanteau. It was well for him that this was done. He had bespoken for himself a bedroom at the public house in Norfolk Street, and had he once taken up his residence there he would have been ruined for ever.

He was still living with Norman, and ever increasing his debt. In his misery at this state of affairs, he had talked over with Harry all manner of schemes for increasing his income, but he had never told a word about Mr. McRuen. Why his salary, which was now 150*l.* per annum, should not be able to support him, Norman never asked. That it was sufficient to support him Norman well knew, and therefore felt convinced that Charley was still going very much astray; but he was not, on that account, the more inclined to desert him. Charley the while was very miserable, and the more miserable he was, the less he found himself able to rescue himself from his dissipation. What moments of ease he had, were nearly all spent in Norfolk Street; and such being the case how could he abstain from going there?

"Well, Charley, and how do Crinoline and Macassar go on?" said Norman, as they sauntered away together up the towing-path

above Putney. Now there were those who had found out that Charley Tudor, in spite of his wretched idle vagabond mode of life, was no fool; indeed that there was that talent within him which, if turned to good account, might perhaps redeem him from ruin and set him on his legs again; at least so thought some of his friends, among whom Mrs. Woodward was the most prominent. She insisted that if he would make use of his genius he might employ his spare time to great profit by writing for magazines or periodicals of some sort; and, inspirited by so flattering a proposition, Charley had got himself introduced to the editor of a newly projected publication. At his instance he was to write a tale for approval, and "Crinoline and Macassar" was the name selected for his first attempt.

The affair had been fully talked over at Hampton, and it had been arranged that the young author should submit his story, when completed, to the friendly criticism of the party assembled at Surbiton Cottage, before he sent it to the editor. He had undertaken to have Crinoline and Macassar ready for perusal on the next Saturday; and in spite of Mr. McRuen and Norah Geraghty, he had really been hard at work.

"Will it be finished by Saturday, Charley?" said Norman.

"Yes—at least I hope so; but if that's not done, I have another all complete."

"Another! and what is that called?"

"Oh, that's a very short one," said Charley, modestly.

"But, short as it is, it must have a name, I suppose. What's the name of the short one?"

"Why the name is long enough; it's the longest part about it. The editor gave me the name, you know, and then I had to write the story. It's to be called 'Sir Anthony Allan-a-dale and the Baron of Ballyporeen.'"

"Oh! two rival knights in love with the same lady, of course," and Harry gave a gentle sigh as he thought of his own still unhealed grief. "The scene is laid in Ireland, I presume?"

"No, not in Ireland; at least not exactly. I don't think the scene is laid anywhere in particular; it's up in a mountain, near a castle. There isn't any lady in it—at least not alive."

"Heavens, Charley! I hope you are not dealing with dead women."

"No—that is, I have to bring them to life again. I'll tell you how it is. In the first paragraph, Sir Anthony Allan-a-dale is lying dead, and the Baron of Ballyporeen is standing over him with a bloody sword. You must always begin with an incident now, and then hark back for your explanation and description; that's what the editor says is the great secret of

the present day, and where we beat all the old fellows that wrote twenty years ago."

"Oh!—yes—I see. They used to begin at the beginning; that was very humdrum."

"A devilish bore, you know, for a fellow who takes up a novel because he's dull. Of course he wants his fun at once. If you begin with a long history of who's who and all that, why he won't read three pages; but if you touch him up with a startling incident or two at the first go off, then give him a chapter of horrors, then another of fun, then a little love, or a little slang, or something of that sort, why, you know, about the end of the first volume, you may describe as much as you like, and tell every thing about everybody's father and mother for just as many pages as you want to fill. At least that's what the editor says."

"'*Meleager ab ovo*' may be introduced with safety when you get as far as that," suggested Norman.

"Yes, you may bring him in too, if you like," said Charley, who was somewhat oblivious of his classicalities. "Well, Sir Anthony is lying dead and the Baron is standing over him, when out come Sir Anthony's retainers —"

"Out—out of what?"

"Out of the castle: that's all explained afterwards. Out come the retainers and pitch into the Baron till they make mincemeat of him."

"They don't kill him, too?"

"Don't they though? I rather think they do, and no mistake."

"And so both your heroes are dead in the first chapter."

"First chapter! why that's only the second paragraph. I'm only to be allowed ten paragraphs for each number, and I am expected to have an incident for every other paragraph, for the first four days."

"That's twenty incidents."

"Yes,—its a great bother finding so many—I'm obliged to make the retainers come by all manner of accidents; and I should never have finished the job if I hadn't thought of setting the castle on fire. 'And now forked tongues of liquid fire and greedy lambent flames burst forth from every window of the devoted edifice. The devouring element—'. That's the best passage in the whole affair."

"This is for the 'Daily Delight,' isn't it?"

"Yes, for the Daily Delight. It is to begin on the 1st of September with the partridges. We expect a most tremendous sale. It will be the first halfpenny publication in the market, and as the retailers will get them for sixpence a score, twenty-four to the score, they'll go off like wildfire."

"Well, Charley, and what do you do with the dead bodies of your two heroes?"

"Of course I needn't tell you, that it was not the Baron who killed Sir Anthony at all."

"Oh! wasn't it? Oh dear—that was a dreadful mistake on the part of the retainers."

"But as natural as life. You see these two grandees were next door neighbours, and there had been a feud between the families for seven centuries—a sort of Capulet and Montague affair—one Adelgitha, the daughter of the Thane of Allen-a-dale—there were Thanes in those days, you know—was betrothed to the eldest son of Sir Waldemar de Ballyporeen. This gives me an opportunity of bringing in a succinct little account of the Conquest, which will be beneficial to the lower classes. The editor peremptorily insists upon that kind of thing."

"*Omne tulit punctum,*—" said Norman.

"Yes, I dare say," said Charley, who was now too intent on his own new profession to attend much to his friend's quotation. "Well, where was I?—Oh! the eldest son of Sir Waldemar went off with another lady, and so the feud began. There is a very pretty scene between Adelgitha and her lady's-maid."

"What, seven centuries before the story begins?"

"Why not? the editor says that the unities are altogether thrown over now, and that they are regular bosh—our game is to stick in a good bit whenever we can get it—I got to be so fond

of Adelgitha that I rather think she's the heroine."

"But doesn't that take off the interest from your dead grandees?"

"Not a bit; I take it chapter and chapter about. Well, you see the retainers had no sooner made mincemeat of the Baron—a very elegant young man was the Baron, just returned from the Continent where he had learnt to throw aside all prejudices about family feuds and everything else, and he had just come over in a friendly way, to say as much to Sir Anthony, when as he crossed the draw-bridge he stumbled over the corpse of his ancient enemy.—Well, the retainers had no sooner made mincemeat of him, than they perceived that Sir Anthony was lying with an open bottle in his hand, and that he had taken poison."

"Having committed suicide?" asked Norman.

"No, not at all. The editor says that we must always have a slap at some of the iniquities of the times. He gave me three or four to choose from; there was the adulteration of food, and the want of education for the poor, and street music, and the miscellaneous sale of poisons."

"And so you chose poisons and killed the Knight?"

"Exactly; at least I didn't kill him, for he comes all right again after a bit. He had gone out to get something to do him good after a

hard night, a seidlitz-powder, or something of that sort, and an apothecary's apprentice had given him prussic acid in mistake."

"And how is it possible he should have come to life after taking prussic acid?"

"Why, there I have a double rap at the trade. The prussic acid is so bad of its kind, that it only puts him into a kind of torpor for a week. Then we have the trial of the apothecary's boy; that is an excellent episode, and gives me a grand hit at the absurdity of our criminal code."

"Why, Charley, it seems to me that you are hitting at everything."

"Oh! ah! right and left, that's the game for us authors. The press is the only *censor morum* going now—and who so fit? Set a thief to catch a thief, you know. Well, I have my hit at the criminal code, and then Sir Anthony comes out of his torpor."

"But how did it come to pass that the Baron's sword was all bloody?"

"Ah, there was the difficulty; I saw that at once. It was necessary to bring in something to be killed, you know. I thought of a stray tiger out of Wombwell's menagerie; but the editor says that we must not trespass against the probabilities, so I have introduced a big dog. The Baron had come across a big dog, and seeing that the brute had a wooden log tied to his throat, thought he must be mad, and so he killed him."

"And what's the end of it, Charley?"

"Why, the end is rather melancholy. Sir Anthony reforms, leaves off drinking, and takes to going to church every day. He becomes a Puseyite, puts up a memorial window to the Baron, and reads the Tracts. At last he goes over to the Pope, walks about in nasty dirty clothes all full of vermin, and gives over his estate to Cardinal Wiseman. Then there are the retainers; they all come to grief, some one way and some another. I do that for the sake of the Nemesis."

"I would not have condescended to notice them, I think," said Norman.

"Oh! I must; there must be a Nemesis. The editor specially insists on a Nemesis."

The conclusion of Charley's novel brought them back to the boat. Norman when he started had intended to employ the evening in giving good counsel to his friend, and in endeavouring to arrange some scheme by which he might rescue the brand from the burning; but he had not the heart to be severe and sententious, while Charley was full of his fun. It was so much pleasanter to talk to him on the easy terms of equal friendship than turn Mentor and preach a sermon.

"Well, Charley," said he as they were walking up from the boat wharf—Norman to his club, and Charley towards his lodgings, from which route,

however, he meant to deviate as soon as ever he might be left alone;—"well, Charley, I wish you success with all my heart; I wish you could do something,—I won't say to keep you out of mischief."

"I wish I could, Harry," said Charley thoroughly abashed; "I wish I could—indeed I wish I could—but it is so hard to go right when one has begun to go wrong."

"It is hard; I know it is."

"But you never can know how hard, Harry, for you have never tried," and then they went on walking for a while in silence, side by side.

"You don't know the sort of place that office of mine is," continued Charley. "You don't know the sort of fellows the men are. I hate the place; I hate the men I live with. It is all so dirty, so disreputable, so false. I cannot conceive that any fellow put in there as young as I was, should ever do well afterwards."

"But at any rate you might try your best, Charley."

"Yes I might do that still; and I know I don't; and where should I have been now, if it hadn't been for you?"

"Never mind about that: I sometimes think we might have done more for each other if we had been more together. But, remember the motto you said you'd choose, Charley—Excelsior! We can none of us mount the hill without hard

labour. Remember that word, Charley—excelsior! —remember it now, now to-night; remember how you dream of higher things, and begin to think of them in your waking moments also;" and so they parted.

CHAPTER IV.

A DAY WITH ONE OF THE NAVVIES.—EVENING.

"Excelsior!" said Charley to himself as he walked on a few steps towards his lodgings, having left Norman at the door of his club. "Remember it now; now to-night."

Yes—now is the time to remember it, if it is ever to be remembered to any advantage. He went on with stoic resolution to the end of the street, determined to press home and put the last touch to Crinoline and Macassar; but as he went he thought of his interview with Mr. McRuen and of the five sovereigns still in his pocket, and altered his course.

Charley had not been so resolute with the usurer, so determined to get 5*l.* from him on this special day, without a special object in view. His credit was at stake in a more than ordinary manner; he had about a week since borrowed money from the woman who kept the public-house in Norfolk Street, and having borrowed it for a week only, felt that this was a debt of honour which it was incumbent on him to pay. Therefore when he had walked the length of one street

on his road towards his lodgings, he retraced his steps and made his way back to his old haunts.

The house which he frequented was hardly more like a modern London gin palace than was that other house in the city which Mr. McRuen honoured with his custom. It was one of those small tranquil shrines of Bacchus in which the god is worshipped perhaps with as constant a devotion, though with less noisy demonstrations of zeal than in his larger and more public temples. None absolutely of the lower orders were encouraged to come thither for oblivion. It had about it nothing inviting to the general eye. No gas illuminations proclaimed its midnight grandeur. No huge folding doors, one set here and another there, gave ingress and egress to a wretched crowd of poverty-stricken midnight revellers. No reiterated assertions in gaudy letters, each a foot long, as to the peculiar merits of the old tom or Hodge's cream of the valley, seduced the thirsty traveller. The panelling over the window bore the simple announcement, in modest letters, of the name of the landlady, Mrs. Davis; and the same name appeared with equal modesty on the one gas lamp opposite the door.

Mrs. Davis was a widow, and her customers were chiefly people who knew her and frequented her house regularly. Lawyers' clerks, who were either unmarried, or whose married homes were

perhaps not so comfortable as the widow's front parlour; tradesmen not of the best sort, glad to get away from the noise of their children; young men who had begun the cares of life in ambiguous positions, just on the confines of respectability, and who finding themselves too weak in flesh to cling on to the round of the ladder above them, were sinking from year to year to lower steps, and depths even below the level of Mrs. Davis's public house. To these might be added some few of a somewhat higher rank in life, though perhaps of a lower rank of respectability; young men, who like Charley Tudor and his comrades, liked their ease and self-indulgence, and were too indifferent as to the class of companions against whom they might rub their shoulders while seeking it.

The "Cat and Whistle," for such was the name of Mrs. Davis's establishment, had been a house of call for the young men of the Internal Navigation long before Charley's time. What first gave rise to the connection it is not now easy to say; but Charley had found it, and had fostered it into a close alliance, which greatly exceeded any amount of intimacy which existed previously to his day.

It must not be presumed that he, in an ordinary way, took his place among the lawyers' clerks, and general run of customers in the front parlour; occasionally he condescended to preside

there over the quiet revels, to sing a song for the guests which was sure to be applauded to the echo, and to engage in a little skirmish of politics with a retired lamp-maker and a silver-smith's foreman from the Strand, who always called him "Sir," and received what he said with the greatest respect; but, as a rule, he quaffed his Falernian in a little secluded parlour behind the bar, in which sat the widow Davis, auditing her accounts in the morning, and giving out orders in the evening to Norah Geraghty, her barmaid, and to an attendant sylph, who ministered to the front parlour, taking in goes of gin and screws of tobacco, and bringing out the price thereof with praiseworthy punctuality.

Latterly, indeed, Charley had utterly deserted the front parlour; for there had come there a pestilent fellow, highly connected with the press as the lamp-maker declared, but employed as an assistant short-hand writer somewhere about the Houses of Parliament, according to the silver-smith, who greatly interfered with our navvy's authority. He would not at all allow that what Charley said was law, entertained fearfully demo-cratic principles of his own, and was not at all the gentleman. So Charley drew himself up, declined to converse any further on politics with a man who seemed to know more about them than himself, and confined himself exclu-sively to the inner room.

On arriving at this elysium, on the night in question, he found Mrs. Davis usefully engaged in darning a stocking, while Scatterall sat opposite with a cigar in his mouth, his hat over his nose, and a glass of gin and water before him.

"I began to think you weren't coming," said Scatterall, "and I was getting so deuced dull that I positively was thinking of going home."

"That's very civil of you, Mr. Scatterall," said the widow.

"Well, you've been sitting there for the last half hour without saying a word to me; and it is dull. Looking at a woman mending stockings is dull, ain't it, Charley?"

"That depends," said Charley, "partly on whom the woman may be, and partly on whom the man may be. Where's Norah, Mrs. Davis?"

"She's not very well to-night; she has got a head ache: there ain't many of them here to-night, so she's lying down."

"A little seedy, I suppose," said Scatterall.

Charley felt rather angry with his friend for applying such an epithet to his lady-love; however he did not resent it, but sitting down, lighted his pipe and sipped his gin and water.

And so they sat for the next quarter of an hour, saying very little to each other. What was the nature of the attraction which induced

two such men as Charley Tudor and Dick Scatterall to give Mrs. Davis the benefit of their society, while she was mending her stockings, it might be difficult to explain. They could have smoked in their own rooms as well, and have drunk gin and water there, if they had any real predilection for that mixture. Mrs. Davis was neither young nor beautiful, nor more than ordinarily witty. Charley, it is true, had an allurement to entice him thither, but this could not be said of Scatterall, to whom the lovely Norah was never more than decently civil. Had they been desired, in their own paternal halls, to sit and see their mother's housekeeper darn the family stockings, they would, probably both of them, have rebelled, even though the supply of tobacco and gin and water should be gratuitous and unlimited.

It must be presumed that the only charm of the pursuit was in its acknowledged impropriety. They both understood that there was something fast in frequenting Mrs. Davis's inner parlour, something slow in remaining at home; and so they both sat there, and Mrs. Davis went on with her darning needle, nothing abashed.

"Well, I think I shall go," said Scatterall, shaking off the last ash from the end of his third cigar."

"Do," said Charley; "you should be careful; late hours will hurt your complexion."

"It's so deuced dull," said Scatterall.

"Why don't you go into the parlour, and have a chat with the gentlemen," suggested Mrs. Davis; "there's Mr. Peppermint there now, lecturing about the war; upon my word he talks very well."

"He's so deuced low," said Scatterall.

"He's a bumptious noisy blackguard too," said Charley; "he doesn't know how to speak to a gentleman, when he meets one."

Scatterall gave a great yawn. "I suppose you're not going, Charley?" said he.

"Oh yes, I am," said Charley, "in about two hours."

"Two hours! well, good night, old fellow, for I'm off. Three cigars, Mrs. Davis, and two goes of gin and water, the last cold." Then, having made this little commercial communication to the landlady, he gave another yawn, and took himself away. Mrs. Davis opened her little book, jotted down the items, and then having folded up her stockings, and put them into a basket, prepared herself for conversation.

But, though Mrs. Davis prepared herself for conversation, she did not immediately commence it. Having something special to say, she probably thought that she might improve her opportunity of saying it, by allowing Charley to begin. She got up and pottered about the room, went to a cupboard and wiped a couple of glasses,

and then out into the bar and arranged the jugs and pots. This done, she returned to the little room, and again sat herself down in her chair.

"Here's your five pounds, Mrs. Davis," said Charley; "I wish you knew the trouble I have had to get it for you."

To give Mrs. Davis her due, this was not the subject on which she was anxious to speak. She would have been at present well inclined that Charley should remain her debtor. "Indeed, Mr. Tudor, I am very sorry you should have taken any trouble on such a trifle. If you're short of cash, it will do for me just as well in October."

Charley looked at the sovereigns, and bethought himself how very short of cash he was. Then he thought of the fight he had had to get them, in order that he might pay the money which he had felt so ashamed of having borrowed, and he determined to resist the temptation.

"Did you ever know me flush of cash? You had better take them while you can get them," and as he pushed them across the table with his stick, he remembered that all he had left was ninepence.

"I don't want the money at present, Mr. Tudor," said the widow. "We're such old friends that there ought not to be a word between us about such a trifle—now don't leave yourself bare;—take what you want and settle with me at quarter-day."

"Well—I'll take a sovereign," said he, "for to tell you the truth, I have only the ghost of a shilling in my pocket." And so it was settled; Mrs. Davis reluctantly pocketed four of Mr. M^c^Ruen's sovereigns, and Charley kept in his own possession the fifth, as to which he had had so hard a combat in the lobby of the bank.

He then sat silent for a while and smoked, and Mrs. Davis again waited for him to begin the subject on which she wished to speak. "And what's the matter with Norah all this time?" he said at last.

"What's the matter with her!" repeated Mrs. Davis. "Well, I think you might know what's the matter with her. You don't suppose she's made of stone, do you?"

Charley saw that he was in for it. It was in vain that Norman's last word was still ringing in his ears—Excelsior! What had he to do with excelsior? What miserable reptile on God's earth was more prone to crawl downwards than he had shown himself to be. And then again a vision floated across his mind's eye of a young sweet angel face with large bright eyes, with soft delicate skin, and all the exquisite charms of gentle birth and gentle nurture. A single soft touch seemed to press his arm, a touch that he had so often felt, and had never felt without acknowledging to himself that there was something in it almost divine. All this passed rapidly

through his mind, as he was preparing to answer Mrs. Davis's question touching Norah Geraghty.

"You don't think she's made of stone, do you?" said the widow, repeating her words.

"Indeed I don't think she's made of anything but what's suitable to a very nice young woman," said Charley.

"A nice young woman! Is that all you can say for her? I call her a very fine girl." Miss Golightly's friends could not say anything more, even for that young lady. "I don't know where you'll pick up a handsomer, or a better-conducted one either, for the matter of that."

"Indeed she is," said Charley.

"Oh! for the matter of that, no one knows it better than yourself, Mr. Tudor—and she's as well able to keep a man's house over his head as some others that take a deal of pride in themselves."

"I'm quite sure of it," said Charley.

"Well, the long and the short of it is this, Mr. Tudor"—And as she spoke the widow got a little red in the face: she had, as Charley thought, an unpleasant look of resolution about her—a roundness about her mouth, and a sort of fierceness in her eyes. "The long and the short of it is this, Mr. Tudor, what do you mean to do about the girl?"

"Do about her?" said Charley almost bewildered in his misery.

"Yes, do about her? do you mean to make

her your wife? that's plain English. Because I'll tell you what; I'll not see her put upon any longer. It must be one thing or the other; and that at once. And if you've a grain of honour in you, Mr. Tudor, and I think you are honourable, you won't go back from your word with the girl now."

"Back from my word?" said Charley.

"Yes, back from your word," said Mrs. Davis, the floodgates of whose eloquence were now fairly opened. "I'm sure you're too much of the gentleman to deny your own words, and them repeated more than once in my presence—Cheroots—yes, are there none there, child?—Oh, they are in the cupboard." These last words were not part of her address to Charley, but were given in reply to a requisition from the attendant nymph outside. "You're too much of a gentleman to do that, I know. And so, as I'm her natural friend, and indeed she's my cousin not that far off, I think it's right that we should all understand one another."

"Oh, quite right," said Charley.

"You can't expect that she should go and sacrifice herself for you, you know," said Mrs. Davis, who now that she had begun hardly knew how to stop herself. "A girl's time is her money. She's at her best now, and a girl like her must make her hay while the sun shines. She can't go on fal-lalling with you, and then nothing to come

of it. You musn't suppose she's to lose her market that way."

"God knows I should be sorry to injure her, Mrs. Davis."

"I believe you would, because I take you for an honourable gentleman as will be as good as your word. Now, there's Peppermint there."

"What, that fellow in the parlour?"

"And an honourable gentleman he is. Not that I mean to compare him to you, Mr. Tudor, nor yet doesn't Norah, not by no means. But there he is. Well, he comes with the most honourablest proposals, and will make her Mrs. Peppermint to-morrow, if so that she'll have it."

"You don't mean to say that there has been anything between them?" said Charley, who in spite of the intense desire which he felt a few minutes since to get the lovely Norah altogether off his hands, now felt an acute pang of jealousy. "You don't mean to say that there has been anything between them."

"Nothing as you have any right to object to, Mr. Tudor. You may be sure I wouldn't allow of that, nor yet wouldn't Norah demean herself to it."

"Then how did she get talking to him?"

"She didn't get talking to him. But he has eyes in his head, and you don't suppose but what he can see with them. If a girl is in the public line, of course any man is free to speak to her. If

you don't like it, it is for you to take her out of it. Not but what, for a girl that is in the public line Norah Geraghty keeps herself to herself as much as any girl you ever set eyes on."

"What the d— has she to do with this fellow then?"

"Why, he's a widower and has three young children; and he's looking out for a mother for them; and he thinks Norah will suit. There now, you have the truth and the whole truth."

"D— his impudence," said Charley.

"Well I don't see that there's any impudence. He has a house of his own and the means to keep it. Now I'll tell you what it is. Norah can't abide him"—

Charley looked a little better satisfied when he heard this declaration.

"Norah can't abide the sight of him; nor won't of any man as long as you are hanging after her. She's as true as steel, and proud you ought to be of her"—proud, thought Charley, as he again muttered to himself, 'excelsior!'—"But, Mr. Tudor, I won't see her put upon, that's the long and the short of it. If you like to take her, there she is. I don't say she's just your equal as to breeding, though she's come of decent people too; but she's good as gold. She'll make a shilling go as far as any young woman I know; and if 100*l*. or 150*l*., are wanting for furniture or the like of that, why, I've that

regard for her, that that shan't stand in the way. Now, Mr. Tudor, I've spoke honest; and if you're the gentleman as I takes you to be, you'll do the same."

To do Mrs. Davis justice it must be acknowledged that in her way she had spoken honest. Of course she knew that such a marriage would be a dreadful misalliance for young Tudor; of course she knew that all his friends would be heart-broken when they heard of it. But what had she to do with his friends? Her sympathies, her good wishes, were for her friend. Had Norah fallen a victim to Charley's admiration, and then been cast off to eat the bitterest bread to which any human being is ever doomed, what then would Charley's friends have cared for her? There was a fair fight between them. If Norah Geraghty, as a reward for her prudence, could get a husband in a rank of life above her, instead of falling to utter destruction as might so easily have been the case, who could do other than praise her—praise her and her clever friend who had so assisted her in her struggle.

Dolus an virtus——

Had Mrs. Davis ever studied the classics she would have thus expressed herself.

Poor Charley was altogether thrown on his beam-ends. He had altogether played Mrs. Davis' game in evincing jealousy at Mr. Peppermint's attentions. He knew this, and yet for the life

of him he could not help being jealous. He wanted to get rid of Miss Geraghty, and yet he could not endure that any one else should lay claim to her favour. He was very weak. He knew how much depended on the way in which he might answer this woman at the present moment; he knew that he ought now to make it plain to her, that however foolish he might have been, however false he might have been, it was quite out of the question that he should marry her barmaid. But he did not do so. He was worse than weak. It was not only the disinclination to give pain or even the dread of the storm that would ensue, which deterred him; but an absurd dislike to think that Mr. Peppermint should be graciously received there as the barmaid's acknowledged admirer.

"Is she really ill now?" said he.

"She's not so ill, but what she shall make herself well enough to welcome you, if you'll say the word that you ought to say. The most that ails her is fretting at the long delay. Bolt the door, child, and go to bed; there will be no one else here now. Go up, and tell Miss Geraghty to come down; she hasn't got her clothes off yet, I know.

Mrs. Davis was too good a general to press Charley for an absolute, immediate, fixed answer to her question. She knew that she had already gained much, by talking thus of the proposed

marriage, by setting it thus plainly before Charley, without rebuke, or denial from him. He had not objected to receiving a visit from Norah, on the implied understanding that she was to come down to him as his affianced bride. He had not agreed to this in words; but silence gives consent, and Mrs. Davis felt that should it ever hereafter become necessary to prove anything, what had passed would enable her to prove a good deal.

Charley puffed at his cigar and sipped his gin and water. It was now twelve o'clock, and he thoroughly wished himself at home and in bed. The longer he thought of it the more impossible it appeared that he should get out of the house without the scene which he dreaded. The girl had bolted the door, put away her cups and mugs, and her step up stairs had struck heavily on his ears. The house was not large, or high, and he fancied that he heard mutterings on the landing-place. Indeed he did not doubt but that Miss Geraghty had listened to most of the conversation which had taken place.

"Excuse me a minute, Mr. Tudor," said Mrs. Davis, who was now smiling, and civil enough. "I will go up stairs myself; the silly girl is shamefaced, and does not like to come down;" and up went Mrs. Davis to see that her barmaid's curls and dress were nice and jaunty. It would not do now, at this moment, for Norah

to offend her lover by any untidiness. Charley for a moment thought of the front door. The enemy had allowed him an opportunity for retreating. He might slip out before either of the women came down, and then never more be heard of in Norfolk-street again. He had his hand in his waistcoat pocket, with the intent of leaving the sovereign on the table; but when the moment came, he felt ashamed of the pusillanimity of such an escape, and therefore stood, or rather sat his ground, with a courage worthy of a better purpose.

Down the two women came, and Charley felt his heart beating against his ribs. As the steps came nearer the door, he began to wish that Mr. Peppermint had been successful. The widow entered the room first, and at her heels, the expectant beauty. We can hardly say that she was blushing; but she did look rather shamefaced, and hung back a little at the door, as though she still had half a mind to think better of it, and go off to her bed.

"Come in, you little fool," said Mrs. Davis. "You needn't be ashamed of coming down to see him; you have done that often enough before now."

Norah simpered and sidled. "Well, I'm sure now!" said she. "Here's a start, Mr. Tudor, to be brought down stairs at this time of night; and I'm sure I don't know what it's about;"

and then she shook her curls, and twitched her dress; and made as though she were going to pass through the room, to her accustomed place at the bar.

Norah Geraghty was a fine girl. Putting her in comparison with Miss Golightly, we are inclined to say that she was the finer girl of the two; and that, barring position, money and fashion, she was qualified to make the better wife. In point of education, that is the effects of education, there was not perhaps much to choose between them. Norah could make an excellent pudding, and was willing enough to exercise her industry and art in doing so; Miss Golightly could copy music, but she did not like the trouble; and could play a waltz badly. Neither of them had ever read anything beyond a few novels. In this respect, as to the amount of labour done, Miss Golightly had certainly far surpassed her rival competitor for Charley's affections.

Charley got up and took her hand; and as he did so, he saw that her nails were dirty. He put his arm round her waist and kissed her; and as he caressed her, his olfactory nerves perceived that the pomatum in her hair was none of the best. He thought of those young lustrous eyes that would look up so wondrously into his face; he thought of the gentle touch, which would send a thrill through all his nerves; and then he felt very sick.

"Well, upon my word, Mr. Tudor," said Miss Geraghty, "you're making very free to-night." She did not, however, refuse to sit down on his knee, though while sitting there she struggled and tossed herself, and shook her long ringlets in Charley's face, till he wished her—safe at home, in Mr. Peppermint's nursery.

"And is that what you brought me down for, Mrs. Davis?" said Norah. "Well, upon my word, I hope the door's locked; we shall have all the world in here else."

"If you hadn't come down to him, he'd have been up to you," said Mrs. Davis.

"Would he though?" said Norah: "I think he knows a trick worth two of that;" and she looked as though she knew well how to defend herself, if any over zeal on the part of her lover should ever induce him to violate the sanctum of her feminine retirement.

There was no over zeal now about Charley. He ought to have been happy enough, for he had his charmer in his arms; but he showed very little of the ecstatic joy of a favoured lover. There he sat with Norah in his arms, and as we have said, Norah was a handsome girl; but he would much sooner have been copying the Kennet and Avon canal lock entries, in Mr. Snape's room at the Internal Navigation.

"Lawks, Mr. Tudor, you needn't hold me so tight," said Norah.

"He means to hold you tight enough now," said Mrs. Davis. "He's very angry because I mentioned another gentleman's name."

"Well, now you didn't," said Norah, pretending to look very angry.

"Well, I just did; and if you'd only seen him. You must be very careful what you say to that gentleman, or there'll be a row in the house."

"I!" said Norah. "What I say to him! It's very little I have to say to the man. But I shall tell him this; he'd better take himself somewhere else, if he's going to make himself troublesome."

All this time Charley had said nothing, but was sitting with his hat on his head, and his cigar in his mouth. The latter appendage he had laid down for a moment when he saluted Miss Geraghty, but he had resumed it, having at the moment no intention of repeating the compliment.

"And so you were jealous, were you?" said she, turning round and looking at him. "Well now some people might have more respect for other people, than to mix up their names that way, with the names of any men that choose to put themselves forward. What would you say if I was to talk to you about Miss———"

Charley stopped her mouth. It was not to be borne that she should be allowed to pronounce the name that was about to fall from her lips.

"So you were jealous, were you?" said she; when she was again able to speak. "Well, my!"

"Mrs. Davis told me flatly that you were going to marry the man," said Charley; "so what was I to think?"

"It doesn't matter what you think now," said Mrs. Davis; "for you must be off from this. Do you know what o'clock it is? Do you want the house to get a bad name? Come, you two understand each other now; so you may as well give over billing and cooing for this time. It's all settled now, isn't it, Mr. Tudor?"

"Oh! yes, I suppose so," said Charley.

"Well, and what do you say, Norah?"

"Oh, I'm sure, I'm agreeable, if he is. Ha! ha! ha! I only hope he won't think me too forward—he! he! he!"

And then with another kiss, and very few more words of any sort, Charley took himself off.

"I'll have nothing more to do with him," said Norah, bursting into tears, as soon as the door was well bolted after Charley's exit. "I'm only losing myself with him. He don't mean anything, and I said he didn't all along. He'd have pitched me to Old Scratch, while I was sitting there on his knee, if he'd have had his own way—so he would"—and poor Norah cried heartily, as she went to her work in her usual way, among the bottles and taps.

"Why, you fool you, what do you expect?

You don't think he's to jump down your throat, do you! You can but try it on; and then if it don't do, why there's the other one to fall back on; only, if I had the choice, I'd rather have young Tudor, too."

"So would I," said Norah. "I can't abide that other fellow."

"Well, there, that's how it is, you know—beggars can't be choosers. But come, make us a drop of something hot; a little drop will do yourself good; but it's better not to take it before him, unless when he presses you."

So the two ladies sat down to console themselves, as best they might, for the reverses which trade and love so often bring with them.

Charley walked off a miserable man. He was thoroughly ashamed of himself, thoroughly acknowledged his own weakness; and yet as he went out from the Cat and Whistle, he felt sure that he should return there again to renew the degradation from which he had suffered this night. Indeed what else could he do now? He had, as it were, solemnly plighted his troth to the girl before a third person who had brought them together, with the acknowledged purpose of witnessing that ceremony. He had, before Mrs. Davis, and before the girl herself, heard her spoken of as his wife, and had agreed to the understanding that such an arrangement was a settled thing. What

else had he to do now, but to return and complete his part of the bargain? What else but that—and be a wretched miserable degraded man for the rest of his days; lower, viler, more contemptible, infinitely lower, even than his brother clerks at the office, whom in his pride he had so much despised?

He walked from Norfolk Street into the Strand, and there the world was still alive though it was now nearly one o'clock. The debauched misery, the wretched out-door midnight revelry of the world was there, streaming in and out from gin palaces, and bawling itself hoarse with horrid discordant screech-owl slang. But he went his way unheeding and uncontaminated. Now, now that it was useless, he was thinking of the better things of the world; nothing now seemed worth his grasp, nothing now seemed pleasurable, nothing capable of giving joy, but what was decent, good, reputable, cleanly, and polished. How he hated now that lower world with which he had for the last three years condescended to pass so much of his time! how he hated himself for his own vileness! He thought of what Alaric was, of what Norman was, of what he himself might have been—he that was praised by Mrs. Woodward for his talent, he that was encouraged to place himself among the authors of the day! He

thought of all this, and then he thought of what he was—the affianced husband of Norah Geraghty.

He went along the Strand, over the crossing under the statue of Charles on horseback, and up Pall Mall East till he came to the opening into the park under the Duke of York's column. The London night world was all alive as he made his way. From the opera colonnade shrill voices shrieked out at him as he passed, and drunken men coming down from the night supper-houses in the Haymarket saluted him with affectionate cordiality; the hoarse waterman from the cab-stand, whose voice had perished in the night air, croaked out at him the offer of a vehicle, and one of the night beggar-women who cling like burrs to those who roam the street at these unhallowed hours still stuck to him, as she had done ever since he had entered the Strand.

"Get away with you," said Charley, turning at the wretched creature in his fierce anger, "get away, or I'll give you in charge."

"That you may never know what it is to be in misery yourself!" said the miserable Irishwoman.

"If you follow me a step further I'll have you locked up," said Charley.

"Oh, then, it's you that have the hard heart," said she, "and it's you that will suffer yet."

Charley looked round, threw her the odd half-pence which he had in his pocket, and then turned

down towards the column. The woman picked up her prize, and, with a speedy blessing, took herself off in search of other prey.

His way home would have taken him up Waterloo Place, but the space round the column was now deserted and quiet, and sauntering there, without thinking of what he did, he paced up and down between the Clubs and the steps leading into the Park. There, walking to and fro, slowly he thought of his past career, of all the circumstances of his life since his life had been left to his own control, and of the absence of all hope for the future.

What was he to do? He was deeply, inextricably in debt. That wretch, M'Ruen, had his name on bills which it was impossible that he should ever pay. Tradesmen held other bills of his which were either now over due or would very shortly become so. He was threatened with numerous writs, any one of which would suffice to put him into gaol. From his poor father, burthened as he was with other children, he knew that he had no right to expect further assistance. He was in debt to Norman, his best, he would have said his only friend, had it not been that in all his misery he could not help still thinking of Mrs. Woodward as his friend.

And yet how could he venture to think longer of her, contaminated as he now was with the

horrid degradation of his acknowledged love at the Cat and Whistle. No; he must think no more of the Woodwards; he must dream no more of those angel eyes which in his waking moments had so often peered at him out of heaven, teaching him to think of higher things, giving him higher hopes than those which had come to him from the working of his own unaided spirit. Ah! lessons taught in vain! vain hopes! lessons that had come all too late! hopes that had been cherished only to be deceived! It was all over now. He had made his bed and he must lie on it; he had sown his seed and he must reap his produce: there was now no "excelsior" left for him within the bounds of human probability.

He had promised to go to Hampton with Harry Norman on Saturday, and he would go there for the last time. He would go there and tell Mrs. Woodward so much of the truth as he could bring himself to utter; he would say farewell to that blest abode; he would take Linda's soft hand in his for the last time; for the last time he would hear the young silver-ringing happy voice of his darling Katie; for the last time look into her bright face; for the last time play with her as with a child of heaven—and then he would return to the Cat and Whistle.

And having made this resolve he went home

to his lodgings. It was singular that in all his misery the idea hardly once occurred to him of setting himself right in the world by accepting his cousin's offer of Miss Golightly's hand and fortune.

CHAPTER V.

HAMPTON COURT BRIDGE.

Before the following Saturday afternoon, Charley's spirits had somewhat recovered their natural tone. Not that he was in a happy frame of mind—the united energies of Mr. McRuen and Mrs. Davis had been too powerful to allow of that; not that he had given over his projected plan of saying a long farewell to Mrs. Woodward, or at any rate of telling her something of his position; he still felt that he could not continue to live on terms of close intimacy both with her daughters and with Norah Geraghty. But the spirits of youth are ever buoyant, and the spirits of no one could be endowed with more natural buoyancy than those of the young navvy. Charley, therefore, in spite of his misfortunes, was ready with his manuscript when Saturday afternoon arrived, and, according to agreement, met Norman at the Railway Station.

Only one evening had intervened since the night in which he had ratified his matrimonial engagement, and in spite of the delicate nature of his position he had for that evening allowed

Mr. Peppermint to exercise his eloquence on the heart of the fair Norah without interruption. He the while had been engaged in completing the memoirs of "Crinoline and Macassar."

"Well, Charley," they asked, one and all, as soon as he reached the cottage, "have you got the story? Have you brought the manuscript? Is it all finished and ready for that dreadful editor?"

Charley produced a roll, and Linda and Katie instantly pounced upon it.

"Oh! it begins with poetry," said Linda.

"I am so glad," said Katie. "Is there much poetry in it, Charley? I do so hope there is."

"Not a word of it," said Charley; "that which Linda sees is a song that the heroine is singing, and it isn't supposed to be written by the author at all."

"I'm so sorry that there's no poetry," said Katie. "Can't you write poetry, Charley?"

"At any rate there's lots of love in it," said Linda, who was turning over the pages.

"Is there?" said Katie. "Well, that's next best; but they should go together. You should have put all your love into verse, Charley, and then your prose would have done for the funny parts."

"Perhaps it's all fun," said Mrs. Woodward. But come, girls, this is not fair; I won't let you look at the story till it's read in full committee."

And so saying, Mrs. Woodward took the papers from her daughters, and tying them up, deposited them in safe custody. "We'll have it out when the tea-things are gone."

But before the tea-things had come, an accident happened, which had been like to dismiss Crinoline and Macassar altogether from the minds of the whole of the Woodward family. The young men had, as usual, dined in town, and therefore they were all able to spend the long summer evening out of doors. Norman's boat was down at Hampton, and it was therefore determined that they should row down as far as Hampton Court Park and back. Charley and Norman were to row; and Mrs. Woodward agreed to accompany her daughters. Uncle Bat was left at home, to his nap and rum and water.

Norman was so expert a Thames waterman, that he was quite able to manage the boat without a steersman, and Charley was nearly his equal. But there is some amusement in steering, and Katie was allowed to sit between the tiller ropes.

"I can steer very well, mama: can't I, Harry? I always steer when we go to the island, and we run the boat straight into the little creek, only just broad enough to hold it." Katie's visits to the island, however, were not so frequent as they had heretofore been, for she was approaching to sixteen years of age, and wet feet and draggled

petticoats had lost some of their charms. Mrs. Woodward, trusting more to the experience of her two knights than to the skill of the lady at the helm, took her seat, and they went off merrily down the stream.

All the world knows that it is but a very little distance from Hampton Church to Hampton Court Bridge, especially when one has the stream with one. They were very soon near to the bridge, and as they approached it, they had to pass a huge barge, that was lazily making its way down to Brentford.

"There's lots of time for the big arch," said Charley.

"Pull away then," said Harry.

They both pulled hard, and shot alongside, and past the barge. But the stream was strong, and the great ugly mass of black timber moved behind them quicker than it seemed to do.

"It will be safer to take the one to the left," said Harry.

"Oh! there's lots of time," said Charley.

"No," said Harry, "do as I tell you, and go to the left.—Pull your left hand a little, Katie."

Charley did as he was bid, and Katie intended to do the same; but unfortunately she pulled the wrong hand. They were now very near the bridge, and the barge was so close to them as to show that there might have been danger in attempting to get through the same arch with her.

"Your left hand, Katie, your left," shouted Norman; "your left string." Katie was confused, and gave first a pull with her left, and then a pull with her right, and then a strong pull with her left. The two men backed water as hard as they could, but the effect of Katie's steering was to drive the nose of the boat right into one of the wooden piers of the bridge.

The barge went on its way, and luckily made its entry under the arch before the little craft had swung round into the stream before it; as it was, the boat, still clinging by its nose, came round with its stern against the side of the barge, and as the latter went on, the timbers of Norman's wherry cracked and crumpled in the rude encounter.

The ladies should all have kept their seats. Mrs. Woodward did do so. Linda jumped up, and being next to the barge, was pulled up into it by one of the men. Katie stood bolt upright, with the tiller ropes still in her hand, awe-struck at the misfortune she had caused; but while she was so standing, the stern of the boat was lifted nearly out of the water, by the weight of the barge, and Katie was pitched, behind her mother's back, head foremost into the water.

Norman, at the moment, was endeavouring to steady the boat, and shove it off from the barge, and had also lent a hand to assist Linda in her escape. Charley was on the other side, standing

up and holding on by the piers of the bridge, keeping his eyes on the ladies, so as to be of assistance to them when assistance might be needed.

And now assistance was sorely needed, and luckily had not to be long waited for. Charley, with a light and quick step, passed over the thwarts, and, disregarding Mrs. Woodward's scream, let himself down, over the gunwale behind her seat, into the water. Katie can hardly be said to have sunk at all. She had, at least, never been so much under the water as to be out of sight. Her clothes kept up her light body; and when Charley got close to her, she had been carried up to the piers of the bridge, and was panting with her head above water, and beating the stream with her little hands.

She was soon again in comparative safety. Charley had her by one arm as he held on with the other to the boat, and kept himself afloat with his legs. Mrs. Woodward leaned over and caught her daughter's clothes; while Linda, who had seen what had happened, stood shrieking on the barge, as it made its way on, heedless of the ruin it left behind.

Another boat soon came to their assistance from the shore, and Mrs. Woodward and Katie were got safely into it. Charley returned to the battered wherry, and assisted Norman in extricating it from its position; and a third boat

went to Linda's rescue, who would otherwise have found herself in rather an uncomfortable position the next morning at Brentford.

The hugging and kissing, to which Katie was subjected, when she was carried up to the inn, near the boat slip on the Surrey side of the river, may be imagined; as may also the faces she made at the wine glass full of stiff brandy and water which she was desired to drink. She was carried home in a fly, and by the time she arrived there, had so completely recovered her life and spirits as to put a vehement negative on her mother's proposition that she should at once go to bed.

"And not hear dear Charley's story?" said she, with tears in her eyes. "And, mama, I can't and won't go to bed without seeing Charley. I didn't say one word yet to thank him for jumping into the water after me."

It was in vain that her mother told her that Charley's story would amuse her twice as much when she should read it printed; it was in vain that Mrs. Woodward assured her that Charley should come up to her room door, and hear her thanks as he stood in the passage, with the door ajar. Katie was determined to hear the story read. It must be read, if read at all, that Saturday night, as it was to be sent to the editor in the course of the week; and reading "Crinoline and Macassar" out loud, on a Sunday, was not to

be thought of at Surbiton Cottage. Katie was determined to hear the story read, and to sit very near the author too during the reading; to sit near him, and to give him such praise as even in her young mind she felt that an author would like to hear. Charley had pulled her out of the river, and no one, as far as her efforts could prevent it, should be allowed to throw cold water on him.

Norman and Charley, wet as the latter was, contrived to bring the shattered boat back to Hampton. When they reached the lawn at Surbiton Cottage, they were both in high spirits. An accident, if it does no material harm, is always an inspiriting thing, unless one feels that it has been attributable to one's own fault. Neither of them could in this instance attach any blame to himself, and each felt that he had done what in him lay to prevent the possible ill effect of the mischance. As for the boat, Harry was too happy to think that none of his friends were hurt to care much about that.

As they walked across the lawn Mrs. Woodward ran out to them. "My dear, dear Charley," she said, "what am I to say to thank you?" It was the first time Mrs. Woodward had ever called him by his Christian name. It had hitherto made him in a certain degree unhappy that she never did so, and now the sound was very pleasant to him.

"Oh, Mrs. Woodward," said he, laughing, "you mustn't touch me, for I'm all mud."

"My dear, dear Charley, what can I say to you? and dear Harry, I fear we've spoilt your beautiful new boat."

"I fear we've spoilt Katie's beautiful new hat," said Norman.

Mrs. Woodward had taken and pressed a hand of each of them, in spite of Charley's protestations about the mud."

"Oh! you are in a dreadful state," said she, "you had better take something at once; you'll catch your death of cold."

"I'd better take myself off to the inn," said Charley, "and get some clean clothes; that's all I want. But how is Katie—and how is Linda?"

And so after a multitude of such inquiries on both sides, and of all manner of affectionate greetings, Charley went off to make himself dry, preparatory to the reading of the manuscript.

During his absence, Linda and Katie came down to the drawing-room. Linda was full of fun, as to her journey with the bargemen; but Katie was a little paler than usual, and somewhat more serious and quiet than she was wont to be.

Norman was the first in the drawing-room, and received the thanks of the ladies for his prowess in assisting them; and Charley was not slow to

follow him, for he was never very long at his toilet. He came in with a jaunty laughing air, as though nothing particular had happened, and as if he had not a care in the world. And yet while he had been dressing he had been thinking almost more than ever of Norah Geraghty. O that she, and Mrs. Davis with her, and Jabesh M'Ruen with both of them, could be buried ten fathom deep out of his sight, and out of his mind!

When he entered the room, Katie felt her heart beat so strongly that she hardly knew how to thank him for saving her life. A year ago she would have got up and kissed him innocently, but a year makes a great difference. She could not do that now, so she gave him her little hand and held his till he came and sat down at his place at the table.

"Oh, Charley, I don't know what to say to you," said she, and he could see and feel that her whole body was shaking with emotion.

"Then I'll tell you what to say: 'Charley, here is your tea, and some bread, and some butter, and some jam, and some muffin,' for I'll tell you what, my evening bath has made me as hungry as a hunter. I hope it has done the same to you."

Katie, still holding his hand, looked up into his face, and he saw that her eyes were suffused with tears. She then left his side and running round the room, filled a plate with all the things

he had asked for, and bringing them to him, again took her place beside him. "I wish I knew how to do more than that," said she.

"I suppose, Charley, you'll have to make an entry about that barge on Monday morning, won't you?" said Linda. "Mind you put in it how beautiful I looked sailing through the arch."

"Yes, and how very gallant the bargeman was," said Norman.

"Yes, and how much you enjoyed the idea of going down the river with him, while we came back to the cottage," said Charley. "We'll put it all down at the Navigation, and old Snape shall make a special minute about it."

Katie drank her tea in silence, and tried to eat, though without much success. When chatting voices and jokes were to be heard at the cottage, the sound of her voice was usually the foremost; but now she sat demure and quiet. She was realizing the danger from which she had escaped, and as is so often the case, was beginning to fear it now that it was over.

"Ah, Katie, my bonny bird," said her mother, seeing that she was not herself, and knowing that the excitement and overpowering feelings of gratitude were too much for her—"come here; you should be in bed, my foolish little puss, should you not?"

"Indeed, she should," said uncle Bat, who was

somewhat hard-hearted about the affair of the accident, and had been cruel enough, after hearing an account of it, to declare that it was all Katie's fault. "Indeed she should; and if she had gone to bed a little earlier in the evening it would have been all the better for Master Norman's boat."

"Oh! mama, don't send me to bed," said she, with tears in her eyes. "Pray don't send me to bed now; I'm quite well, only I can't talk because I'm thinking of what Charley did for me;" and so saying she got up and hiding her face on her mother's shoulder, burst into tears.

"My dearest child," said Mrs. Woodward, "I'm afraid you'll make yourself ill. We'll put off the reading, won't we, Charley? We have done enough for one evening."

"Of course we will," said he. "Reading a stupid story will be very slow work after all we've gone through to-day."

"No, no, no," said Katie; "it shan't be put off; there won't be any other time for hearing it. And mama, it must be read: and I know it won't be stupid. Oh, mama, dear mama, do let us hear it read; I'm quite well now."

Mrs. Woodward found herself obliged to give way. She had not the heart to bid her daughter go away to bed, nor, had she done so, would it have been of any avail. Katie would only have lain and sobbed in her own room, and very probably have gone into hysterics. The best thing for

her was to try to turn the current of her thoughts, and thus by degrees tame down her excited feelings.

"Well, darling, then we will have the story, if Charley will let us. Go and fetch it, dearest." Katie raised herself from her mother's bosom, and going across the room fetched the roll of papers to Charley. As he prepared to take it she took his hand in hers, and, bending her head over it, tenderly kissed it. "You mustn't think," said she, "that because I say nothing, I don't know what it is that you've done for me; but I don't know how to say it."

Charley was at any rate as ignorant what he ought to say as Katie was. He felt the pressure of her warm lips on his hand and hardly knew where he was. He felt that he blushed and looked abashed, and dreaded, fearfully dreaded, lest Mrs. Woodward should surmise that he estimated at other than its intended worth, her daughter's show of affection for him.

"I shouldn't mind doing it every night," said he, "in such weather as this. I think it rather good fun going into the water with my clothes on." Katie looked up at him through her tears, as though she would say that she well understood what that meant.

Mrs. Woodward saw that if the story was to be read, the sooner they began it the better.

"Come, Charley," said she, "now for the

romance. Katie, come and sit by me." But Katie had already taken her seat, a little behind Charley, quite in the shade, and she was not to be moved.

"But I won't read it myself," said Charley; "you must read it, Mrs. Woodward."

"Oh, yes, Mrs. Woodward, you are to read it," said Norman.

"Oh, yes, do read it, mama," said Linda. Katie said nothing, but she would have preferred that Charley should have read it himself.

"Well, if I can," said Mrs. Woodward.

"Snape says I write the worst hand in all Somerset House," said Charley, "but still I think you'll be able to manage it."

"I hate that Mr. Snape," said Katie, *sotto voce*. And then Mrs. Woodward unrolled the manuscript and began her task.

CHAPTER VI.

CRINOLINE AND MACASSAR; OR, MY AUNT'S WILL.

"WELL, Katie was right," said Mrs. Woodward, "it does begin with poetry."

"It's only a song," said Charley apologetically—"and after all there is only one verse of that"—and then Mrs. Woodward began

'"CRINOLINE AND MACASSAR.'

Ladies and Gentlemen, that is the name of Mr. Charles Tudor's new novel."

"Crinoline and Macassar!" said uncle Bat. "Are they intended for human beings' names."

"They are the heroine and the hero, as I take it," said Mrs. Woodward, "and I presume them to be human, unless they turn out to be celestial."

"I never heard such names in my life," said the captain.

"At any rate, uncle, they are as good as Sir Jib Boom and Captain Hardaport," said Katie pertly.

"We won't mind about that," said Mrs. Wood-

ward, "I'm going to begin, and I beg I may not be interrupted.

'CRINOLINE AND MACASSAR.

'The lovely Crinoline was sitting alone at a lattice window on a summer morning, and as she sat she sang with melancholy cadence the first part of a now celebrated song which had then lately appeared, from the distinguished pen of Sir G— H—.'

"Who is Sir G— H—, Charley?"

"Oh, it wouldn't do for me to tell that," said Charley. "That must be left to the tact and intelligence of my readers."

"Oh—very well"—said Mrs. Woodward, "we will abstain from all impertinent questions—— 'from the distinguished pen of Sir G— H—. The ditty which she sung ran as follows:

> "My heart's at my office, my heart is always there—
> My heart's at my office, docketing with care;
> Docketing the papers, and copying all day.
> My heart's at my office, tho' I be far away."

'"Ah me," said the lady Crinoline—'

"What—is she a peer's daughter?" said uncle Bat.

"Not exactly," said Charley, "it's only a sort of semi-poetic way one has of speaking of one's heroine."

'"Ah me!" said the lady Crinoline—"his heart! his heart!—I wonder whether he has got a

heart"—and then she sang again in low plaintive voice the first line of the song, suiting the line to her own case.

"His heart is at his office, his heart is *always* there."

'It was evident that the lady Crinoline did not repeat the words in the feeling of their great author, who when he wrote them had intended to excite to high deeds of exalted merit that portion of the British youth which is employed in the Civil Service of the country.

'Crinoline laid down her lute—it was in fact an accordion—and gazing listlessly over the rails of the balcony, looked out at the green foliage which adorned the enclosure of the square below.

'It was Tavistock Square. The winds of March and the showers of April had been successful in producing the buds of May.'

"Ah, Charley, that's taken from the old song," said Katie, "only you've put buds instead of flowers."

"That's quite allowable," said Mrs. Woodward, "there is no plagiarism in that. The adaptation is new if the idea be not so; and that's quite enough—'successful in producing the buds of May. The sparrows chirped sweetly on the house-top, and the coming summer gladdened the hearts of all—of all except poor Crinoline.

'"I wonder whether he has a heart," said she; and if he has, I wonder whether it *is* at his office."

'As she thus soliloquized the door was opened

by a youthful page, on whose well-formed breast buttons seemed to grow like mushrooms in the meadows in August.

'"Mr. Macassar Jones," said the page; and having so said he discreetly disappeared. He was in his line of life a most invaluable member of society. He had brought from his last place a twelve months' character that was creditable alike to his head and heart; he was now found to be an invaluable assistant in the household of the Lady Crinoline's mother; and was the delight of his aged parents to whom he always remitted no inconsiderable portion of his wages. Let it always be remembered that the life even of a page may be glorious. All honour to the true and brave!'

"Goodness—Charley—how very moral you are," said Linda.

"Yes," said he; "that's indispensable. It's the intention of the Daily Delight always to hold up a career of virtue to the lower orders as the thing that pays. Honesty, high wages, and hot dinners. Those are our principles."

"You'll have a deal to do before you'll bring the lower orders to agree with you," said uncle Bat.

"We have a deal to do," said Charley, "and we'll do it. The power of the cheap press is unbounded."

'As the page closed the door, a light low melancholy step was heard to make its way

across the drawing-room. Crinoline's heart had given one start when she had heard the announcement of the well-known name. She had once glanced with eager inquiring eye towards the door. But not in vain to her had an excellent mother taught the proprieties of elegant life. Long before Macassar Jones was present in the chamber she had snatched up the tambore frame that lay beside her, and when he entered she was zealously engaged on the fox's head that was to ornament the toe of a left foot slipper. Who shall dare to say that those slippers were intended to grace the feet of Macassar Jones?'

"But I suppose they were," said Katie.

"You must wait and see," said her mother; "for my part I am not at all so sure of that."

"Oh, but I know they must be; for she's in love with him," said Katie.

'"Oh, Mr. Macassar," said the Lady Crinoline when he had drawn nigh to her; "and how are you to-day?" This mention of his Christian name betrayed no undue familiarity, as the two families were intimate, and Macassar had four elder brothers. "I am so sorry mama is not at home; she will regret not seeing you amazingly."

'Macassar had his hat in his hand, and he stood awhile gazing at the fox in the pattern. "Won't you sit down?" said Crinoline.

'"Is it very dusty in the street to-day?" asked

Crinoline; and as she spoke she turned upon him a face wreathed in the sweetest smiles, radiant with elegant courtesy, and altogether expressive of extreme gentility, unsullied propriety, and a very high tone of female education—"Is it very dusty in the street to-day?"

'Charmed by the involuntary grace of her action, Macassar essayed to turn his head towards her as he replied; he could not turn it much, for he wore an all-rounder; but still he was enabled by a side glance to see more of that finished elegance than was perhaps good for his peace of mind.

'"Yes," said he, "it is dusty;—it certainly is dusty, rather—; but not very—and then, in most streets they've got the water-carts."—

'"Ah, I love those water-carts," said Crinoline; "the dust, you know, is so trying."

'"To the complexion?" suggested Macassar, again looking round as best he might over the bulwark of his collar.

'Crinoline laughed slightly; it was perhaps hardly more than a simper, and turning her lovely eyes from her work she said, "Well, to the complexion, if you will,—what would you gentlemen say if we ladies were to be careless of our complexions?"

'Macassar merely sighed gently—perhaps he had no fitting answer: perhaps his heart was too full for him to answer. He sat with his eye fixed

on his hat, which still dangled in his hand; but his mind's eye was far away.

'"Is it in his office?" thought Crinoline to herself; "or is it here? Is it anywhere?"

'"Have you learnt the song I sent you," said he, at last, waking, as it were, from a trance.

'"Not yet," said she—"that is, not quite; that is, I could not sing it before strangers yet."

'"Strangers!" said Macassar; and he looked at her again with an energy that produced results not beneficial either to his neck or his collar.

'Crinoline was delighted at this expression of feeling—"At any rate it is somewhere," said she to herself; "and it can hardly be all at his office."

'"Well, I will not say strangers," she said out loud;—"it sounds—it sounds—I don't know how it sounds—But what I mean is, that as yet I've only sung it before mama!"'

"I declare I don't know which is the biggest fool of the two," said uncle Bat, very rudely. As for him, if I had him on the forecastle of a man of war for a day or two, I'd soon teach him to speak out."

"You forget, sir," said Charley, "he's not a sailor, he's only in the Civil Service; we're all very bashful in the Civil Service."

"I think he is rather spooney, I must say," said Katie; whereupon Mrs. Woodward went on reading.

'"It's a sweet thing, isn't it?" said Macassar.

'"Oh, very!" said Crinoline, with a rapturous expression which pervaded her whole head and shoulders as well as her face and bust,—"very sweet, and so new."

'"It quite comes home to me," said Macassar, and he sighed deeply.

'"Then it is at his office," said Crinoline to herself, and she sighed also.

'They both sat silent for a while, looking into the square—Crinoline was at one window, and Macassar at the other: "I must go now," said he; "I promised to be back at three."

'"Back where?" said she.

'"At my office," said he.

'Crinoline sighed. After all it was at his office; it was too evident that it was there, and nowhere else. Well, and why should it not be there? why should not Macassar Jones be true to his duty and to his country? What had she to do with his heart? Why should she wish it elsewhere? 'Twas thus she tried to console herself, but in vain. Had she had an office of her own it might perhaps have been different; but Crinoline was only a woman, and often she sighed over the degradation of her lot.

'"Good morning, Miss Crinoline," said he.

'"Good morning, Mr. Macassar," said she. "Mama will so regret that she has lost the pleasure of seeing you."

'And then she rang the bell. Macassar went

downstairs perhaps somewhat slower, with perhaps more of melancholy than when he entered. The page opened the hall-door with alacrity, and shut it behind him with a slam.

'All honour to the true and brave!

'Crinoline again took up the note of her sorrow, and with her lute in her hand, she warbled forth the line which stuck like a thorn in her sweet bosom.

"His heart is in his office—his heart IS ALWAYS *there*."'

"There," said Mrs. Woodward, "that's the end of the first chapter."

'"Well, I like the page the best," said Linda, "because he seems to know what he's about."

'"Oh, so does the lady," said Charley, "but it wouldn't at all do if we made the hero and heroine go about their work like humdrum people. You'll see that the Lady Crinoline knows very well what's what."

"Oh—Charley, pray don't tell us," said Katie; "I do so like Mr. Macassar; he is so spooney; pray go on, mama."

"I'm ready;" said Mrs. Woodward, again taking up the manuscript.

CHAPTER II.

'The lovely Crinoline was the only daughter of fond parents;—and though they were not what might be called extremely wealthy, considering

the vast incomes of some residents in the metropolis, and were not perhaps wont to mix in the highest circles of the Belgravian aristocracy, yet she was enabled to dress in all the elegance of fashion, and contrived to see a good deal of that society which moves in the highly respectable neighbourhood of Russell Square and Gower Street.

'Her dresses were always made at the distinguished establishment of Madame Mantalini, in Hanover Square; at least she was in the habit of getting one dress there every other season, and this was quite sufficient among her friends to give her a reputation for dealing in the proper quarter. Once she had got a bonnet direct from Paris, which gave her ample opportunity of expressing a frequent opinion not favourable to the fabricators of a British article. She always took care that her shoes had within them the name of a French *cordonnier;* and her gloves were made to order in the Rue Du Bac, though usually bought and paid for in Tottenham Court Road.'

"What a false creature," said Linda.

"False!" said Charley; "and how is a girl to get along if she be not false? What girl could live for a moment before the world if she were to tell the whole truth about the get-up of her wardrobe? The patchings and make-believes, the chipped ribbons and turned silks, the little bills here, and the little bills there? how else is

an allowance of 20*l.* a year to be made compatible with an appearance of unlimited income? how else are young men to be taught to think that in an affair of dress money is a matter of no moment whatsoever?"

"Oh, Charley, Charley, don't be slanderous," said Mrs. Woodward.

"I only repeat what the editor says to me—I know nothing about it myself. Only we are requested 'to hold the mirror up to nature,' and to art too, I believe. We are to set these things right, you know."

"We, who are we?" said Katie.

"Why, the Daily Delight," said Charley.

"But I hope there's nothing false in patching and turning," said Mrs. Woodward: "for if there be, I'm the falsest woman alive.

> 'To gar the auld claes look amaist as weel's the new'—

is, I thought, one of the most legitimate objects of a woman's diligence."

"It all depends on the spirit of the stitches," said Charley the censor.

"Well, I must say I don't like mending up old clothes a bit better than Charley does," said Katie; "but pray go on, mama"—So Mrs. Woodward continued to read.

'On the day of Macassar's visit in Tavistock Square, Crinoline was dressed in a most elegant morning costume. It was a very light barege

muslin, extremely full; and which, as she had assured her friend, Miss Manasseh, of Keppel Street, had been sent home from the establishment in Hanover Square only the day before. I am aware that Miss Manasseh instantly projected an ill-natured report, that she had seen the identical dress in a milliner's room up two pairs back in Store Street; but then Miss Manasseh was known to be envious; and had moreover seen twelve seasons out in those localities, whereas the fair Crinoline, young thing, had graced Tavistock Square only for two years; and her mother was ready to swear that she had never passed the nursery door till she came there. The ground of the dress was a light pea-green, and the pattern was ivy wreaths entwined with pansies and tulips—each flounce showed a separate wreath—and there were nine flounces, the highest of which fairy circles was about three inches below the smallest waist that ever was tightly girded in steel and whalebone.

'Macassar had once declared, in a moment of ecstatic energy, that a small waist was the chiefest grace in woman. How often had the Lady Crinoline's maid, when in the extreme agony of her labour, put a malediction on his name on account of this speech!

'It is unnecessary to speak of the drapery of the arms which showed the elaborate lace of the sleeve beneath, and sometimes also the pearly

whiteness of that rounded arm. This was a sight which would sometimes almost drive Macassar to distraction. At such moments as that the hopes of the patriotic poet for the good of the Civil Service were not strictly fulfilled in the heart of Macassar Jones. Oh, if the Lady Crinoline could but have known!

'It is unnecessary also to describe the strange and hidden mechanism of that mysterious petticoat which gave such full dimensions, such ample sweeping proportions to the *tout ensemble* of the lady's appearance. It is unnecessary, and would perhaps be improper, and as far as I am concerned, is certainly impossible.'

Here Charley blushed, as Mrs. Woodward looked at him from over the top of the paper.

'Let it suffice to say that she could envelope a sofa without the slightest effort, throw her draperies a yard and a half from her on either side without any appearance of stretching, completely fill a carriage; or, which was more frequently her fate, entangle herself all but inextricably in a cab.

'A word, however, must be said of those little feet that peeped out now and again so beautifully from beneath the artistic constructions above alluded to—of the feet, or perhaps rather of the shoes. But yet, what can be said of them successfully? That French name so correctly spelt, so elaborately accented, so beautifully

finished in gold letters, which from their form, however, one would say that the *cordonnier* must have imported from England, was only visible to those favoured knights who were occasionally permitted to carry the shoes home in their pockets.

'But a word must be said of the hair dressed *à l'imperatrice*, redolent of the sweetest patchouli, disclosing all the glories of that ingenuous, but perhaps too open brow. A word must be said; but, alas! how inefficacious to do justice to the ingenuity so wonderfully displayed! The hair of the Lady Crinoline was perhaps more lovely than abundant; to produce that glorious effect, that effect which has now symbolized among English lasses the head-dress *à l'imperatrice* as the one idea of feminine beauty, every hair was called on to give its separate aid. As is the case with so many of us who are anxious to put our best foot foremost, everything was abstracted from the rear in order to create a show in the front. Then, to complete the garniture of the head, to make all perfect, to leave no point of escape for the susceptible admirer of modern beauty, some dorsal appendage was necessary o' mornings as well as in the more fully bedizened period of evening society.

'Everything about the sweet Crinoline was wont to be green. It is the sweetest and most innocent of colours; but, alas! a colour dangerous for the heart's ease of youthful beauty. Hanging

from the back of her head were to be seen moss and fennel, and various grasses—rye grass and timothy, trefoil and cinque-foil, vetches and clover, and here and there a young fern. A story was told, but doubtless false, as it was traced to the mouth of Miss Manasseh, that once while Crinoline was reclining in a paddock at Richmond, having escaped with the young Macassar from the heat of a neighbouring drawing-room, a cow had attempted to feed from her head.'

"Oh, Charley, a cow!" said Katie.

"Well, but you see I don't give it as true," said Charley.

"Then you ought to leave it out," said Katie. "It makes the cow out to be such a fool."

"I didn't think of that," said Charley; "but I can't alter it now, I'm afraid; for I've only just the proper number of lines."

"I shall never get it done, if Katie won't hold her tongue," said Mrs. Woodward.

'But perhaps it was, when at the sea-side in September, at Broadstairs, Herne Bay, or Dover, Crinoline and her mama invigorated themselves with the sea breezes of the ocean,—perhaps it was there that she was enabled to assume that covering for her head in which her soul most delighted. It was a Tom and Jerry hat turned up at the sides, with a short but knowing feather, velvet trimmings, and a steel buckle blinking brightly in the noon-day sun. Had Macassar

seen her in this he would have yielded himself her captive at once, quarter or no quarter. It was the most marked, and perhaps the most attractive peculiarity of the Lady Crinoline's face, that the end of her nose was a little turned up. This charm, in unison with the upturned edges of her cruel-hearted hat, were found by many men to be invincible.

'We all know how dreadful is the spectacle of a Saracen's head, as it appears or did appear, painted on a huge board at the top of Snow Hill. From that we are left to surmise with what tremendous audacity of countenance, with what terror-striking preparations of the outward man, an Eastern army is led to battle. Can any men so fearfully bold in appearance ever turn their backs and fly? They look as though they could destroy by the glance of their ferocious eyes. Who could withstand the hirsute horrors of those fiery faces?

'There is just such audacity, a courage of a similar description, perhaps we may say an equal invincibility, in the charms of those Tom and Jerry hats when duly put on, over a face of the proper description—over such a face as that of the Lady Crinoline. They give to the wearer an appearance of a concentration of pluck. But as the Eastern array does quail before the quiet valour of Europe, so, we may perhaps say, does the open, quick audacity of the Tom and

Jerry tend to less powerful results than the modest enduring patience of the bonnet.'

"So ends the second chapter—bravo, Charley," said Mrs. Woodward. "In the name of the British female public, I beg to thank you for your exertions."

"The editor said I was to write down turned-up hats," said Charley. "I rather like them myself."

"I hope my new slouch is not an audacious Saracen's head," said Linda.

"Or mine," said Katie. "But you may say what you like about them now; for mine is drowned."

"Come, girls, there are four more chapters, I see. Let me finish it, and then we can discuss it afterwards."

CHAPTER III.

'Having thus described the Lady Crinoline——'

"You haven't described her at all," said Linda; "you haven't got beyond her clothes yet."

"There is nothing beyond them," said Charley.

"You haven't even described her face," said Katie; "you have only said that she had a turned-up nose."

"There is nothing further that one can say about it," said Charley.

'Having thus described the Lady Crinoline,' continued Mrs. Woodward, 'it now becomes our duty as impartial historians, to give some account of Mr. Macassar Jones.'

"Historians?" said uncle Bat. "Does the Daily Delight profess to deal in history?"

"The editor says that by an elegant fiction, all modern story writers presume their stories to be true. They always call them histories."

"Oh!" said Captain Cuttwater.

'We are not prepared to give the exact name of the artist by whom Mr. Macassar Jones was turned out to the world so perfectly-dressed a man. Were we to do so, the signal service done to one establishment by such an advertisement would draw down on us the anger of the trade at large, and the tailors of London would be in league against the Daily Delight. It is sufficient to remark that the artist's offices are not a hundred miles from Pall Mall. Nor need we expressly name the boot-maker, to whom is confided the task of making those feet "small by degrees and beautifully less." The process, we understand, has been painful, but the effect is no doubt remunerative.

'In three especial walks of dress has Macassar Jones been more than ordinarily careful to create a sensation; and we believe we may assert that he has been successful in all. We have already alluded to his feet. Ascending from them, and

ascending not far, we come to his coat. It is needless to say that it is a frock; needless to say that it is a long frock—long as those usually worn by younger infants, and apparently made so for the same purpose. But look at the exquisitely small proportions of the collar; look at the grace of the long sleeves, the length of back, the propriety, the innate respectability, the perfect decorum—we had almost said the high moral worth—of the whole. Who would not willingly sacrifice any individual existence, that he might become the exponent of such a coat? Macassar Jones was proud to do so.

'But he had bestowed perhaps the greatest amount of personal attention on his collar. It was a matter more within his own grasp than those great and important articles to which attention has been already drawn; but one, nevertheless, on which he was able to expend the whole amount of his energy and genius. Some people may think that an all-rounder is an all-rounder, and that if one is careful to get an all-rounder one has done all that is necessary. But so thought not Macassar Jones. Some men wear collars of two plies of linen, some men of three; but Macassar Jones wore collars of four plies. Some men, some sensual, self-indulgent men appear to think that the collar should be made for the neck; but Macassar Jones knew better. He, who never spared himself when the

cause was good, he knew that the neck had been made for the collar—it was at any rate evident that such was the case with his own. And such a collar has this advantage, that it teaches a man to look straight forward in the world, to face adversity when it meets him, and forces him to abstain entirely from the Orphean danger, peculiarly to be dreaded in the streets of London, of looking back after any Eurydice that may be in pursuit. Little can be said of his head, except that it was small, narrow, and genteel; but his hat might be spoken of, and perhaps with advantage. Of the loose but studied tie of his inch-wide cravat, a paragraph might be made; but we would fain not be tedious.

'We will only further remark that he always carried with him a wonderful representation of himself, like to him to a miracle, only smaller in its dimensions, like as a duodecimo is to a folio—a babe, as it were, of his own begetting—a little *alter ego* in which he took much delight. It was his umbrella. Look at the delicate finish of its lower extremity; look at the long, narrow, and well-made coat in which it is enveloped from its neck downwards, without speck, or blemish, or wrinkle; look at the little wooden head, nicely polished, with the effigy of a human face on one side of it—little eyes it has, and a sort of nose; look closer at it, and you will perceive a mouth, not expressive indeed, but still it is there—a

mouth and chin; and is it, or is it not, an attempt at a pair of whiskers? It certainly has a moustache.

'Such were Mr. Macassar Jones and his umbrella—'

"That's some enemy of yours at the Internal Navigation, I suppose," said Linda.

"No, indeed," said Charley. "We've no flowers of that delicate description there. There are no long coats among the navvies; and I doubt if there be an umbrella in the office, except the old cotton one which Mr. Snape has had for the last fifteen years."

"Then who is Mr. Macassar Jones?" said Linda.

"Oh! there are a dozen of them in the next shop to ours; it's the Episcopal Audit Office. They always look down on us, and won't speak to any of our fellows; so now I'm down on them."

'Such were Mr. Macassar Jones and his umbrella. He was an excellent clerk, and did great credit to the important office to which he was attached—namely, that of the Episcopal Audit Board. He was much beloved by the other gentlemen, who were closely connected with him in that establishment; and may be said, for the first year or two of his service, to have been, not exactly the life and soul, but we may

perhaps say with more propriety, the pervading genius of the room in which he sat.

'But, alas! at length a cloud came over his brow. At first it was but a changing shadow; but it settled into a dark veil of sorrow which obscured all his virtues, and made the worthy senior of his room shake his thin gray locks once and again. He shook them more in sorrow than in anger; for he knew that Macassar was in love, and he remembered the days of his youth. Yes; Macassar was in love. He had seen the lovely Crinoline. To see was to admire; to admire was to love; to love—that is, to love her, to love Crinoline, the exalted, the sought-after, the one so much in demand, as he had once expressed himself to one of his bosom friends—to love her was to despair. He did despair; and despairing sighed, and sighing was idle.

'But he was not all idle. The genius of the man had that within it which did not permit itself to evaporate in mere sighs. Sighs, with the high-minded, force themselves into the guise of poetry, and so it had been with him. He got leave of absence for a week, and shut himself up alone in his lodgings; for a week in his lodgings, during the long evenings of winter did he remain unseen and unheard of. His landlady thought that he was in debt, and his friends whispered abroad that he had caught scarlatina.

But at the end of the seven days he came forth, pale indeed, but with his countenance lighted up by ecstatic fire, and as he started for his office, he carefully folded and put into his pocket the elegantly written poem on which he had been so intently engaged.'

"That's flat, Charley," said Norman.

"Well, I'm going to give you the verses now, and they're not flat, at any rate," said Charley.

"I'm so glad we are to have more poetry," said Katie. "Is it another song?"

"You'll see," said Mrs. Woodward.

'Macassar had many bosom friends at his office, to all of whom, one by one, he had confided the tale of his love. For a while he doubted to which of them he should confide the secret of his inspiration; but genius will not hide its head under a bushel; and thus, before long, did Macassar's song become the common property of the Episcopal Audit Board. Even the Bishops sang it, so Macassar was assured by one of his brother clerks who was made of a coarser clay than his colleague—even the Bishops sang it when they met, in council together, on their own peculiar bench.

'It would be useless to give the whole of it here; for it contained ten verses. The two last were those which Macassar was wont to sing to himself, as he wandered lonely under the elms of Kensington gardens.

"Oh, how she walks
And how she talks—
And sings like a bird serene;
But of this be sure,
While the world shall endure,
The loveliest lady that'll ever be seen,
Will still be the Lady Crinoline,
The lovely Lady Crinoline.

"With her hair done all *à l'impératrice*,
Sweetly done with the best of grease,
She looks like a Goddess or Queen,—
And so I declare,
And solemnly swear,
That the loveliest lady that ever was seen,
Is still the Lady Crinoline,
The lovely Lady Crinoline."'

"And so ends the third chapter," said Mrs. Woodward.

Both Katie and Linda were beginning to criticise, but Mrs. Woodward repressed them sternly, and went on with

CHAPTER IV.

'It was a lovely day towards the end of May that Macassar Jones, presenting himself before the desk of the senior clerk at one o'clock, begged for permission to be absent for two hours. The request was preferred with meek and hesitating voice, and with downcast eyes.

'The senior clerk shook his gray locks sadly; sadly he shook his thin gray locks, for he grieved at the sight which he saw. 'Twas sad to see the

energies of this young man thus sapped in his early youth by the all-absorbing strength of a hopeless passion. Crinoline was now, as it were, a household word at the Episcopal Audit Board. The senior clerk believed her to be cruel, and as he knew for what object these two hours of idleness were requested, he shook his thin gray locks in sorrow.

'"I'll be back at three, sir, punctual," said Macassar.

'"But, Mr. Jones, you are absent nearly every day for the same period."

'"To-day shall be the last; to-day shall end it all," said Macassar, with a look of wretched desperation.

'"What—what would Sir Gregory say?" said the senior clerk.

'Macassar Jones sighed deeply. Nature had not made the senior clerk a cruel man; but yet this allusion *was* cruel. The young Macassar had drank deeply of the waters that welled from the fountain of Sir Gregory's philosophy. He had been proud to sit humbly at the feet of such a Gamaliel; and now it rent his young heart to be thus twitted with the displeasure of the great master whom he so loved and so admired.

'"Well, go, Mr. Jones," said the senior clerk, "go, but as you go, resolve that to-morrow you will remain at your desk. Now go, and may prosperity attend you!"

'"All shall be decided to-day," said Macassar, and as he spoke an unusual spark gleamed in his eye. He went, and as he went the senior clerk shook his thin gray hairs. He was a bachelor, and he distrusted the charms of the sex.

'Macassar, returning to his desk, took up his hat and his umbrella, and went forth. His indeed was a plight at which that old senior clerk might well shake his thin gray hairs in sorrow, for Macassar was the victim of mysterious circumstances, which, from his youth upwards, had marked him out for a fate of no ordinary nature. The tale must now be told.'

"Oh dear!" said Linda; "is it something horrid?"

"I hope it is," said Katie; "perhaps he's already married to some old hag or witch."

"You don't say who his father and mother are; but I suppose he'll turn out to be somebody else's son," said Linda.

"He is a very nice young man for a small tea party, at any rate," said uncle Bat.

'The tale must now be told,' continued Mrs. Woodward. 'In his early years Macassar Jones had had a maiden aunt. This lady died—'

"Oh, mama, if you read it in that way I shall certainly cry," said Katie.

"Well, my dear, if your heart is so susceptible you had better indulge it." 'This lady died and left behind her—'

"What?" said Linda.

"A diamond ring?" said Katie.

"A sealed manuscript, which was found in a secret drawer," suggested Linda.

"Perhaps a baby," said uncle Bat.

'And left behind her a will—'

"Did she leave anything else?" asked Norman.

"Ladies and gentlemen, if I am to be interrupted in this way, I really must resign my task," said Mrs. Woodward; "we shall never get to bed."

"I won't say another word," said Katie.

'In his early years Macassar had had a maiden aunt. This lady died and left behind her a will, in which, with many expressions of the warmest affection and fullest confidence, she left 3000*l*. in the three per cents——'

"What are the three per cents?" said Katie.

"The three per cents is a way in which people get some of their money to spend regularly, when they have got a large sum locked up somewhere," said Linda.

"Oh!" said Katie.

"Will you hold your tongue, Miss," said Mrs. Woodward. 'Left 3000*l*. in the three per cents, to her nephew. But she left it on these conditions, that he should be married before he was twenty-five, and that he should have a child lawfully born in the bonds of wedlock before he was

twenty-six. And then the will went on to state that the interest of the money should accumulate till Macassar had attained the latter age; and that in the event of his having failed to comply with the conditions and stipulations above named, the whole money, principal and interest, should be set aside, and by no means given up to the said Macassar, but applied to the uses, purposes, and convenience of that excellent charitable institution, denominated the Princess Charlotte's Lying-in Hospital.

'Now the nature of this will had been told in confidence by Macassar to some of his brother clerks, and was consequently well known at the Episcopal Audit Board. It had given rise there to a spirit of speculation against which the senior clerk had protested in vain. Bets were made, some in favour of Macassar, and some in that of the hospital; but of late the odds were going much against our hero. It was well known that in three short months he would attain that disastrous age, which, if it found him a bachelor, would find him also denuded of his legacy. And then how short a margin remained for the second event! The odds were daily rising against Macassar, and as he heard the bets offered and taken at the surrounding desks, his heart quailed within him.

'And the lovely Crinoline, she also had heard

of this eccentric will; she and her mother. 3000*l.* with interest arising for some half score of years would make a settlement by no means despicable in Tavistock Square, and would enable Macassar to maintain a house over which even Crinoline need not be ashamed to preside. But what if the legacy should be lost! She also knew to a day what was the age of her swain; she knew how close upon her was that day, which, if she passed it unwedded, would see her resolved to be deaf for ever to the vows of Macassar. Still, if she managed well, there might be time, at any rate for the marriage.

'But, alas, Macassar made no vows; none at least which the most attentive ear could consider to be audible. Crinoline's ear was attentive, but hitherto in vain. He would come there daily to Tavistock Square, daily would that true and valiant page lay open the path to his mistress's feet, daily would Macassar sit there for a while and sigh. But the envious hour would pass away, while the wished-for word was still unsaid; and he would hurry back, and complete with figures too often erroneous, the audit of some diocesan balance.

'"You must help him, my dear," said Crinoline's mama.

'"But he says nothing, mama," said Crinoline in tears.

'"You must encourage him to speak, my dear."

'"I do encourage him, but by that time it is always three o'clock, and then he has to go away."

'"You should be quicker, my dear. You should encourage him more at once. Now try to-day; if you can't do anything to-day I really must get your papa to interfere."

'Crinoline had ever been an obedient child, and now, as ever, she determined to obey. But it was a hard task for her. In three months he would be twenty-five—in fifteen months twenty-six. She however would do her best; and then, if her efforts were unavailing, she could only trust to providence and her papa.

'With sad and anxious heart did Macassar that day take up his new silk hat, take up also his darling umbrella, and descend the sombre steps of the Episcopal Audit Office. "Seven to one on the Lying-in," were the last words which reached his ears as the door of his room closed behind him. His was a dreadful position. What if that sweet girl, that angel whom he so worshipped, what if she, melted by his tale of sorrow,—that is if he could prevail on himself to tell it,—should take pity, and consent to be hurried prematurely to the altar of Hymen; and then, if after all the legacy should be forfeited! Poverty for himself he could endure; at least he thought so; but poverty for her! could he bear that? What if he should live to see her deprived of that green head-dress, robbed of those copious draperies,

reduced to English shoes, compelled to desert that shrine in Hanover Square, and all through him! His brain reeled round, his head swam, his temples throbbed, his knees knocked against each other, his blood stagnated, his heart collapsed, a cold clammy perspiration covered him from head to foot; he could hardly reach the court-yard and there obtain the support of a pillar. Dreadful thoughts filled his mind; the Thames, the friendly Thames, was running close to him; should he not put a speedy end to all his misery; those horrid words, that "seven to one on the Lying-in," still rang in his ears; were the chances really seven to one against his getting his legacy? "Oh!" said he, "my aunt; my aunt, my aunt, my aunt, my aunt!"

'But at last he roused the spirit of the man within him. "Faint heart never won fair lady," seemed to be whispered to him from every stone in Somerset House. The cool air blowing through the passages revived him, and he walked forth through the wide portals, resolving that he would return a happy, thriving lover, or that he would return no more—that night. What would he care for Sir Gregory, what for the thin locks of the senior clerk, if Crinoline should reject him?

'It was his custom as he walked towards Tavistock Square to stop at a friendly pastry-cook's in Covent Garden, and revive his spirits for the coming interview with Banbury tarts and cherry

brandy. In the moments of his misery something about the pastry-cook's girl, something that reminded him of Crinoline, it was probably her nose, had tempted him to confide to her his love. He had told her everything; the kind young creature pitied him, and as she ministered to his wants, was wont to ask sweetly as to his passion.

'"And how was the lovely Lady Crinoline yesterday?" asked she. He had entrusted to her a copy of his poem.

'"More beauteous than ever," he said, but somewhat indistinctly, for his mouth was clogged with the Banbury tart.

'"And goodnatured, I hope.—Indeed I don't know how she can resist," said the girl; "I'm sure you'll make it all right to-day, for I see you've got your winning way with you."

'Winning way with seven to one against him! Macassar sighed, and spilt some of his cherry brandy over his shirt front. The kind-hearted girl came and wiped it for him. "I think I'll have another glass," said he, with a deep voice. He did take another glass, and also eat another tart.

'"He'll pop to-day as sure as eggs, now he's taken them two glasses of popping powder," said the girl, as he went out of the shop. "Well, it's astonishing to me, what the men find to be afraid of."

'And so Macassar hastened towards Tavistock-

square, all too quickly; for as he made his way across Great Russell-street, he found that he was very hot. He leant against the rail, and taking off his hat and gloves began to cool himself, and wipe away the dust with his pocket handkerchief. "I wouldn't have minded the expense of a cab," said he to himself, "only the chances are so much against me; seven to one!"

'But he had no time to lose. He had had but two precious hours at his disposal, and thirty minutes were already gone. He hurried on to Tavistock Square, and soon found that well-known door open before him.

'"The Lady Crinoline sits up-stairs alone," said the page; "and is a-thinking of you." Then he added in a whisper, "do you go at her straight Mr. Macassar; slip, slap and no mistake."

'All honour to the true and brave!

CHAPTER V.

'As Macassar walked across the drawing-room, Crinoline failed to perceive his presence, although his boots did creak rather loudly. Such at least must be presumed to have been the case, for she made no immediate sign of having noticed him. She was sitting at the open window, with her lute in hand, gazing into the vacancy of the square below; and as Macassar walked across the room, a deep sigh escaped from her bosom. The page closed the door, and at the same moment

Crinoline touched her lute, or rather pulled it at the top and bottom, and threw one wild witch note to the wind. As she did so, a line of a song escaped from her lips, with a low, melancholy, but still rapturous cadence—

"His heart is *at* his office, *his* heart is *always* there."

'"Oh, Mr. Macassar, is that you?" she exclaimed. She struggled to rise, but finding herself unequal to the effort, she sank back again on a chair, dropped her lute on a soft footstool, and then buried her face in her hands. It was dreadful for Macassar to witness such agony.

'"Is anything the matter?" said he.

'"The matter!" said she. "Ah! ah!"

'"I hope you are not sick?" said he.

'"Sick!" said she. "Well, I fear, I am very sick."

'"What is it?" said he. "Perhaps only bilious," he suggested.

'"Oh! oh! oh!"—said she.

'"I see, I'm in the way; and I think I had better go," and so he prepared to depart.

'"No! no! no!" said she, jumping up from her chair. "Oh! Mr. Macassar, don't be so cruel; do you wish to see me sink on the carpet before your feet?"

'Macassar denied the existence of any such wish; and said, "that he humbly begged her pardon, if he gave any offence."

'"Offence!" said she, smiling sweetly on him; sweetly, but yet sadly. "Offence! no—no offence. Indeed I don't know how you could—but never mind—I am such a silly thing. One's feelings will sometimes get the better of one; don't you often find it so?"

'"Oh! yes, quite so," said Macassar. "I think it's the heat."

'"He's a downright noodle," said Crinoline's mama, to her sister-in-law—who lived with them. The two were standing behind a chink in the door, which separated the drawing-room from a chamber behind it.

'"Won't you sit down, Mr. Macassar?" Macassar sat down. "Mama will be so sorry to miss you again. She's calling somewhere in Grosvenor Square, I believe. She wanted me to go with her; but I could not bring myself to go with her to-day. It's useless for the body to go out, when the heart still remains at home. Don't you find it so?"

'"Oh, quite so," said Macassar. The cherry brandy had already evaporated before the blaze of all that beauty; and he was bethinking himself how he might best take himself off. Let the hospital have the filthy lucre! He would let the money go; and would show the world that he loved for the sake of love alone! He looked at his watch, and found that it was already past two.

'Crinoline when she saw that watch, knew that something must be done at once. She appreciated more fully than her lover did the value of this world's goods; and much as she doubtless sympathized with the wants of the hospital in question, she felt that charity should begin at home. So she fairly burst out into a flood of tears.

'Macassar was quite beside himself. He had seen her weep before, but never with such frightful violence. She rushed up from her chair, and passing so close to him as nearly to upset him by the waft of her petticoats threw herself on to an ottoman, and hiding her face on the stump in the middle of it, sobbed and screeched, till Macassar feared that the buttons behind her dress would crack and fly off.

'"Oh! oh! oh!" sobbed Crinoline.

'"It must be the heat," said Macassar; knocking down a flower-pot in his attempt to open the window a little wider. "Oh! dear, what have I done?" said he. "I think I'd better go."

'"Never mind the flower-pot," said Crinoline, looking up through her tears. "Oh! oh! oh! oh! me. Oh! my heart."

'Macassar looked at his watch. He had only forty-five minutes left for everything. The expense of a cab would, to be sure, be nothing if he were successful; but then, what chance was there of that?

'"Can I do anything for you in the Strand?" said he. "I must be at my office at three."

'"In the Strand!" she screeched. "What could he do for me in the Strand? Heartless—heartless—heartless! Well go—go—go to your office, Mr. Macassar; your heart is there, I know. It is always there. Go—don't let me stand between you and your duties—between you and Sir Gregory. Oh! how I hate that man! Go! why should I wish to prevent you; of course I have no such wish. To me it is quite indifferent; only, mama will be so sorry to miss you. You don't know how mama loves you. She loves you almost as a son. But go—go; pray go!"

'And then Crinoline looked at him. Oh! how she looked at him! It was as though all the goddesses of Heaven were inviting him to come and eat ambrosia with them, on a rosy-tinted cloud. All the goddesses, did we say? No, but one goddess, the most beautiful of them all. His heart beat violently against his ribs, and he felt that he was almost man enough for anything. Instinctively his hand went again to his waistcoat pocket.

'"You shan't look at your watch so often," said she, putting up her delicate hand and stopping his. "There, I'll look at it for you. It's only just two, and you needn't go to your office for this hour;" and as she squeezed it back into his pocket, he felt her fingers pressing against his heart, and

felt her hair—done all *à l'imperatrice*—in sweet contact with his cheek. "There, I shall hold it there," said she; "so that you shan't look at it again."

'"Will you stay, till I bid you go?" said Crinoline.

'Macassar declared that he did not care a straw for the senior clerk, or for Sir Gregory either. He would stay there for ever," he said.

'"What! for ever, in mama's drawing-room," said Crinoline, opening wide her lovely eyes with surprise.

'"For ever near to you," said Macassar.

'"Oh, Mr. Macassar," said Crinoline, dropping her hand from his waistcoat, and looking bashfully towards the ground. "What can you mean?"

'Down went Macassar on his knees, and down went Crinoline into her chair. There was perhaps rather too much distance between them, but that did not much matter now. There he was on both knees, with his hands clasped together as they were wont to be when he said his prayers, with his umbrella beside him on one side, and his hat on the other, making his declaration in full and unmistakable terms. A yard or two of floor, more or less, between them was neither here nor there. At first the bashful Crinoline could not bring herself to utter a distinct consent, and Macassar was very nearly

up and away, in a returning fit of despair. But her good nature came to his aid; and as she quickly said, "I will, I will, I will," he returned to his posture in somewhat nearer quarters, and was transported into the seventh heaven by the bliss of kissing her hand.

'"Oh, Macassar!" said she.

'"Oh, Crinoline!" said he.

'"You must come and tell papa, to-morrow," said she.

'He readily promised to do so.

'"You had better come to breakfast; before he goes into the City," said she.

'And so the matter was arranged, and the lovely Lady Crinoline became the affianced bride of the happy Macassar.

'It was past three when he left the house, but what did he care for that? He was so mad with joy that he did not even know whither he was going. He went on straight ahead, and came to no check, till he found himself waving his hat over his head in the New Road. He then began to conceive that his conduct must have been rather wild, for he was brought to a stand-still in a crossing, by four or five cabmen, who were rival candidates for his custom.

'"Somerset House, old brick!" he shouted out, as he jumped into a Hansom, and as he did so he poked one of the other cabbies playfully in the ribs with his umbrella.

'"'Is mama don't know as 'ow 'e's hout, I shouldn't vonder," said the cabman—and away went Macassar singing at the top of his voice as he sat in the cab.

> "The loveliest lady that ever was seen,
> Is the lovely Lady Crinoline."

'The cab passed through Covent Garden on its way. "Stop at the pastry-cook's at the corner," said Macassar, up through the little trap-door. The cab drew up suddenly. "She's mine, she's mine!" shouted Macassar, rushing into the shop, and disregarding in the ecstasy of the moment the various customers who were quietly eating their ices. "She's mine, she's mine!

> 'With her hair done all *à l'impératrice*,
> Sweetly done with the best of grease.'

And now for Somerset House."

'Arrived at those ancient portals he recklessly threw eighteen pence to the cabman, and ran up the stone stairs which led to his office. As he did so the clock, with iron tongue, tolled four.—But what recked he what it tolled! He rushed into his room where his colleagues were now locking their desks, and waving abroad his hat and his umbrella, repeated the chorus of his song. "She's mine, she's mine,—

> 'The loveliest lady that ever was seen,
> Is the lovely Lady Crinoline.'

and she's mine, she's mine!"

'Exhausted nature could no more. He sank to a chair, and his brother clerks stood in a circle around him. Soon a spirit of triumph seemed to actuate them all; they joined hands in that friendly circle, and dancing with joyful glee, took up with one voice the burden of the song

> "Oh, how she walks,
> And how she talks,
> And sings like a bird serene;
> But of this be sure,
> While the world shall endure,
> The loveliest lady that ever was seen,
> Is still the Lady Crinoline—
> The lovely Lady Crinoline."

'And that old senior clerk with the thin gray hair,—was he angry at this general ebullition of joy? Oh no! The just severity of his discipline was always tempered with genial mercy. Not a word did he say of that broken promise, not a word of the unchecked diocesan balance, not a word of Sir Gregory's anger. He shook his thin gray locks; but he shook them neither in sorrow nor in anger. "God bless you, Macassar Jones," said he, "God bless you!"

'He too had once been young, had once loved, had once hoped and feared and hoped again, and had once knelt at the feet of beauty. But, alas, he had knelt in vain.

'"May God be with you, Macassar Jones," said he, as he walked out of the office door with his

coloured bandana pressed to his eyes. "May God be with you, and make your bed fruitful!"

> "For the loveliest lady that ever was seen,
> Is the lovely Lady Crinoline—"

shouted the junior clerks, still dancing in mad glee round the happy lover.

'We have said that they all joined in this kindly congratulation to their young friend. But no. There was one spirit there whom envy had soured, one whom the happiness of another had made miserable, one whose heart beat in no unison with these jocund sounds. As Macassar's joy was at its height, in the proud moment of his triumph, a hated voice struck his ears, and filled his soul with dismay once more.

'There's two to one still on the Lying-in,' said this hateful Lucifer.

'And so Macassar was not all happy even yet, as he walked home to his lodgings.

CHAPTER VI.

'We have but one other scene to record, but one short scene, and then our tale will be told and our task will be done. And this last scene shall not, after the usual manner of novelists, be that of the wedding; but rather one which in our eyes is of a much more enduring interest. Crinoline and Macassar were duly married in

Bloomsbury Church. The dresses are said to have come from the house in Hanover Square. Crinoline behaved herself with perfect propriety, and Macassar went through his work like a man. When we have said that, we have said all that need be said on that subject.

'But we must beg our readers to pass over the space of the next twelve months, and to be present with us in that front sitting-room of the elegant private lodgings, which the married couple now prudently occupied in Alfred Place. Lodgings! yes, they were only lodgings; for not as yet did they know what might be the extent of their income.

'In this room during the whole of a long autumn day sat Macassar in a frame of mind not altogether to be envied. During the greater portion of it he was alone; but ever and anon some bustling woman would enter and depart without even deigning to notice the questions which he asked. And then after a while he found himself in company with a very respectable gentleman in black, who belonged to the medical profession.

'"Is it coming?" asked Macassar. "Is it, is it coming?"

'"Well—we hope so—we hope so," said the medical gentleman. If not to-day, it will be to-morrow. If I should happen to be absent, Mrs. Gamp is all that you could desire. If not

to-day, it will certainly be to-morrow,"—and so the medical gentleman went his way.

'Now the coming morrow would be Macassar's birthday. On that morrow he would be twenty-seven.

'All alone he sat there till the autumn sun gave way to the shades of evening. Some one brought him a mutton chop, but it was raw and he could not eat it; he went to the side-board and prepared to make himself a glass of negus, but the water was all cold. His water at least was cold; though Mrs. Gamp's was hot enough. It was a sad and mournful evening. He thought he would go out, for he found that he was not wanted; but a low drizzling rain prevented him. Had he got wet he could not have changed his clothes, for they were all in the wardrobe in his wife's room. All alone he sat till the shades of evening were hidden by the veil of night.

'But what sudden noise is that he hears within the house? Why do those heavy steps press so rapidly against the stairs? What feet are they which are so busy in the room above him? He opens the sitting-room door, but he can see nothing. He has been left there without a candle. He peers up the stairs, but a faint glimmer of light shining through the keyhole of his wife's door is all that meets his eye. "Oh my aunt! my aunt!" he says as he leans against the banisters. "My aunt, my aunt, my aunt!"

'What a birthday will this be for him on the morrow. He already hears the sound of the hospital bells as they ring with joy at the acquisition of their new wealth; he must dash from his lips, tear from his heart, banish for ever from his eyes, that vision of a sweet little cottage at Brompton, with a charming dressing-room for himself, and gas laid on all over the house.

'"Lodgings, I hate, I detest lodgings," he said to himself. "Connubial bliss and furnished lodgings are not compatible. My aunt, my aunt, for what misery hast thou not to answer! Oh, Mrs. Gamp, could you be so obliging as to tell me what o'clock it is?" The last question was asked as Mrs. Gamp suddenly entered the room with a candle. Macassar's watch had been required for the use of one of the servants.

'"It's just half-past heleven, this wery moment as is," said Mrs. Gamp; "and the finest boy babby as my heyes, which has seen a many, 'as ever sat upon."

'Up, up to the ceiling, went the horse-hair cushion of the lodging-house sofa—up went the foot-stool after it, and its four wooden legs in falling made a terrible clatter on the mahogany loo-table. Macassar in his joy got hold of Mrs. Gamp, and kissed her heartily, forgetful of the fumes of gin. "Hurrah," shouted he, "hurrah, hurrah, hurrah! Oh, Mrs. Gamp, I feel so—so—so—I really don't know how I feel."

'He danced round the room with noisy joy till Mrs. Gamp made him understand how very unsuited were such riotous ebullitions to the weak state of his lady-love up stairs. He then gave over, not the dancing but the noise, and went on capering round the room with suppressed steps, ever and anon singing to himself in a whisper,

> "The loveliest lady that ever was seen,
> Is still the Lady Crinoline."

'A few minutes afterwards a knock at the door was heard and the monthly nurse entered. She held something in her embrace; but he could not see what. He looked down pryingly into her arms, and at the first glance thought that it was his umbrella. But then he heard a little pipe, and he knew that it was his child.

'We will not intrude further on the first interview between Macassar and his heir.'

"And so ends the romantic history of Crinoline and Macassar," said Mrs. Woodward; "and I'm sure, Charley, we are all very much obliged to you for the excellent moral lessons you have given us."

"I'm so delighted with it," said Katie; "I do so like that Macassar."

"So do I," said Linda yawning; "and the old man with the thin gray hair."

"Come girls; its nearly one o'clock, and we'll go to bed," said the mother. "Uncle Bat has been asleep these two hours."

And so they went off to their respective chambers.

CHAPTER VII.

SURBITON COLLOQUIES.

All further conversation in the drawing-room was forbidden for that night. Mrs. Woodward would have willingly postponed the reading of Charley's story so as to enable Katie to go to bed after the accident, had she been able to do so. But she was not able to do so without an exercise of a species of authority which was distasteful to her, and which was very seldom heard, seen, or felt within the limits of Surbiton Cottage. It would moreover have been very ungracious to snub Charley's manuscript, just when Charley had made himself such a hero; and she had, therefore, been obliged to read it. But now that it was done, she hurried Katie off to bed, not without many admonitions.

"Good night," she said to Charley; "and God bless you, and make you always as happy as we are now. What a household we should have had to-night, had it not been for you."

Charley rubbed his eyes with his hand, and muttered something about there not having been the slightest danger in the world.

"And remember, Charley," she said, "paying no attention to his mutterings—"we always liked you—liked you very much; but liking and loving are very different things. Now you are a dear, dear friend,—one of the dearest."

In answer to this, Charley was not even able to mutter; so he went his way to the inn and lay awake half the night thinking how Katie had kissed his hand: during the other half he dreamt, first that Katie was drowned, and then that Norah was his bride.

Linda and Katie had been so hurried off, that they had only been just able to shake hands with Harry and Charley. There is, however, an old proverb, that though one man may lead a horse to water, a thousand cannot make him drink. It was easy to send Katie to bed, but very difficult to prevent her talking when she was there.

"Oh, Linda," she said, "what can I do for him?"

"Do for him?" said Linda; "I don't know that you can do anything for him. I don't suppose he wants you to do anything." Linda still looked on her sister as a child: but Katie was beginning to put away childish things.

"Couldn't I make something for him, Linda? something for him to keep as a present, you know. I would work so hard to get it done."

"Work a pair of slippers, as Crinoline did," said Linda.

Katie was brushing her hair at the moment, and then she sat still with the brush in her hand, thinking. "No," said she, after a while, "not a pair of slippers—I shouldn't like a pair of slippers."

"Why not?" said Linda.

"Oh—I don't know—but I shouldn't." Katie had said that Crinoline was working slippers for Macassar because she was in love with him; and having said so, she could not now work slippers for Charley. Poor Katie! she was no longer a child when she thought thus.

"Then make him a purse," said Linda.

"A purse is such a little thing."

"Then work him the cover for a sofa, like what mama and I are doing for Gertrude."

"But he hasn't got a house," said Katie.

"He'll have a house by the time you've done the sofa, and a wife to sit on it too."

"Oh, Linda, you are so illnatured."

"Why, child, what do you want me to say? If you were to give him one of those grand long tobacco pipes they have in the shop windows, that's what he'd like the best; or something of that sort. I don't think he cares much for girl's presents, such as purses and slippers."

"Doesn't he?" said Katie, mournfully.

"No; not a bit. You know he's such a rake."

"Oh! Linda; I don't think he's so very bad, indeed I don't; and mama doesn't think so;

and you know Harry said on Easter Sunday that he was much better than he used to be."

"I know Harry is very, very goodnatured to him."

"And isn't Charley just as goodnatured to Harry? I am quite sure he is. Harry has only to ask the least thing, and Charley always does it. Do you remember how Charley went up to town for him, the Sunday before last?"

"And so he ought," said Linda. "He ought to do whatever Harry tells him."

"Well, Linda, I don't know that he ought," said Katie. "They are not brothers, you know; nor yet even cousins."

"But Harry is very—so very—so very superior, you know," said Linda.

"I don't know any such thing," said Katie.

"Oh! Katie, don't you know that Charley is such a rake?"

"But rakes are just the people who don't do whatever they are told; so that's no reason. And I am quite sure that Charley is much the cleverer."

"And I am quite sure he is not—nor half so clever; nor nearly so well educated. Why don't you know the navvies are the most ignorant young men in London? Charley says so himself!"

"That's his fun," said Katie; "besides, he always makes little of himself. I am quite sure

Harry could never have made out all that about Macassar and Crinoline, out of his own head."

"No! because he doesn't think of such nonsensical things. I declare, Miss Katie, I think you are in love with Master Charley!"

Katie, who was still sitting at the dressing table, blushed up to her forehead; and at the same time her eyes were suffused with tears. But there was no one to see either of those tell-tale symptoms; for Linda was in bed.

"I know he saved my life," said Katie, as soon as she could trust herself to speak without betraying her emotion—"I know he jumped into the river after me, and very, very nearly drowned himself; and I don't think any other man in the world would have done so much for me, besides him."

"Oh, Katie! Harry would in a moment."

"Not for me; perhaps he might for you—though I'm not quite sure that he would." It was thus that Katie took her revenge on her sister.

"I am quite sure he would for anybody, even for Sally." Sally was an assistant in the back kitchen. "But I don't mean to say, Katie, that you shouldn't feel grateful to Charley; of course you should."

"And so I do," said Katie, now bursting out into tears, overdone by her emotion and fatigue; "and so I do—and I do love him and will love him, if he's ever so much a rake!

but you know, Linda, that is very different from being in love; and it was very illnatured of you to say so, very!"

Linda was out of bed in a trice, and sitting with her arm round her sister's neck.

"Why, you darling little foolish child, you; I was only quizzing," said she; "don't you know that I love Charley too."

"But you shouldn't quiz about such a thing as that. If you'd fallen into the river and Harry had pulled you out, then you'd know what I mean; but I'm not at all sure that he could have done it."

Katie's perverse wickedness on this point was very nearly giving rise to another contest between the sisters. Linda's common sense however prevailed, and giving up the point of Harry's prowess, she succeeded at last in getting Katie into bed. You know mama will be so angry if she hears us," said Linda, "and I am sure you will be ill to-morrow."

"I don't care a bit about being ill to-morrow; —and yet I do too," she added after a pause, for it's Sunday. It would be so stupid not to be able to go out to-morrow."

"Well—then, try to go to sleep at once"— and Linda carefully tucked the clothes around her sister.

"I think it shall be a purse," said Katie.

"A purse will certainly be the best: that is

if you don't like the slippers," and Linda rolled herself up comfortably in the bed.

"No—I don't like the slippers at all. It shall be a purse. I can do that the quickest, you know. It's so stupid to give a thing when every thing about it is forgotten, isn't it?"

"Very stupid," said Linda, nearly asleep.

"And when it's worn out, I can make another, can't I?"

"H'm 'm 'm," said Linda, quite asleep.

And then Katie went to sleep also in her sister's arms.

Early in the morning—that is to say not very early, perhaps between seven and eight—Mrs. Woodward came into their room, and having inspected her charges, desired that Katie should not get up for morning church, but lie in bed till the middle of the day.

"Oh, mama, it will be so stupid not going to church after tumbling into the river; people will say that all my clothes are wet."

"People will about tell the truth as to some of them," said Mrs. Woodward: "but don't you mind about people, but lie still and go to sleep if you can. Linda, do you come and dress in my room."

"And is Charley to lie in bed too?" said Katie. "He was in the river longer than I was."

"It's too late to keep Charley in bed," said

Linda, "for I see him coming along the road now with a towel; he's been bathing."

"Oh, I do so wish I could go and bathe," said Katie.

Poor Katie was kept in bed till the afternoon. Charley and Harry however were allowed to come up to her bed-room door, and hear her pronounce herself quite well.

"How d'ye do, Mr. Macassar?" said she.

"And how d'ye do, my lady Crinoline?" said Harry. After that Katie never called Charley Mr. Macassar again.

They all went to church, and Katie was left to sleep or read, or think of the new purse that she was to make, as best she might.

And then they dined, and then they walked out: but still without Katie. She was to get up and dress while they were out, so as to receive them in state in the drawing-room on their return. Four of them walked together; for uncle Bat now usually took himself off to his friend at Hampton Court, on Sunday afternoon. Mrs. Woodward walked with Charley, and Harry and Linda paired together.

"Now," said Charley to himself—"now would have been the time to have told Mrs. Woodward every thing, but for that accident of yesterday. Now I can tell her nothing; to do so now, would be to demand her sympathy

and to ask for assistance, and so he determined to tell her nothing.

But the very cause which made Charley dumb on the subject of his own distresses made Mrs. Woodward inquisitive about them. She knew that his life was not like that of Harry, steady, sober, and discreet; she knew that he was not gifted with Alaric's ambition and intense energy; she knew indeed that he needed to make much amends for past misconduct.

But she felt that she did not like him or even love him the less on this account. Nay, it was not clear to her that these feelings of his did not give him additional claims on her sympathies. What could she do for him? how could she relieve him; how could she bring him back to the right way?

When we say that Mrs. Woodward was inquisitive, we do not at all mean that she was vulgarly or rudely so. She did her best to lead him to that confidence, which it had been his intention to bestow on her, and which he now resolved he must withhold. She spoke to him of his London life, praised his talents, encouraged him to exertion, besought him to have some solicitude and, above all, some respect for himself. And then with that delicacy which such a woman, and none but such a woman, can use in such a matter, she asked him whether he was still in debt.

Charley, with shame we must own it, had on this subject been false to all his friends. He had been false to his father and his mother, and had never owned to them the half of what he owed; he had been false to Alaric, and false to Harry; but now, now at such a moment as this, he would not allow himself to be false to Mrs. Woodward.

"Yes," he said—"he was in debt—rather."

Mrs. Woodward pressed him to say whether his debts were heavy—whether he owed much.

"It's no use thinking of it, Mrs. Woodward," said he; "not the least. I know I ought not to come down here; and I don't think I will any more."

"Not come down here!" said Mrs. Woodward. "Why not? there's very little expense in that. I dare say you'd spend quite as much in London."

"Oh—of course—three times as much, perhaps; that is if I had it—but I don't mean that."

What do you mean?" said she.

Charley walked on in silence, with melancholy look, very crest fallen, his thumbs stuck into his waistcoat pockets.

"Upon my word I don't know what you mean," said Mrs. Woodward. "I should have thought coming to Hampton might perhaps—perhaps have kept you—I don't exactly mean out

of mischief." That however, in spite of her denial, was exactly what Mrs. Woodward did mean.

"So it does – but"—said Charley, now thoroughly ashamed of himself.

"But what?" said she.

"I am not fit to be here," said Charley; and as he spoke his manly self-control all gave way, and big tears rolled down his cheeks.

Mrs. Woodward in her woman's heart resolved, that if it might in any way be possible she would make him fit, fit not only to be there, but to hold his head up with the best in any company in which he might find himself.

She questioned him no further then. Her wish now was not to torment him further, but to comfort him. She determined that she would consult with Harry and with her uncle, and take counsel from them as to what steps might be taken to save the brand from the burning. She talked to him as a mother might have done, leaning on his arm, as she returned; leaning on him as a woman never leans on a man whom she deems unfit for her society. All this Charley's heart and instinct fully understood, and he was not ungrateful.

But yet he had but little to comfort him. He must return to town on Monday; return to Mr. Snape and the lock entries, to Mr. M'Ruen and the three Seasons—to Mrs. Davis, Norah Geraghty, and that horrid Mr. Peppermint. He

never once thought of Clementina Golightly, to whom at that moment he was being married by the joint energies of Undy Scott and his cousin Alaric.

And what had Linda and Norman been doing all this time? Had they been placing mutual confidence in each other? No; they had not come to that yet. Linda still remembered the pang with which she had first heard of Gertrude's engagement, and Harry Norman had not yet been able to open his seared heart to a second love.

But those who observed them, might have found ground to hope that in the course of events such things might still be written in the book of fate. Though they were not lovers they were fast friends. Linda pitied, admired, and all but loved the man who had so loved her sister; and Harry was very grateful for her kindness.

The evening passed away quietly. Katie was certainly in appearance sufficiently weak to justify her mother's precautions in keeping her in bed. Charley was in no humour to be very gay, and Mrs. Woodward, who well understood why he was not so, was not herself in high spirits.

To make matters worse, a letter was brought to Captain Cuttwater in the evening, which clearly did not raise his spirits.

"Whom is your letter from, uncle?" said Mrs. Woodward.

"From Alaric," said he gruffly, crumpling it up and putting it into his pocket. And then he turned to his rum and water in a manner that showed his determination to say nothing more on the matter.

In the morning Harry and Charley returned to town. Captain Cuttwater went up with them; and all was again quiet at Surbiton Cottage.

CHAPTER VIII.

MR. M^{c}BUFFER ACCEPTS THE CHILTERN HUNDREDS.

It was an anxious hour for the Honourable Undecimus Scott when he first learnt that Mr. McBuffer had accepted the Stewardship of the Chiltern Hundreds. The Stewardship of the Chiltern Hundreds! Does it never occur to any one how many persons are appointed to that valuable situation? Or does any one ever reflect why a Member of Parliament, when he wishes to resign his post of honour, should not be simply gazetted in the newspapers as having done so, instead of being named as the new Steward of the Chiltern Hundreds? No one ever does think of it; resigning and becoming a steward are one and the same thing, with the difference, however, that one of the grand bulwarks of the British constitution is thus preserved.

Well; Mr. McBuffer, who, having been elected by the independent electors of the Tillietudlem burghs to serve them in Parliament, could not in accordance with the laws of the constitution have got himself out of that honourable but difficult

position by any scheme of his own, found himself on a sudden a free man, the Queen having selected him to be her steward for the district in question. We have no doubt but that the deed of appointment set forth that her Majesty had been moved to this step by the firm trust she had in the skill and fidelity of the said Mr. McBuffer; but if so her Majesty's trust would seem to have been somewhat misplaced, as Mr. McBuffer having been a managing director of a bankrupt swindle, from which he had contrived to pillage some thirty or forty thousand pounds, was now unable to show his face at Tillietudlem, or in the House of Commons; and in thus retreating from his membership had no object but to save himself from the expulsion which he feared. It was, however, a consolation for him to think that in what he had done the bulwarks of the British constitution had been preserved.

It was an anxious moment for Undy. The existing Parliament had still a year and a half, or possibly two years and a half, to run. He had already been withdrawn from the public eye longer than he thought was suitable to the success of his career. He particularly disliked obscurity, for he had found that in his case obscurity had meant comparative poverty. An obscure man, as he observed early in life, had nothing to sell. Now, Undy had once had something to sell, and a very good market he had made of it. He was

of course anxious that those halcyon days should return. Fond of him as the electors of Tillietudlem no doubt were, devoted as they might be in a general way to his interests, still, still it was possible that they might forget him, if he remained too long away from their embraces. Out of sight out of mind is a proverb which opens to us the worst side of human nature. But even at Tillietudlem, nature's worst side might sometimes show itself.

Actuated by such feelings as these Undy heard with joy the tidings of M'Buffer's stewardship, and determined to rush to the battle at once. Battle he knew there must be. To be brought in for the district of Tillietudlem was a prize which had never yet fallen to any man's lot without a contest. Tillietudlem was no poor pocket borough to be disposed of, this way or that, according to the caprice or venal call of some aristocrat. The men of Tillietudlem knew the value of their votes and would only give them according to their consciences. The way to win these consciences, to overcome the sensitive doubts of a free and independent Tillietudlem elector, Undy knew to his cost.

It was almost a question, as he once told Alaric, whether all that he could sell was worth all that he was compelled to buy.

But having put his neck to the collar in this line of life, he was not now going to withdraw.

Tillietudlem was once more vacant, and Undy determined to try it again, undaunted by former outlays. To make an outlay, however, at any rate in electioneering matters, it is necessary that a man should have in hand some ready cash; at the present moment Undy had very little, and therefore the news of Mr. M'Buffer's retirement to the German baths for his health, was not heard with unalloyed delight.

He first went into the City, as men always do when they want money; though in what portion of the City they find it has never come to the author's knowledge. Charley Tudor, to be sure, did get 5*l.* by going to the Banks of Jordan; but the supply likely to be derived from such a fountain as that would hardly be sufficient for Undy's wants. Having done what he could in the City, he came to Alaric, and prayed for the assistance of all his friend's energies in the matter. Alaric would not have been, and was not, unwilling to assist him to the extent of his own immediate means; but his own immediate means were limited, and Undy's desire for ready cash was almost unlimited.

It has been said that Undy and Alaric were to a certain degree in partnership in their speculations. It must not be conceived from this that they had any common purse, or that they bought and sold on a joint account. Undy Scott had no sufficient trust in any brother mortal for such an

arrangement as that. But they aided and abetted and backed each other; each took shares in the other's speculations; they bought and sold as it were in concert, and imparted one to another the secrets of their trade, perhaps with truth on Undy's part, and certainly with truth as far as Alaric was concerned.

There was a certain railway or proposed railway in Ireland, in which Undy had ventured very deeply, more so indeed than he had deemed it quite prudent to divulge to his friend; and in order to gain certain ends he had induced Alaric to become a director of this line. He, with his prospect of returning to Parliament, argued that he might be able to render more efficient aid to the concern, or at any rate to his views of the concern, by being apparently independent of any interest in it as it stood before the world. The line in question was the Great West Cork, which was to run from Skibbereen to Bantry, and the momentous question now hotly debated before the Railway Board was on the moot point of a branch to Ballydehob. If Undy could carry the West Cork and Ballydehob branch entire, he would make a pretty thing of it; but if, as there was too much reason to fear, his Irish foes should prevail, and leave—as Undy had once said in an eloquent speech at a very influential meeting of shareholders—and leave the unfortunate agricultural and commercial interest of Ballydehob

steeped in cimmerian darkness, the chances were that poor Undy would be well-nigh ruined.

Such being the case he had striven, not unsuccessfully, to draw Alaric into the concern. Alaric had bought very cheaply a good many shares, which many people said were worth nothing, and had, by dint of Undy's machinations, been chosen a director on the board. Undy himself meanwhile lay by, hoping that fortune might restore him to Parliament, and haply put him on that committee which must finally adjudicate as to the great question of the Ballydehob branch.

Such were the circumstances under which he came to Alaric with the view of raising such a sum of money as might enable him to overcome the scruples of the Tillietudlem electors, and place himself in the shoes lately vacated by Mr. McBuffer.

They were sitting together after dinner when he commenced the subject. He and Mrs. Val and Clementina had done the Tudors the honour of dining with them; and the ladies had now gone up into the drawing-room, and were busy talking over the Chiswick affair, which was to come off in the next week, and after which Mrs. Val intended to give a small evening party to the most *élite* of her acquaintance.

"We won't have all the world, my dear," she had said to Gertude; "but just a few of our own set that are really nice. Clementina is dying to

try that new back step with M. Jaquêtanàpe, so we won't crowd the room." Such were the immediate arrangements of the Tudor and Scott party.

"So M'Buffer is off at last," said Scott, as he seated himself and filled his glass, after closing the dining-room door. "He brought his pigs to a bad market after all."

"He was an infernal rogue," said Alaric.

"Well, I suppose he was," said Undy. "And a fool into the bargain to be found out."

"He was a downright swindler," said Alaric.

"After all," said the other, not paying much attention to Alaric's indignation, "he did not do so very badly. Why, M'Buffer has been at it now for thirteen years. He began with nothing; he had neither blood nor money; and God knows he had no social merits to recommend him. He is as vulgar as a hog, as awkward as an elephant, and as ugly as an ape. I believe he never had a friend, and was known at his club to be the greatest bore that ever came out of Scotland; and yet for thirteen years he has lived on the fat of the land; for five years he has been in Parliament, his wife has gone about in her carriage, and every man in the City has been willing to shake hands with him."

"And what has it all come to?" said Alaric, whom the question of M'Buffer's temporary prosperity made rather thoughtful.

"Well, not so bad either; he has had his fling for thirteen years, and that's something. Thirteen good years out of a man's life is more than falls to the lot of every one. And then, I suppose, he has saved something."

"And he is spoken of everywhere as a monster, for whom hanging is too good."

"Pshaw! that won't hang him. Yesterday he was a god; to-day he is a devil; to-morrow he'll be a man again; that's all."

"But you don't mean to tell me, Undy, that the consciousness of such crimes as those which McBuffer has committed must not make a man wretched in this world, and probably in the next also?"

"'Judge not, and ye shall not be judged,'" said Undy, quoting Scripture as the devil did before him; "and as for consciousness of crime, I suppose McBuffer has none at all. I have no doubt he thinks himself quite as honest as the rest of the world. He firmly believes that all of us are playing the same game, and using the same means, and has no idea whatever that dishonesty is objectionable."

"And you, what do you think about it yourself?"

"I think the greatest rogues are they who talk most of their honesty; and, therefore, as I wish to be thought honest myself, I never talk of my own."

They both sat silent for awhile, Undy bethinking himself what arguments would be most efficacious towards inducing Alaric to strip himself of every available shilling that he had; and Alaric debating in his own mind that great question which he so often debated, as to whether men, men of the world, the great best men whom he saw around him, really endeavoured to be honest, or endeavoured only to seem so. Honesty was preached to him on every side; but did he, in his intercourse with the world, find men to be honest? Or did it behove him, a practical man like him, a man so determined to battle with the world as he had determined, did it behove such a one as he to be more honest than his neighbours? And yet in his heart he loved the idea of an upright honest man; he was most anxious that his conduct should be ever just, his conscience ever clear, his path ever straight; but he was most anxious also that his head should be high, his name common in men's mouths, that his place should be among the few superiors of the world's children. Perhaps, alas! he was more anxious on this head than on that other.

He also encouraged himself by that mystic word 'excelsior!' To him it was a watchword of battle, repeated morning, noon, and night. It was the prevailing idea of his life. Excelsior! Yes; how great, how grand, how all-absorbing

is the idea! But what if a man may be going down, down to Tophet, and yet think the while that he is scaling the walls of heaven.

"But you wish to think yourself honest," he said, disturbing Undy just as that hero had determined on the way in which he would play his present hand of cards.

"I have not the slightest difficulty about that," said Undy; "and I dare say you have none either. But as to McBuffer, his going will be a great thing for us, if, as I don't doubt, I can get his seat."

"It will be a great thing for you," said Alaric, who, as well as Undy, had his Parliamentary ambition.

"And for you, too, my boy. We should carry the Ballydehob branch to a dead certainty; and even if we did not do that, we'd bring it so near it that the expectation of it would send the shares up like mercury in fine weather. They are at 2*l.* 12*s.* 6*d.* now, and, if I am in the House next Session, they'll be up to 7*l.* 10*s.* before Easter; and what's more, my dear fellow, if we can't help ourselves in that way, they'll be worth nothing in a very few months."

Alaric looked rather blank; for he had invested deeply in this line, of which he was now a director of a week's standing, or perhaps we should say sitting. He had sold out all his golden hopes in the Wheal Mary Jane for

the sake of embarking his money and becoming a director in this Irish Railway, and in one other speculation nearer home, of which Undy had a great opinion, viz.: the Limehouse Thames Bridge Company. Such being the case, he did not like to hear the West Cork with the Ballydehob Branch spoken of so slightingly.

"The fact is, a man can do anything if he is in the House, and he can do nothing if he is not," said Undy. "You know our old Aberdeen saying, 'You scratch me and I'll scratch you;' it is not only what a man may do himself for himself, but it is what others will do for him when he is in a position to help them. Now, there are those fellows; I am hand-and-glove with all of them; but there is not one of them would lift a finger to help me as I am now: but let me get my seat again, and they'll do for me just anything I ask them. Vigil moves the new writ to-night; I got a line from him asking me whether I was ready. There was no good to be got by waiting, so I told him to fire away."

"I suppose you'll go down at once?" said Alaric.

"Well, that's as may be—at least, yes; that's my intention. But there's one thing needful, and that is the needful."

"Money?" suggested Alaric.

"Yes, money—cash—rhino—tin—ready—or

by what other name the goddess would be pleased to have herself worshipped; money, sir; there's the difficulty, now as ever. Even at Tullietudlem, money will have its weight."

"Can't your father assist you?" said Alaric.

"My father! I wonder how he'd look if he got a letter from me asking for money. You might as well expect a goose to feed her young with blood out of her own breast, like a pelican, as expect that a Scotch lord should give money to his younger sons like an English duke. What would my father get by my being member for Tillietudlem? No; I must look nearer home than my father. What can you do for me?"

"I?"

"Yes, you," said Undy; "I am sure you don't mean to say you'll refuse to lend me a helping hand if you can. I *must* realize by the Ballydehobs, if I am once in the House; and then you'd have your money back at once."

"It is not that," said Alaric; "but I haven't got it."

"I am sure you could let me have a thousand or so," said Undy. "I think a couple of thousand would carry it, and I could make out the other myself."

"Every shilling I have," said Alaric, "is either in the Ballydehobs or in the Limehouse Bridge. Why don't you sell, yourself?"

"So I have," said Undy; "everything that I

can without utter ruin. The Ballydehobs are not saleable, as you know."

"What can I do for you, then?"

Undy set himself again to think. "I have no doubt I could get a thousand on our joint names. That blackguard, McRuen, would do it."

"Who is McRuen?" asked Alaric.

"A low blackguard of a discounting Jew Christian. He would do it; but then, Heaven knows what he would charge, and he'd make so many difficulties that I shouldn't have the money for the next fortnight."

"I wouldn't have my name on a bill in such a man's hands on any account," said Alaric.

"Well, I don't like it myself," said Undy; "but what the deuce am I to do? I might as well go to Tillietudlem without my head as without money."

"I thought you'd kept a lot of the Mary Jane's," said Alaric.

"So I had, but they're gone now. I tell you I've managed 1000*l.* myself. It would murder me now if the seat were to go into other hands. I'd get the Committee on the Limehouse Bridge, and we should treble our money. Vigil told me he would not refuse the Committee, though of course the Government won't consent to a grant if they can help it."

"Well, Undy, I can let you have 250*l.*, and that is every shilling I have at my bankers."

"They would not let you overdraw a few hundreds?" suggested Undy.

"I certainly shall not try them," said Alaric.

"You are so full of scruple, so green, so young," said Undy, almost in an enthusiasm of remonstrance. "What can be the harm of trying them?"

"My credit."

"Fal lal. What's the meaning of credit? How are you to know whether you have got any credit if you don't try? Come, I'll tell you how you can do it. Old Cuttwater would lend it you for the asking."

To this proposition Alaric at first turned a deaf ear; but by degrees he allowed Undy to talk him over. Undy showed him that if he lost the Tillietudlem Burghs on this occasion, it would be useless for him to attempt to stand for them again. In such case, he would have no alternative at the next general election but to stand for the borough of Strathbogy in Aberdeenshire; whereas, if he could secure Tillietudlem as a seat for himself, all the Gaberlunzie interest in the borough of Strathbogy, which was supposed to be by no means small, should be transferred to Alaric himself. Indeed, Sandie Scott, the eldest hope of the Gaberlunzie family, would, in such case, himself propose Alaric to the electors. Ca'stalk Cottage, in which the Hon. Sandie lived, and which was on the out-

skirts of the Gaberlunzie property, was absolutely within the boundary of the borough.

Overcome by these and other arguments Alaric at last consented to ask from Captain Cuttwater the loan of 700*l*. That sum Undy had agreed to accept as a sufficient contribution to that desirable public object, the re-seating himself for the Tillietudlem borough; and as Alaric on reflection thought that it would be uncomfortable to be left penniless himself, and as it was just as likely that uncle Bat would lend him 700*l*. as 500*l*. he determined to ask for a loan of the entire sum. He accordingly did so, and the letter, as we have seen, reached the Captain while Harry and Charley were at Surbiton Cottage. The old gentleman was anything but pleased. In the first place, he liked his money, though not with any over-weening affection; in the next place, he had done a great deal for Alaric, and did not like being asked to do more; and lastly, he feared that there must be some evil cause for the necessity of such a loan so soon after Alaric's marriage.

Alaric in making his application had not done so actually without making any explanation on the subject. He wrote a long letter, worded very cleverly, which only served to mystify the Captain, as Alaric had intended that it should do. Captain Cuttwater was most anxious that Alaric, whom he looked on as his adopted son, should rise in

the world; he would have been delighted to think that he might possibly live to see him in Parliament; would probably have made considerable pecuniary sacrifice for such an object. With the design, therefore, of softening Captain Cuttwater's heart Alaric in his letter had spoken about great changes that were coming, of the necessity that there was of his stirring himself, of the great pecuniary results to be expected from a small present expenditure; and ended by declaring that the money was to be used in forwarding the election of his friend Scott for the Tillietudlem district Burghs.

Now, the fact was, that Uncle Bat, though he cared a great deal for Alaric, did not care a rope's end for Undy Scott, and could enjoy his rum punch just as keenly if Mr. Scott was in obscurity as he could possibly hope to do even if that gentleman should be promoted to be a Lord of the Treasury. He was not at all pleased to think that his hard-earned moidores should run down the gullies of the Tillietudlem boroughs in the shape of muddy ale, or vitriolic whisky: and yet this was the first request that Alaric had ever made to him, and he did not like to refuse Alaric's first request. So he came up to town himself on the following morning with Harry and Charley, determined to reconcile all these difficulties by the light of his own wisdom.

In the evening he returned to Surbiton Cottage, having been into the City, sold out stock for 700*l*. and handed over the money to Alaric Tudor.

On the following morning Undy Scott set out for Scotland, properly freighted, Mr. Whip Vigil having in due course moved for a new writ for the Tillietudlem borough in the place of Mr. M^c^Buffer, who had accepted the situation of Steward of the Chiltern Hundreds.

CHAPTER IX.

CHISWICK GARDENS.

The following Thursday was as fine as a Chiswick flower-show-day ought to be and so very seldom is. The party who had agreed to congregate there, the party that is whom we are to meet, was very select. Linda and Katie had come up to spend a few days with their sister. Mrs. Val, Clementina, Gertrude, and Linda were to go in a carriage, for which Alaric was destined to pay, and which Mrs. Val had hired, having selected it regardless of expense, as one which by its decent exterior and polished outward graces conferred on its temporary occupiers an agreeable appearance of proprietorship. The two Miss Neverbends, sisters of Fidus, were also to be with them, and they with Katie followed humbly, as became their station, in a cab, which was not only hired, but which very vulgarly told the fact to all the world.

Slight as had been the intimacy between Fidus Neverbend and Alaric at Tavistock, nevertheless a sort of friendship had since grown up between them. Alaric had ascertained that Fidus might

in a certain degree be useful to him, that the good word of the Aristides of the Works and Buildings might be serviceable, and that, in short, Neverbend was worth cultivating. Neverbend, on the other hand, when he perceived that Tudor was likely to become a Civil-service hero, a man to be named with glowing eulogy at all the Government Boards in London, felt unconsciously a desire to pay him some of that reverence which a mortal always feels for a god. And thus there was formed between them a sort of alliance, which included also the ladies of the family.

Not that Mrs. Val, or even Mrs. A. Tudor, encountered Lactimel and Ugolina Neverbend on equal terms. There is a distressing habitual humility in many unmarried ladies of an uncertain age, which at the first blush tells the tale against them which they are so painfully anxious to leave untold. In order to maintain their places but yet a little longer in that delicious world of love, sighs, and dancing partners, from which it must be so hard for a maiden, with all her youthful tastes about her, to tear herself away for ever, they smile and say pretty things, put up with the caprices of married women, and play second fiddle, though the doing so in no whit assists them in their task. Nay, the doing so does but stamp them the more plainly with that horrid name from which they would so fain escape. Their plea is for mercy—"Have pity on me, have pity on me; put up

with me but for one other short twelve months; and then, if then I shall still have failed, I will be content to vanish from the world for ever." When did such plea for pity from one woman ever find real entrance into the heart of another?

On such terms, however, the Misses Neverbend were content to follow Mrs. Val to the Chiswick flower-show, and to feed on the crumbs which might chance to fall from the rich table of Miss Golightly; to partake of broken meat in the shape of cast-off adorers, and regale themselves with the lukewarm civility from the outsiders in the throng which followed that adorable heiress.

And yet the Misses Neverbend were quite as estimable as the divine Clementina, and had once been, perhaps, as attractive as she is now.—They had never waltzed, it is true, as Miss Golightly waltzes. It may be doubted, indeed, whether any lady ever did. In the pursuit of that amusement Ugolina was apt to be stiff and ungainly, and to turn herself, or allow herself to be turned, as though she were made of wood; she was somewhat flat in her figure, looking as though she had been uncomfortably pressed into an unbecoming thinness of substance, and a corresponding breadth of surface, and this confirmation did not assist her in acquiring a graceful flowing style of motion. The elder sister, Lactimel, was of a different form, but yet hardly more fit to shine in the mazes of the dance than her sister. She had her

charms, nevertheless, which consisted of a somewhat stumpy dumpy comeliness. She was altogether short in stature, and very short below the knee. She had fair hair and a fair skin, small bones and copious soft flesh. She had a trick of sighing gently in the evolutions of the waltz, which young men attributed to her softness of heart, and old ladies to her shortness of breath. They both loved dancing dearly, and were content to enjoy it whenever the chance might be given to them by the aid of Miss Golightly's crumbs.

The two sisters were as unlike in their inward lights as in their outward appearance. Lactimel walked ever on the earth, but Ugolina never deserted the clouds. Lactimel talked prose and professed to read it; Ugolina read poetry, and professed to write it. Lactimel was utilitarian; *cui bono?*—though probably in less classic phrase,—was the question she asked as to everything. Ugolina was transcendental, and denied that there could be real good in anything. Lactimel would have clothed and fed the hungry and naked, so that all mankind might be comfortable. Ugolina would have brought mankind back to their original nakedness, and have taught them to feed on the grasses of the field, so that the claims of the body, which so vitally oppose those of the mind, might remain unheeded and despised. They were both a little nebulous in their doctrines, and apt

to be somewhat unintelligible in their discourse, when indulged in the delights of unrestrained conversation. Lactimel had a theory that every poor brother might eat of the fat and drink of the sweet, might lie softly, and wear fine linen, if only some body or bodies could be induced to do their duties; and Ugolina was equally strong in a belief that if the mind were properly looked to, all appreciation of human ill would cease. But they delighted in generalizing rather than in detailed propositions; and had not probably, even in their own minds, realized any exact idea as to the means by which the results they desired were to be brought about.

They toadied Mrs. Val,—poor young women, how little should they be blamed for this fault, which came so naturally to them in their forlorn position!—They toadied Mrs. Val, and therefore Mrs. Val bore with them; they bored Gertrude, and Gertrude, for her husband's sake, bore with them also; they were confidential with Clementina, and Clementina, of course, snubbed them. They called Clementina "the sweetest creature." Lactimel declared that she was born to grace the position of a wife and mother, and Ugolina swore that her face was perfect poetry. Whereupon Clementina laughed aloud, and elegantly made a grimace with her nose and mouth, as she turned the "perfect poetry" to her mother. Such were the ladies of the party who went to the Chiswick

flower-show, and who afterwards were to figure at Mrs. Val's little evening 'thè dansant,' at which nobody was to be admitted who was not nice.

They were met at the gate of the Gardens by a party of young men, of whom Victoire Jaquêtanàpe was foremost. Alaric and Charley were to come down there when their office work was done. Undy was by this time on his road to Tillietudlem; and Captain Val was playing billiards at his club. The latter had given a promise that he would make his appearance, a promise, however, which no one expected, or wished him to keep.

The happy Victoire was dressed up to his eyes. That, perhaps, is not saying much, for he was only a few feet high; but what he wanted in quantity, he fully made up in quality. He was a well made, shining, jaunty little Frenchman, who seemed to be perfectly at ease with himself, and all the world. He had the smallest little pair of moustaches imaginable, the smallest little imperial, the smallest possible pair of boots, and the smallest possible pair of gloves. Nothing on earth could be nicer, or sweeter, or finer than he was. But he did not carry his finery like a hog in armour, as an Englishman so often does when an Englishman stoops to be fine. It sat as naturally on Victoire, as though he had been born in it. He jumped about in his best patent

leather boots, apparently quite heedless whether he spoilt them or no; and when he picked up Miss Golightly's parasol from the gravel, he seemed to suffer no anxiety about his gloves.

He handed out the ladies one after another, as though his life had been passed in handing out ladies, as, indeed, it probably had—in handing them out and handing them in; and when Mrs. Val's "private" carriage passed on, he was just as courteous to the Misses Neverbend and Katie in their cab, as he had been to the greater ladies who had descended from the more ambitious vehicle. As Katie said afterwards to Linda, when she found the free use of her voice in their own bed-room, "he was a darling little duck of a man, only he smelt so strongly of tobacco."

But when they were once in the garden, Victoire had no time for any one but Mrs. Val and Clementina. He had done his duty by the Misses Neverbend and those other two insipid young English girls, and now he had his own affairs to look after. He also knew that Miss Golightly had 20,000*l.* of her own.

He was one of those butterfly beings who seem to have been created that they may flutter about from flower to flower in the summer hours of such gala times as those now going on at Chiswick, just as other butterflies do. What the butterflies were last winter, or what will become of them next winter, no one but the

naturalist thinks of inquiring. How they may feed themselves on flower-juice, or on insects small enough to be their prey, is matter of no moment to the general world. It is sufficient that they flit about in the sunbeams, and add bright glancing spangles to the beauty of the summer day.

And so it was with Victoire Jacquĉtanàpe. He did no work. He made no honey. He appeared to no one in the more serious moments of life. He was the reverse of Shylock; he would neither buy with you nor sell with you, but he would eat with you and drink with you; as for praying, he did little of that either with or without company. He was clothed in purple and fine linen, as butterflies should be clothed, and fared sumptuously every day; but whence came his gay colours, or why people fed him with *pâté* and champagne, nobody knew and nobody asked.

Like most Frenchmen of his class he never talked about himself. He understood life, and the art of pleasing, and the necessity that he should please too well to do so. All that his companions knew of him was that he came from France, and that when the gloomy months come on in England, the months so unfitted for a French butterfly, he packed up his azure wings and sought some more genial climate, certain to return and be seen again when the world of London became habitable.

If he had means of living no one knew it; if he was in debt no one ever heard of it; if he had a care in the world he concealed it. He abounded in acquaintances who were always glad to see him, and would have regarded it as quite *de trop* to have a friend. Nevertheless time was flying on with him as with others; and, butterfly as he was, the idea of Miss Golightly's 20,000*l.* struck him with delightful amazement—500,000 francs! 500,000 francs! and so he resolved to dance his very best, warm as the weather undoubtedly was at the present moment.

"Ah, he was charmed to see madame and mademoiselle look so charmingly," he said, walking between mother and daughter, but paying apparently much the greater share of attention to the elder lady. In this respect we Englishmen might certainly learn much from the manners of our dear allies. We know well enough how to behave ourselves to our fair young countrywomen; we can be civil enough to young women; nature teaches us that; but it is so seldom that we are sufficiently complaisant to be civil to old women; and yet that, after all, is the soul of gallantry. It is to the sex that we profess to do homage. Our theory is, that feminine weakness shall receive from man's strength humble and respectful service. But where is the chivalry, where the gallantry, if we only do service in expectation of receiving such

guerdon as rosy cheeks and laughing eyes can bestow?

It may be said that Victoire had an object in being civil to Mrs. Val. But the truth is, all French Victoires are, as a rule, courteous to old ladies. An Englishman may probably be as forward as a Frenchman in rushing into a flaming building to save an old woman's life; but then it so rarely happens that occasion offers itself for gallantry such as that. A man, however, may with ease be civil to a dozen old women in one day.

And so they went on walking through parterres and glass-houses, talking of theatres, balls, dinner-parties, pic-nics, concerts, operas, of ladies married and single, of single gentlemen who should be married, and of married gentlemen who should be single, of everything, indeed, except the flowers, of which neither Victoire nor his companions took the slightest notice.

"And madame really has a dance to-night in her own house?"

"Oh, yes," said Mrs. Val; "that is, just a few quadrilles and waltzes for Clementina. I really hardly know whether the people will take the carpet up or no." The people, consisting of the cook and housemaid,—for the page had of course come with the carriage,—were at this moment hard at work wrenching up the nails, as Mrs. Val was very well aware.

"It will be delightful, charming," said Victoire.

"Just a few people of our own set, you know," said Mrs. Val: "no crowd, or fuss, or anything of that sort; just a few people that we know are nice, in a quiet homely way."

"Ah, that is so pleasing," said M. Victoire: "that is just what I like; and is mademoiselle engaged for——"

No. Mademoiselle was not engaged, either for—or for—or for— &c. &c. &c.; and then out came the little tablets, under the dome of a huge green-house filled with the most costly exotics, and Clementina and her fellow-labourer in the cause of Terpsichore went to work to make their arrangements for the evening.

And the rest of the party followed them. Gertrude was accompanied by an Englishman just as idle and quite as useless as M. Victoire, but not quite so graceful a butterfly, but one without colour.

And then came the Misses Neverbend walking together, and with them, one on each side, two tall Frenchmen, whose faces had been remodelled in that mould into which so large a proportion of Parisians of the present day force their heads, in order that they may come out with some look of the Emperor about them. Were there not some such machine as this in operation, it would be impossible that so many Frenchmen

should appear with elongated, angular, hard faces, all as like each other as though they were brothers! The cut of the beard, the long prickly-ended, clotted moustache, which looks as though it were being continually rolled up in saliva, the sallow, half bronzed, apparently unwashed colour—these may all, perhaps, be assumed by any man after a certain amount of labour and culture. But how it has come to pass that every Parisian has been able to obtain for himself a pair of the Emperor's long, hard, bony, cruel-looking cheeks, no Englishman has yet been able to guess. That having the power they should have the wish to wear this mask is almost equally remarkable. Can it be that a political phase, when stamped on a people with an iron hand of sufficient power of pressure, will leave its impress on the outward body as well as on the inward soul? If so, a Frenchman may, perhaps, be thought to have gained in the apparent stubborn wilfulness of his countenance some recompense for his compelled loss of all political wilfulness whatever.

Be this as it may the two Misses Neverbend walked on, each with a stubborn long-faced Frenchman at her side, looking altogether not ill pleased at this instance of the excellence of French manners. After them came Linda, talking to some acquaintance of her own, and then poor dear little Katie with another French-

man, sterner, more stubborn looking, more long faced, more like the pattern after whom he and they had been remodelled than any of them.

Poor little Katie! This was her first day in public. With many imploring caresses, with many half-formed tears in her bright eyes, with many assurances of her perfect health, she had induced her mother to allow her to come to the flower-show; to allow her also to go to Mrs. Val's dance, at which there were to be none but such very nice people. Katie was to commence her life, to open her ball with this flower-show. In her imagination it was all to be one long bright flower-show, in which, however, the sweet sorrowing of the sensitive plant would ever and anon invite her to pity and tears. When she entered that narrow portal she entered the world, and there she found herself walking on the well-mown grass with this huge, stern, bearded Frenchman by her side! As to talking to him, that was quite out of the question. At the gate some slight ceremony of introduction had been gone through, which had consisted in all the Frenchmen taking off their hats and bowing to the two married ladies, and in the Englishmen standing behind and poking the gravel with their canes. But in this no special notice had of course been taken of Katie; and she had a kind of idea, whence derived she knew not, that it would be improper for her to talk to this man,

unless she were actually and *bonâ fide* introduced to him. And then, again, poor Katie was not very confident in her French, and then her companion was not very intelligible in his English; so when the gentleman asked, "Is it that mademoiselle lofe de fleures?" poor little Katie felt herself trembling, and tried in vain to mutter something; and when, again essaying to do his duty, he suggested that "all de beauté of Londres did delight to valk itself at Chisveek," she was equally dumb, merely turning on him her large eyes for one moment, to show that she knew that he addressed her. After that he walked on as silent as herself, still keeping close to her side; and other ladies, who had not the good fortune to have male companions, envied her happiness in being so attended.

But Alaric and Charley were coming she knew; Alaric was her brother-in-law now, and therefore she would be delighted to meet him; and Charley, dear Charley, she had not seen him since he went away that morning, now four days since; and four days was a long time, considering that he had saved her life. Her busy little fingers had been hard at work the while, and now she had in her pocket the purse which she had been so eager to make, and which she was almost afraid to bestow.

"Oh, Linda," she had said, "I don't think I will after all; it is such a little thing."

"Nonsense, child, you wouldn't give him a worked counterpane, little things are best for presents."

"But it isn't good enough," she said, looking at her handywork in despair; but, nevertheless, she persevered, working in the golden beads with constant diligence, so that she might be able to give it to Charley among the Chiswick flowers. Oh! what a place it was in which to bestow a present, with all the eyes of all the world upon her!

And then this dance to which she was going! The thought of what she would do there troubled her. Would any one ask her to dance? Would Charley think of her when he had so many grown-up girls, girls quite grown up, all around him? It would be very sad if at this London party it should be her fate to sit down the whole evening and see others dance. It would suffice for her, she thought, if she could stand up with Linda, but she had an idea that this would not be allowed at a London party; and then Linda, perhaps, might not like it. Altogether she had much upon her mind, and was beginning to think that, perhaps, she might have been happier to have stayed at home with her mama. She had not quite recovered from the effect of her toss into the water, or the consequent excitement, and a very little misery would upset her. And so she walked on with her Napoleonic companion, from

whom she did not know how to free herself, through one glass-house after another, across lawns and along paths, attempting every now and then to get a word with Linda, and not at all so happy as she had hoped to have been.

At last Gertrude came to her rescue. They were all congregated for awhile in one great flower-house, and Gertrude, finding herself near her sister, asked her how she liked it all.

"Oh! it is very beautiful," said Katie, "only—"

"Only what, my dear?"

"Would you let me come with you a little while—look here—" and she crept softly around to the other side of her sister, sidling with little steps away from the Frenchman, at whom, however, she kept furtively looking, as though she feared that he would detect her in the act.

"Look here, Gertrude," she said, twitching her sister's arm, "that gentleman there—you see him, don't you? he's a Frenchman, and I don't know *how* to get away from him."

"How to get away from him?" said Gertrude. "That's M. Delabarbe de L'Empereur, a great friend of Mrs. Val's, and a very quiet sort of man I believe; he won't eat you."

"No, he won't eat me, I know; but I can't look at anything, because he will walk so close to me; mayn't I come with you?"

Gertrude told her she might, and so Katie made good her escape, hiding herself from her

enemy as well as she could behind her sister's petticoats. He, poor man, was perhaps as rejoiced at the arrangement as Katie herself; at any rate he made no attempt to regain his prey, but went on by himself, looking as placidly stern as ever, till he was absorbed by Mrs. Val's more immediate party, and then he devoted himself to her, while M. Jâquetanàpe settled with Clementina the properest arrangement for the waltzes of the evening.

Katie was beginning to be tranquilly happy, and was listening to the enthusiasm of Ugolina Neverbend, who declared that flowers were the female poet's fitting food—it may be doubted whether she had ever tried it—when her heart leaped within her on hearing a sharp, clear, well-known voice, almost close behind her. It was Charley Tudor. After her silent promenade with M. Delabarbe de L'Empereur, Katie had been well pleased to put up with the obscure but yet endurable volubility of Ugolina; but now she felt almost as anxious to get quit of Ugolina as she had before been to shake off the Frenchman.

"Flowers are Nature's chef-d'œuvre," said Ugolina; "they convey to me the purest and most direct essence of that heavenly power of production which is the sweetest evidence which Jehovah gives us of his presence."

"Do they?" said Katie, looking over her shoul-

der to watch what Charley was doing, and to see whether he was coming to notice her.

"They are the bright stars of his immediate handiwork," said Ugolina; "and if our dim eyes could read them aright, they would whisper to us the secret of his love."

"Yes, I dare say they would," said Katie, who felt, perhaps, a little disappointed because Charley lingered awhile shaking hands with Mrs. Val and Clementina Golightly.

It was, however, but for a moment. There was much shaking of hands to be done, and a considerable taking off of hats to be gone through; and as Alaric and Charley encountered the head of the column first, it was only natural that they should work their way through it gradually. Katie, however, never guessed—how could she?—that Charley had calculated that by reaching her last he would be able to remain with her.

She was still listening to Ugolina, who was mounting higher and higher up to heaven, when she found her hand in Charley's. Ugolina might now mount up, and get down again as best she could, for Katie could no longer listen to her.

Alaric had not seen her yet since her ducking. She had to listen to, and to answer his congratulations, Charley standing by and making his comments.

"Charley says you took to the water quite naturally, and swam like a duck," said Alaric.

"Only she went in head foremost," said Charley.

"All bathers ought to do that," said Alaric; "and tell me, Katie, did you feel comfortable when you were in the water?"

"Indeed I don't recollect anything about it," said she, "only that I saw Charley coming to me, just when I was going to sink for the last time."

"Sink—why I'm told that you floated like a deal board."

"The big hat and the crinoline kept her up," said Charley; "she had no idea of sinking."

"Oh! Charley, you know I was under the water for a long time; and that if you had not come, just at that very moment, I should never have come up again."

And then Alaric went on, and Charley and Katie were left together.

How was she to give him the purse? It was burning a hole in her pocket till she could do so; and yet, how was she to get it out of her possession into his, and make her little speech, here in the public garden? She could have done it easily enough, at home in the drawing room at Surbiton Cottage.

"And how do you like the gardens?" asked Charley.

"Oh! they are beautiful; but I have hardly been able to see anything yet: I have been

going about with a great big Frenchman—there, that man there—he has such a queer name."

"Did his name prevent your seeing?"

"No, not his name, I didn't know his name then. But it seemed so odd to be walking about with such a man as that. But I want to go back, and look at the black and yellow roses in that house, there. Would you go with me? that is, if we may. I wonder whether we may?"

Charley was clearly of opinion that they might, and should, and would; and so away they sallied back to the roses, and Katie began to enjoy the first instalment of the happiness which she had anticipated. In the temple of the roses, the crowd at first was great, and she could not get the purse out of her pocket, nor make her speech; but after a while the people passed on, and there was a lull before others filled their places, and Katie found herself opposite to a beautiful black rose, with no one close to her but Charley.

"I have got something for you," she said; and as she spoke she felt herself to be almost hot with blushing.

"Something for me," said Charley; and he also felt himself abashed, he did not know why.

"It's only a very little thing," said Katie, feeling in her pocket, "and I am almost ashamed to ask you to take it. But I made it all myself; no one else put a stitch in it," and so saying, and

looking round to see that she was not observed, she handed her gift to Charley.

"Oh! Katie, dearest Katie," said he, "I am so much obliged to you—I'll keep it till I die."

"I didn't know what to make that was better," said she.

"Nothing on earth could possibly be better," said he.

"A plate of bread and butter and a purse are a very poor return for saving one's life," said she; half laughing, half crying.

He looked at her with his eyes full of love; and as he looked, he swore within himself that come what might, he would never see Norah Geraghty again, but would devote his life to an endeavour to make himself worthy of the angel that was now with him. Katie the while was looking up anxiously into his face. She was thinking of no other love than that which it became her to feel for the man who had saved her life. She was thinking of no other love; but her young heart was opening itself to a very different feeling. She was sinking deep, deep, in waters which were to go near to drown her warm heart; much nearer than those other waters which she fancied had all but closed for ever over her life.

She looked into his face, and saw that he was pleased; and that, for the present, was enough for her. She was at any rate happy now. So they passed on through the roses, and then lost

themselves among the geraniums, and wondered at the gigantic rhododendrons and beautiful azaleas, and so went on from house to house, and from flower-bed to flower-bed, Katie talking and Charley listening, till she began to wonder at her former supineness, and to say both to herself and out loud to her companion, how very, very, very glad she was that her mother had let her come.

Poor Katie — dear darling bonnie Katie — sweet, sweetest, dearest child! Why, oh why, has that mother of thine, that tender-hearted, loving mother, put thee unguarded in the way of such peril as this? Has she not sworn to herself that over thee at least she would watch as a hen does over her young, so that no unfortunate love should quench thy young spirit, or blanch thy cheek's bloom? Has she not trembled at the thought of what would have befallen thee, had thy fate been such as Linda's? Has she not often — oh, how often! — on her knees thanked the Almighty God that Linda's spirit was not as thine; that this evil had happened to the lamb whose temper had been fitted by Him to endure it? And yet—here thou art—all unguarded, all unaided, left by thyself to drink of the cup of sweet poison, and none near to warn thee that the draught is deadly!

Alas!—'twould be useless to warn thee now. The false god has been placed upon the altar,

the temple all shining with gems and gold has been built around him, the incense cup is already swinging; nothing will now turn the idolater from her worship, nothing short of a miracle.

Our Katie's childish days are now all gone. A woman's passion now glows within her breast, though as yet she has not scanned it with a woman's intelligence. Her mother, listening to a child's entreaty, had suffered her darling to go forth for a child's amusement. It was doomed that the child should return no more, but in lieu of her, a fair, heart-laden maiden, whose every fondest thought must henceforth be of a stranger's welfare and a stranger's fate.

But it must not be thought that Charley abused the friendship of Mrs. Woodward, and made love to Katie, as love is usually made—with warm words, assurances of affection, with squeezing of the hand, with sighs, and all a lover's ordinary catalogue of resources. Though we have said that he was a false god, yet he was hardly to be blamed for the temple, and gems, and gold, with which he was endowed; not more so, perhaps, than the unconscious bird which is made so sacred on the banks of the Egyptian river. He loved too, perhaps as warmly, though not so fatally as Katie did; but he spoke no word of his love. He walked among the flowers with her, laughing and listening to her in his usual light-hearted, easy man-

ner; every now and again his arm would thrill with pleasure, as he felt on it the touch of her little fingers, and his heart would leap within him as he gazed on the speaking beauty of her face; but he was too honest-hearted to talk to the young girl, to Mrs. Woodward's child, of love. He talked to her as to a child—but she listened to him and loved him as a woman.

And so they rambled on till the hour appointed for quitting this elysium had arrived. Every now and again they had a glimpse of some one of their party, which had satisfied Katie that they were not lost. At first Clementina was seen tracing with her parasol on the turf the plan of a new dance. Then Ugolina passed by them describing the poetry of the motion of the spheres in a full flow of impassioned eloquence to M. Delabarbe de L' Empereur; "*ce'st toujours vrai; que mademoiselle dít est toujours vrai,*" was the Frenchman's answer, which they heard thrice repeated. And then Lactimel and Captain Val were seen together, the latter having disappointed the prophecies which had been made respecting him. Lactimel had an idea that as the Scotts were great people, they were all in Parliament, and she was endeavouring to persuade Captain Val that something ought to be done for the poor.

"Think," said she, "only think, Captain Scott, of all the money that this *féte* must cost."

"A doosed sight," said the Captain, hardly articulating from under his thick, sandy-coloured moustache, which, growing downwards from his nose, looked like a heavy thatch put on to protect his mouth from the inclemency of the clouds above. "A doosed sight," said the captain.

"Now suppose, Captain Scott, that all this money could be collected. The tickets, you know, and the dresses, and——"

"I wish I knew how to do it," said the captain.

Lactimel went on with her little scheme for expending the cost of the flower-show in bread and bacon for the poor Irish of Saffron Hill; but Charley and Katie heard no more; for the mild philosopher passed out of hearing and out of sight.

At last Katie got a poke in her back from a parasol, just as Charley had expended half-a-crown, one of Mr. McRuen's last, in purchasing for her one simple beautiful flower, to put into her hair that night.

"You naughty puss," said Gertrude; "we have been looking for you all over the gardens. Mrs. Val and the Miss Neverbends have been waiting this half hour." Katie looked terribly frightened. "Come along, and don't keep them waiting any longer. They are all in the passage. This was your fault, Master Charley."

"Oh no, it was not," said Katie; "but we thought ——"

"Never mind thinking," said Gertrude; "but come along." And so they hurried on, and were soon replaced in their respective vehicles, and then went back to town.

"Well, I do think the Chiswick Gardens is the nicest place in all the world," said Katie, leaning back in the cab, and meditating on her past enjoyment.

"They are very pretty—very," said Lactimel Neverbend. "I only wish every cotter had such a garden behind his cottage. I am sure we might manage it, if we set about it in the right way."

"What, as big as Chiswick?" said Katie.

"No; not so big," said Lactimel; "but quite as nicely kept."

"I think the pigs would get in," said Katie.

"It would be much easier, and more important too to keep their minds nicely," said Ugolina; "and there the pigs could never get in."

"No; I suppose not," said Katie.

"I don't know that," said Lactimel.

CHAPTER X.

KATIE'S FIRST BALL.

In spite of Mrs. Val's oft-repeated assurance that they would have none but nice people, she had done her best to fill her rooms, and not unsuccessfully. She had, it is true, eschewed the Golightly party, who resided some north of Oxford Street, in the purlieus of Fitzroy Square, and some even to the east of Tottenham Court Road. She had eschewed the Golightlys, and confined herself to the Scott connection ; but so great had been her success in life, that, even under these circumstances, she had found herself able to fill her rooms respectably. If, indeed, there was no absolute crowding, if some space was left in the front drawing-room sufficient for the operations of dancers, she could still attribute this apparent want of fashionable popularity to the selectness of the few nice people whom she had asked. The Hon. Mrs. Val was no ordinary woman, and understood well how to make the most of the goods with which the gods provided her.

The Miss Neverbends were to dine with the Tudors, and go with them to the dance in the evening, and their brother Fidus was to meet

them there. Charley was, of course, one of the party at dinner; and as there was no other gentleman there, Alaric had an excellent opportunity, when the ladies went up to their toilets, to impress on his cousin the expediency of his losing no time in securing to himself Miss Golightly's twenty thousand pounds. The conversation, as will be seen, at last became rather animating.

"Well, Charley, what do you think of the beautiful Clementina?" said Alaric, pushing over the bottle to his cousin, as soon as they found themselves alone. "A 'doosed' fine girl as Captain Val says, isn't she?"

"A 'doosed' fine girl, of course," said Charley, laughing. "She has too much go in her for me, I'm afraid."

"Marriage and children will soon pull that down. She'd make an excellent wife for such a man as you; and to tell you the truth, Charley, if you'll take my advice, you'll lose no time in making up to her. She has got that d—— French fellow at her heels, and though I don't suppose she cares one straw about him, it may be well to make sure."

"But you don't mean in earnest that you think that Miss Golightly would have me?"

"Indeed I do—you are just the man to get on with girls; and, as far as I can see, you are just the man that will never get on in any other way under the sun."

Charley sighed as he thought of his many debts, his poor prospects, and his passionate love. There seemed, indeed, to be little chance that he ever would get at all on in the ordinary sense of the word. "I'm sure she'd refuse me," said he, still wishing to back out of the difficulty. "I'm sure she would—I've not got a penny in the world, you know."

"That's just the reason—she has got lots of money, and you have got none."

"Just the reason why she should refuse me, you should say."

"Well—what if she does? There's no harm done. 'Faint heart never won fair lady.' You've everything to back you—Mrs. Val is led by Undy Scott, and Undy is all on your side."

"But she has got guardians, hasn't she?"

"Yes—her father's first cousin, Old Sam Golightly. He is dying; or dead probably by this time; only Mrs. Val won't have the news brought to her, because of this party. He had a fit of apoplexy yesterday. Then there's her father's brother-in-law, Figgs; he's bed-ridden. When old Golightly is off the hooks altogether, another will be chosen, and Undy talks of putting in my name as that of a family friend—so you'll have everything to assist you."

Charley looked very grave. He had not been in the habit of discussing such matters, but it

seemed to him, that if Alaric was about to become in any legal manner the guardian of Miss Golightly's fortune, that that in itself was reason enough why he, Alaric, should not propose such a match as this. Needy men, to be sure, did often marry rich ladies, and the world looked on and regarded it only as a matter of course; but surely it would be the duty of a guardian to protect his ward from such a fate, if it were in his power to do so.

Alaric, who saw something of what was going on in his cousin's mind, essayed to remove the impression which was thus made. "Besides, you know Clementina is no chicken. Her fortune is fully at her own disposal. All the guardians on earth cannot prevent her marrying you if she makes up her mind to do so."

Charley gulped down his glass of wine, and then sat staring at the fire, saying nothing further. It was true enough that he was very poor—true enough that Miss Golightly's fortune would set him on his legs, and make a man of him—true enough, perhaps, that no other expedient of which he could think would do so. But, then, there were so many arguments that were "strong against the deed." In the first place, he thought it impossible that he should be successful in such a suit, and then again it would hardly be honest to obtain such success, if it were possible; then, thirdly, he had

no sort of affection whatsoever for Miss Golightly; and fourthly, lastly, and chiefly, he loved, so dearly, tenderly, loved poor Katie Woodward.

As he thought of this, he felt horror-stricken with himself at allowing the idea of his becoming a suitor to another to dwell for an instant on his mind, and looking up with all the resolution which he was able to summon, he said—

"It's impossible, Alaric, quite impossible! I couldn't do it."

"Then what do you mean to do?" said Alaric, who was angry at having his scheme thus thwarted; "do you mean to be a beggar—or if not, how do you intend to get out of your difficulties?"

"I trust not a beggar," said Charley, sadly.

"What other hope have you; what rational hope of setting yourself right?"

"Perhaps I may do something by writing," said Charley, very bashfully.

"By writing!" ha, ha, ha! and Alaric laughed somewhat cruelly at the poor navvy—"do something by writing! what will you do by writing? will you make 20,000*l.*—or 20,000 pence? Of all trades going, that, I should say, is likely to be the poorest for a poor man—the poorest and the most heart-breaking. What have you made already to encourage you?"

"The editor says that Crinoline and Macassar will come to 4*l.* 10*s.*"

"And when will you get it?"

"The editor says that the rule is to pay six months after the date of publication. The *Daily Delight* is only a new thing, you know. The editor says that, if the sale comes up to his expectations, he will increase the scale of pay."

"A prospect of 4*l*. 10*s*. for a fortnight's hard work! That's a bad look out, my boy; you had better take the heiress."

"It may be a bad look out," said Charley, whose spirit was raised by his cousin's sneers,—"but at any rate it's honest. And I'll tell you what, Alaric, I'd sooner earn 50*l*. by writing for the press, than get 1,000*l*. in any other way you can think of. It may be a poor trade in one way; and authors, I believe, are poor; but I am sure it has its consolations."

"Well, Charley, I hope with all my heart that you may find them. For my own part, seeing what a place the world is, seeing what are the general aspirations of other men, seeing what, as it appears to me, the Creator has intended for the goal of our labours, I look for advancement, prosperity and such rank and station as I may be able to win for myself. The labourer is worthy of his hire, and I do not mean to refuse such wages as may come in my way."

"Yes"—said Charley, who now that his spirit was roused determined to fight his battle manfully—"Yes, the labourer is worthy of his hire;

but were I to get Miss Golightly's fortune I should be taking the hire without labour."

"Bah!" said Alaric.

"It would be dishonest in every way, for I do not love her, and should not love her at the moment that I married her."

"Honesty!" said Alaric, still sneering—"there is no sign of the dishonesty of the age so strong, as the continual talk which one hears about honesty!" It was quite manifest that Alaric had not sat at the feet of Undy Scott without profiting by the lessons which he had heard. "With what face," continued he, "can you pretend to be more honest than your neighbours?"

"I know that it is wrong, and unmanly too, to hunt a girl down merely for what she has got."

"There are a great many wrong and unmanly men about then," said Alaric. "Look through the houses of Parliament, and see how many men there have married for money; ay, and made excellent husbands afterwards. I'll tell you what it is, Charley; it is all humbug in you to pretend to be better than others, you are not a bit better; —mind, I do not say you are worse. We have, none of us, too much of this honesty of which we are so fond of prating. Where was your honesty when you ordered the coat for which you know you cannot pay; or when you swore to the bootmaker that he should have the amount of his little bill after next quarter day, knowing in your

heart at the time that he wouldn't get a farthing of it. If you are so honest, why did you waste your money to-day in going to Chiswick, instead of paying some portion of your debts? Honest! you are, I dare say, indifferently honest as the world goes, like the rest of us. But I think you might put the burden of Clementina's fortune on your conscience without feeling much the worse for it after what you have already gone through."

Charley became very red in the face as he sat silent listening to Alaric's address—nor did he speak at once, at the first pause, so Alaric went on. "The truth, I take it, is that at the present moment you have no personal fancy for this girl."

"No I have not," said Charley.

"And you are so incredibly careless as to all prudential considerations as to prefer your immediate personal fancies to the future welfare of your whole life. I can say no more. If you will think well of my proposition, I will do all I can to assist you. I have no doubt you would make a good husband to Miss Golightly, and that she would be very happy with you. If you think otherwise there is an end of it; but pray do not talk so much about your honesty,—your tailor would arrest you to-morrow if he heard you."

"There are two kinds of honesty, I take it," said Charley—speaking with suppressed anger and sorrow visible in his face—"that which the

world sees, and that which it does not see. For myself, I have nothing to say in my own defence. I have made my bed badly, and must lie on it as it is. I certainly will not mend it by marrying a girl that I can never love. And as for you, Alaric, all who know you and love you, watch your career with the greatest hope. We know your ambition, and all look to see you rise in the world. But in rising as you will do, you should remember this; that nothing that is wrong can become right because other people do it."

"Well, Charley," said the other—"thank you for the lecture. I did not certainly expect it from you, but it is not on that account the less welcome. And now suppose we go up stairs and dress for Mrs. Val;" and so they went up stairs.

It must not be supposed from all this that Alaric had inured himself to unjust conduct; that his conscience was blunted, and his desire for rectitude all quenched. Oh, no! He still wished to be an honest man; but he imagined that he could best show his abhorrence of the humbug of the mock honesty of the age by sailing near the wind; he would not, so he said to himself, be frightened by shadows; and, alas! by degrees solid substances became shadows in his sight.

Charley had at any rate made up his mind to this, that he would not enter the lists as one of Clementina's suitors; and Alaric, perceiving that such was the case, had to look about and see how

his own object might be attained in another way. It would be very desirable that he should for a while have the fingering of Miss Golightly's money, and as his cousin was so stubborn and stupid some other method must be devised.

Katie's heart beat high as she got out of the carriage—Mrs. Val's private carriage had been kept on for the occasion—and saw before, and above her on the stairs a crowd of muslin crushing its way on towards the room prepared for dancing. Katie had never been to a ball before. We hope that the word ball may not bring down on us the adverse criticism of the "Morning Post." It was probably not a ball in the strictly fashionable sense of the word, but it was so to Katie to all intents and purposes. Her dancing had hitherto been done either at children's parties, or as a sort of supplemental amusement to the evening tea gatherings at Hampton or Hampton Court. She had never yet seen the muse worshipped with the premeditated ceremony of banished carpets, chalked floors, and hired musicians. Her heart consequently beat high as she made her way up stairs, linked arm in arm with Ugolina Neverbend.

"Shall you dance much?" said Ugolina.

"Oh, I hope so," said Katie.

"I shall not. It is an amusement of which I am peculiarly fond; and for which my active habits suit me." This was probably said with

some allusion to her sister who was apt to be short of breath. "But in the dances of the present day conversation is impossible, and I look upon any pursuit as barbaric which stops 'the flood of reason and the flow of soul.'"

Katie did not quite understand this, but she thought in her heart that she would not at all mind giving up talking for the whole evening if she could only get dancing enough. But on this matter her heart misgave her. To be sure she was engaged to Charley for the first quadrille and second waltz; but there her engagements stopped, whereas Clementina, as she was aware, had a whole book full of them. What if she should get no more dancing when Charley's good nature should have been expended? She had an idea that no one would care to dance with her when older partners were to be had. Ah, Katie, you do not yet know the extent of your riches, or half the wealth of your own attractions!

And then they all heard another little speech from Mrs. Val. "She was really quite ashamed—she really was—to see so many people; she could not wish any of her guests away, that would be impossible,—though, perhaps, one or two might be spared," she said in a confidential whisper to Gertrude. Who the one or two might be it would be difficult to decide, as she had made the same whisper to every one;—"but she really was ashamed; there was almost a crowd, and she had

quite intended that the house should be nearly empty. The fact was everybody asked had come, and as she could not, of course, have counted on that, why she had got, you see, twice as many people as she had expected." And then she went on, and made the same speech to the next arrival.

Katie, who wanted to begin the play at the beginning, kept her eye anxiously on Charley, who was still standing with Lactimel Neverbend on his arm. "Oh, now," said she to herself, "if he should forget me and begin dancing with Miss Neverbend!" But then she remembered how he had jumped into the water, and determined that, even with such provocation as that, she must not be angry with him.

But there was no danger of Charley's forgetting. "Come," said he, "we must not lose any more time, if we mean to dance the first set. Alaric will be our *vis à vis*—he is going to dance with Miss Neverbend," and so they stood up. Katie tightened her gloves, gave her dress a little shake, looked at her shoes; and then the work of the evening began.

"I shouldn't have liked to have sat down for the first dance," she said confidentially to Charley, "because it's my first ball."

"Sit down! I don't suppose you'll be let to sit down the whole evening. You'll be crying out for mercy about three or four o'clock in the morning."

"It's you to go on now," said Katie, whose eyes were intent on the figure, and who would not have gone wrong herself, or allowed her partner to do so, on any consideration. And so the dance went on right merrily.

"I've got to dance the first polka with Miss Golightly," said Charley.

"And the next with me," said Katie.

"You may be sure I shan't forget that."

"You lucky man to get Miss Golightly for a partner. I am told she is the most beautiful dancer in the world."

"Oh no—Mademoiselle —— is much better," said Charley, naming the principal stage performer of the day. "If one is to go the whole hog, one had better do it thoroughly.

Katie did not quite understand then what he meant, and merely replied that she would look at the performance. In this, however, she was destined to be disappointed, for Charley had hardly left her before Miss Golightly brought up to her the identical M. Delabarbe de l'Empereur, who had so terribly put her out in the gardens. This was done so suddenly, that Katie's presence of mind was quite insufficient to provide her with any means of escape. The Frenchman bowed very low, and said nothing. Katie made a little curtsey, and was equally silent. Then she felt her own arm gathered up and put within his, and she stood up to take her

share in the awful performance. She felt herself to be in such a nervous fright that she would willingly have been home again at Hampton, if she could; but as this was utterly impossible she had only to bethink herself of her steps, and get through the work as best she might.

Away went Charley and Clementina leading the throng; away went M. Jâquetanàpe and Linda; away went another Frenchman clasping in his arms the happy Ugolina. Away went Lactimel with a young Weights and Measures,—and then came Katie's turn. She pressed her lips together, shut her eyes, felt the tall Frenchman's arm behind her back, and made a start. 'Twas like plunging into cold water on the first bathing day of the season—'*ce n'est que le premier pas que coût.*' When once off Katie did not find it so bad. The Frenchman danced well, and Katie herself was a wicked little adept. At home, at Surbiton, dancing with another girl, she had with great triumph tired out the fingers both of her mother and sister, and forced them to own that it was impossible to put her down. M. De l'Empereur, therefore, had his work before him, and he did it like a man—as long as he could.

Katie, who had not yet assumed the airs or will of a grown-up young lady, thought that she was bound to go on as long as her grand partner chose to go with her. He, on the other hand, accustomed in his gallantry to obey all ladies'

wishes, considered himself bound to leave it to her to stop when she pleased. And so they went on with apparently interminable gyrations. Charley and the heiress had twice been in motion, and had twice stopped, and still they were going on; Ugolina had refreshed herself with many delicious observations, and Lactimel had thrice paused to advocate dancing for the million, and still they went on; the circle was gradually left to themselves, and still they went on;—people stood round, some admiring and others pitying; and still they went on. Katie, thinking of her steps and her business, did not perceive that she and her partner were alone; and ever and anon others of course joined in—and so they went on and on—and on.

M. Delabarbe de l'Empereur was a strong and active man, but he began to perceive that the lady was too much for him. He was already melting away with his exertions, while his partner was as cool as a cucumber. She, with her active young legs, her lightly filled veins, and small agile frame could have gone on almost for ever; but M. D. l'Empereur was more encumbered. Gallantry was at last beat by nature, his overtasked muscles would do no more for him, and he was fain to stop, dropping his partner into a chair, and throwing himself in a state of utter exhaustion against the wall.

Katie was hardly out of breath as she received the congratulation of her friends; but at the

moment she could not understand why they were quizzing her. In after times, however, she was often reproached with having danced a Frenchman to death in the evening, in revenge for his having bored her in the morning. It was observed that M. Delabarbe de l'Empereur danced no more that evening. Indeed he very soon left the house.

Katie had not been able to see Miss Golightly's performance, but it had been well worth seeing. She was certainly no ordinary performer, and if she did not quite come up to the remarkable movements which one sees on the stage under the name of dancing, the fault was neither in her will nor her ability, but only in her education. Charley also was peculiarly well suited to give her 'ample verge and room enough' to show off all her perfections. Her most peculiar merit consisted, perhaps, in her power of stopping herself suddenly, while going on at the rate of a hunt one way, and without any pause or apparent difficulty going just as fast the other way. This was done by a jerk which must, one would be inclined to think, have dislocated all her bones, and entirely upset her internal arrangements. But no; it was done without injury, or any disagreeable result either to her brain or elsewhere. We all know how a steamer is manœuvred when she has to change

her course, how we stop her and ease her and back her; but Miss Golightly stopped and eased and backed all at once, and that without collision with any other craft. It was truly very wonderful, and Katie ought to have looked at her.

Katie soon found occasion to cast off her fear that her evening's happiness would be destroyed by a dearth of partners. Her troubles began to be of an exactly opposite description. She had almost envied Miss Golightly her little book full of engagements, and now she found herself dreadfully bewildered by a book of her own. Some one had given her a card and a pencil, and every moment she could get to herself was taken up in endeavouring to guard herself from perfidy on her own part. All down the card, at intervals which were not very far apart, there were great Cs, which stood for Charley, and her firmest feeling was that no earthly consideration should be allowed to interfere with those landmarks. And then there were all manner of hieroglyphics—sometimes, unfortunately, illegible to Katie herself—French names and English names mixed together in a manner most vexatious; and to make matters worse, she found that she had put down both Victoire Jaquêtanàpe and Mr. Johnson of the Weights, by a great I, and she could not remember with whom she was bound to dance the lancers, and to which she had promised the

last polka before supper. One thing, however, was quite fixed; when supper should arrive she was to go down stairs with Charley.

"What dreadful news, Linda!" said Charley, "did you hear it?" Linda was standing up with Mr. Neverbend for a sober quadrille, and Katie also was close by with her partner—"dreadful news indeed!"

"What is it?" said Linda.

"A man can die but once to be sure; but to be killed in such a manner as that, is certainly very sad."

"Killed! who has been killed?" said Neverbend.

"Well, perhaps I shouldn't say killed. He only died in the cab, as he went home."

"Died in a cab! how dreadful!" said Neverbend. "Who? who was it, Mr. Tudor?"

"Didn't you hear? how very odd; why M. De l'Empereur, to be sure. I wonder what the coroner will bring it in."

"How can you talk such nonsense, Charley," said Linda.

"Very well, Master Charley," said Katie. "All that comes of being a writer of romances. I suppose that's to be the next contribution to the 'Daily Delight.'"

Neverbend went off on his quadrille not at all pleased with the joke. Indeed he was never pleased with a joke, and in this instance he ventured to suggest to his partner that the idea of a

gentleman expiring in a cab was much too horrid to be laughed at.

"Oh, we never mind Charley Tudor," said Linda; "he always goes on in that way. We all like him so much."

Mr. Neverbend, who, though not very young, still had a susceptible heart within his bosom, had been much taken by Linda's charms. He already began to entertain an idea that as a Mrs. Neverbend would be a desirable adjunct to his establishment at some future period, he could not do better than offer himself and his worldly goods to the acceptance of Miss Woodward; he therefore said nothing further in disparagement of the family friend; but he resolved that no such alliance should ever induce him to make Mr. Charles Tudor welcome at his house. But what could he have expected? The Internal Navigation had ever been a low place, and he was surprised that the Hon. Mrs. Val should have admitted one of the navvies inside her drawing-room.

And so the ball went on. Mr. Johnson came duly for the lancers, and M. Jaquêtanàpe for the polka. Johnson was great at the lancers, knowing every turn and vagary in that most intricate and exclusive of dances; and it need hardly be said that the polka with M. Jaquêtanàpe was successful. The last honour, however, was not without evil results, for it excited the envy of Ugolina, who, proud of her own performance, had

longed, but hitherto in vain, to be whirled round the room by that wondrously expert foreigner.

"Well, my dear," said Ugolina, with an air that plainly said that Katie was to be treated as a child, "I hope you have had dancing enough."

"Oh, indeed I have not," said Katie, fully appreciating the purport and cause of her companion's remark; "not near enough."

"Ah—but my dear—you should remember," said Ugolina; "your mama will be displeased if you fatigue yourself."

"My mama is never displeased because we amuse ourselves, and I am not a bit fatigued;" and so saying Katie walked off, and took refuge with her sister Gertrude. What business had any Ugolina Neverbend to interfere between her and her mama?

Then came the supper. There was a great rush to get down stairs, but Charley was so clever that even this did not put him out. Of course there was no sitting down; which means that the bashful, retiring, and obedient guests were to stand on their legs; while those who were forward, and impudent, and disobedient, found seats for themselves wherever they could. Charley was certainly among the latter class, and he did not rest therefore till he had got Katie into an old arm-chair in one corner of the room, in such a position as to enable himself to eat his own supper leaning against the chimney-piece.

"I say, Johnson," said he, "do bring me some ham and chicken—it's for a lady—I'm wedged up here and can't get out—and, Johnson, some sherry."

The good-natured young Weights obeyed, and brought the desired provisions.

"And Johnson—upon my word I'm sorry to be so troublesome—but one more plateful if you please—for another lady—a good deal if you please for this lady, for she's very hungry; and some more sherry."

Johnson again obeyed—the Weights are always obedient—and Charley of course appropriated the second portion to his own purposes.

"Oh, Charley, that was a fib—now wasn't it?"

"You shouldn't have said it was for a lady."

"But then I shouldn't have got it."

"Oh, but that's no reason; according to that everybody might tell a fib whenever they wanted anything."

"Well, everybody does. Everybody except you, Katie."

"Oh no," said Katie—"no they don't—mama, and Linda, and Gertrude never do; nor Harry Norman, he never does, nor Alaric."

"No, Harry Norman never does," said Charley, with something like vexation in his tone. He made no exception to Katie's list of truth-tellers, but he was thinking within himself whether Alaric had a juster right to be in the catalogue

than himself. "Harry Norman never does, certainly. You must not compare me with them, Katie. They are patterns of excellence. I am all the other way, as everybody knows." He was half laughing as he spoke, but Katie's sharp ear knew that he was more than half in earnest, and she felt she had pained him by what she had said.

"Oh, Charley, I didn't mean that, indeed I did not. I know that in all serious things you are as truthful as they are—and quite as good—that is, in many ways." Poor Katie! she wanted to console him, she wanted to be kind, and yet she could not be dishonest.

"Quite as good! no, you know I am not."

"You are as good-hearted, if not better; and you will be as steady, won't you, Charley? I am sure you will; and I know you are more clever, really more clever than either of them."

"Oh! Katie."

"I am quite sure you are. I have always said so; don't be angry with me for what I said."

"Angry with you. I couldn't be angry with you."

"I wouldn't, for the world, say anything to vex you. I like you better than either of them, though Alaric is my brother-in-law. Of course I do; how could I help it, when you saved my life."

"Saved your life, pooh! I didn't save your life. Any boy could have done the same, or any

waterman about the place. When you fell in, the person who was nearest you pulled you out, that was all."

There was something almost approaching to ferocity in his voice as he said this; and yet when Katie timidly looked up she saw that he had turned his back to the room, and that his eyes were full of tears. He had felt that he was loved by this child, but that he was loved from a feeling of uncalled for gratitude. He could not stop to analyze this, to separate the sweet from the bitter; but he knew that the latter prevailed. It is so little flattering to be loved when such love is the offspring of gratitude. And then when that gratitude is unnecessary, when it has been given in mistake for supposed favours, the acceptance of such love is little better than a cheat!

"That was not all," said Katie, very decidedly. "It never shall be all in my mind. If you had not been with us I should now have been drowned, and cold, and dead; and mama, where would she have been? Oh! Charley, I shall think myself so wicked if I have said anything to vex you."

Charley did not analyze his feelings, nor did Katie analyze hers. It would have been impossible for her to do so. But could she have done it, and had she done it, she would have found that her gratitude was but the excuse which she made to herself for a passionate love which she could

not have excused, even to herself, in any other way.

He said everything he could to reassure her, and make her happy; and she soon smiled and laughed again.

"Now, that's what my editor would call a Nemesis," said Charley.

"Oh, that's a Nemesis, is it?"

"Johnson was cheated into doing my work, and getting me my supper; and then you scolded me, and took away my appetite, so that I couldn't eat it; that's a Nemesis. Johnson is avenged, only, unluckily, he doesn't know it, and wickedness is punished."

"Well, mind you put it into the 'Daily Delight.' But all the girls are going up stairs; pray let me get out," and so Katie went up stairs again.

It was then past one. About two hours afterwards Gertrude, looking for her sister that she might take her home, found her seated on a bench, with her feet tucked under her dress. She was very much fatigued, and she looked to be so; but there was still a bright laughing sparkle in her eye, which showed that her spirits were not even yet weary.

"Well, Katie, have you had enough dancing?"

"Nearly," said Katie, yawning.

"You look as if you couldn't stand."

"Yes, I *am* too tired to stand; but still I think I could dance a little more, only——"

"Only what?"

"Whisper," said Katie; and Gertude put down her ear near to her sister's lips. "Both my shoes are quite worn out, and my toes are all out on the floor."

It was clearly time for them to go home, so away they all went.

CHAPTER XI.

EXCELSIOR.

The last words that Katie spoke as she walked down Mrs. Val's hall, leaning on Charley's arm, as he led her to the carriage, were these—

"You will be steady, Charley, won't you; you will try to be steady, won't you, dear Charley?" and as she spoke she almost imperceptibly squeezed the arm on which she was leaning. Charley pressed her little hand as he parted from her, but he said nothing. What could he say, in that moment of time, in answer to such a request? Had he made the reply which would have come most readily to his lips, it would have been this: "It is too late, Katie—too late for me to profit by a caution, even from you,—no steadiness now will save me." Katie, however, wanted no other answer than the warm pressure which she felt on her hand.

And then, leaning back in the carriage, and shutting her eyes, she tried to think quietly over the events of the night. But it was, alas! a dream, and yet so like reality that she could not divest herself of the feeling that the ball was still going on. She still seemed to see the lights

and hear the music, to feel herself whirled round the room, and to see others whirling, whirling, whirling on every side of her. She thought over all the names on her card, and the little contests that had taken place for her hand, and all Charley's jokes, and M. de l'Empereur's great disaster; and then as she remembered how long she had gone on twisting round with the poor unfortunate ill-used Frenchman, she involuntarily burst out into a fit of laughter.

"Good gracious, Katie, what is the matter? I thought you were asleep," said Gertrude.

"So did I," said Linda. "What on earth can you be laughing at now?"

"I was laughing at myself," said Katie, still going on with her half-suppressed chuckle, "and thinking what a fool I was to go on dancing so long with that M. de l'Empereur—Oh dear, Gertrude, I am so tired, shall we be home soon?" and then she burst out crying.

The excitement and fatigue of the day had been too much for her, and she was now completely overcome. Ugolina Neverbend's advice, though not quite given in the kindest way, had in itself been good. Mrs. Woodward would, in truth, have been unhappy could she have seen her child at this moment. Katie made an attempt to laugh off her tears, but she failed, and her sobs then became hysterical, and she lay with her head on her married sister's shoulder,

almost choking herself in her attempts to repress them.

"Dear Katie, don't sob so," said Linda,—"don't cry, pray don't cry, dear Katie."

"She had better let it have its way," said Gertrude; "she will be better directly, won't you, Katie?"

In a little time she was better, and then she burst out laughing again. "I wonder why the man went on when he was so tired,—what a stupid man he must be."

Gertrude and Linda both laughed in order to comfort her, and bring her round.

"Do you know, I think it was because he didn't know how to say 'stop' in English," and then she burst out laughing again, and that led to another fit of hysterical tears.

When they reached home Gertrude and Linda soon got her into bed. Linda was to sleep with her, and she also was not very long in laying her head on her pillow. But before she did so Katie was fast asleep, and twice in her sleep she cried out, "Oh, Charley! oh, Charley!" Then Linda guessed how it was with her sister, and in the depths of her loving heart she sorrowed for the coming grief which she foresaw.

When the morning came Katie was feverish, and had a head-ache. It was thought better that she should remain in town, and Alaric took Linda down to Hampton. The next day Mrs. Wood-

ward came up, and as the invalid was better she took her home. But still she was an invalid. The doctor declared that she had never quite recovered from her fall into the river, and prescribed quiet and cod's liver oil. All the truth about the Chiswick fête and the five hours' dancing, and the worn-out shoes, was not told to him, or he might, perhaps, have acquitted the water gods of the injury. Nor was it all, perhaps, told to Mrs. Woodward.

"I'm afraid she tired herself at the ball," said Mrs. Woodward.

"I think she did, a little," said Linda.

"Did she dance much?" said Mrs. Woodward, looking anxiously.

"She did dance a good deal," said Linda.

Mrs. Woodward was too wise to ask any further questions.

As it was a fine night Alaric had declared his intention of walking home from Mrs. Val's party, and he and Charley started together. They soon parted on their roads, but not before Alaric had had time to notice Charley's perverse stupidity as to Miss Golightly.

"So you wouldn't take my advice about Clementina?" said he.

"It was quite impossible, Alaric," said Charley, in an apologetic voice. I couldn't do it, and, what is more, I am sure I never shall."

"No, not now; you certainly can't do it now.

If I am not very much mistaken, the chance is gone—I think you'll find she engaged herself to that Frenchman to-night."

"Very likely," said Charley.

"Well,—I did the best I could for you. Good night, old fellow."

"I'm sure I'm much obliged to you. Good night," said Charley.

Alaric's suggestion with reference to the heiress was quite correct. M. Jaquêtanàpe had that night proposed, and been duly accepted. He was to present himself to his loved one's honourable mother on the following morning, as her future son-in-law, comforted and supported in his task of doing so by an assurance from the lady that if her mother would not give her consent the marriage should go on all the same without it. How delightful to have such a dancer for her lover, thought Clementina. That was her "excelsior."

Charley walked home with a sad heart. He had that day given a pledge that he would on the morrow go to the Cat and Whistle, and visit his lady love there. Since the night when he sat there with Norah Geraghty on his knee, now nearly a fortnight since, he had spent but little of his time there. He had, indeed, gone there once or twice with his friend Scatterall, but had contrived to avoid any confidential intercourse with either the landlady or the barmaid, alleging, as an excuse for his extraordinary absence, that

his time was wholly occupied by the demands made on it by the editor of the "Daily Delight." Mrs. Davis, however, was much too sharp, and so also we may say was Miss Geraghty, to be deceived. They well knew that such a young man as Charley would go wherever his inclination led him. Till lately it had been all but impossible to get him out of the little back parlour at the Cat and Whistle; now it was nearly as difficult to get him into it. They both understood what this meant.

"You'd better take up with Peppermint and have done with it," said the widow. "What's the good of your shilly-shallying till you're as thin as a whipping-post. If you don't mind what you're after he'll be off too."

"And the d—— go along with him," said Miss Geraghty, who had still about her a twang of the County Clare, from whence she came.

"With all my heart," said Mrs. Davis; "I shall save my hundred pounds; but if you'll be led by me you'll not throw Peppermint over till you're sure of the other; and, take my word for it, you're ——"

"I hate Peppermint."

"Nonsense; he's an honest good sort of man, and a deal more likely to keep you out of want than the other."

Hereupon Norah began to cry, and to wipe her beautiful eyes with the glass cloth. Hers, indeed,

was a cruel position. Her face was her fortune, and her fortune she knew was deteriorating from day to day. She could not afford to lose the lover that she loved, and also the lover that she did not love. Matrimony with her was extremely desirable, and she was driven to confess that it might very probably be either now or never. Much as she hated Peppermint, she was quite aware that she would take him if she could not do better. But then was it absolutely certain that she must lose the lover that so completely suited her taste? Mrs. Davis said it was; she herself, confiding, as it is so natural that ladies should do, a little too much in her own beauty, thought that she couldn't but have a chance left. She also had her high aspirations; she desired to rise in the world, to leave goes of gin and screws of tobacco behind her, and to reach some position more worthy of the tastes of a woman—'excelsior,' translated doubtless into excellent Irish, was her motto also. It would be so great a thing to be the wife of Charles Tudor, Esq., of the Civil Service, and more especially as she dearly and truly loved the same Charles Tudor in her heart of hearts.

She knew, however, that it was not for her to indulge in the luxury of a heart, if circumstances absolutely forbade it. To eat and drink and clothe herself, and, if possible, to provide eating and drinking and clothes for her future years, this was the business of life, this was the only

real necessity. She had nothing to say in opposition to Mrs. Davis, and therefore she went on crying, and again wiped her eyes with the glass cloth.

Mrs. Davis, however, was no stern monitor, unindulgent to the weakness of human nature. When she saw how Norah took to heart her sad fate, she resolved to make one more effort in her favour. She consequently dressed herself very nicely, put on her best bonnet, and took the unprecedented step of going off to the Internal Navigation, and calling on Charley in the middle of his office.

Charley was poking over the Kennet and Avon lock entries with his usual official energy, when the office messenger came up and informed him that a lady was waiting to see him.

"A lady," said Charley; "what lady?" and he immediately began thinking of the Woodwards, whom he was to meet that afternoon at Chiswick.

"I'm sure I can't say, sir; all that she said was that she was a lady," answered the messenger, falsely,—for he well knew that the woman was Mrs. Davis, of the Cat and Whistle.

Now the clerks at the Internal Navigation were badly off for a waiting-room; and in no respect can the different ranks of different public offices be more plainly seen than in the presence or absence of such little items of accommodation as this. At the Weights and Measures there was

an elegant little chamber, carpeted, furnished with leathern-bottomed chairs, and a clock, supplied with cream laid note paper, new pens, and the "Times" newspaper, quite a little Elysium, in which to pass half an hour, while the Secretary, whom one had called to see, was completing his last calculation on the matter of the decimal coinage. But there were no such comforts at the Internal Navigation. There was indeed a little room at the top of the stairs, in which visitors were requested to sit down; but even here two men were always at work—at work, or else at play.

Into this room Mrs. Davis was shown, and there Charley found her. Long and intimately as the young navvy had been acquainted with the landlady of the Cat and Whistle, he had never before seen her arrayed for the outer world. It may be doubted whether Sir John Falstaff would, at the first glance, have known even Dame Quickley in her bonnet, that is, if Dame Quickley in those days had had a bonnet. At any rate Charley was at fault for a moment, and was shaking hands with the landlady before he quite recognised who she was.

The men in the room, however, had recognised her, and Charley well knew that they had done so.

"Mr. Tudor," she began, not a bit abashed, "I want to know what it is you are going to do."

Though she was not abashed, Charley was, and very much so. However, he contrived to get her out of the room, so that he might speak to her somewhat more privately in the passage. The gentlemen at the Internal Navigation were well accustomed to this mode of colloquy, as their tradesmen not unfrequently called, with the view of having a little conversation, which could not conveniently be held in the public room.

"And, Mr. Tudor, what are you agoing to do about that poor girl there?" said Mrs. Davis, as soon as she found herself in the passage, and saw that Charley was comfortably settled with his back against the wall.

"She may go to Hong Kong for me." That is what Charley should have said. But he did not say it. He had neither the sternness of heart nor the moral courage to enable him to do so. He was very anxious, it is true, to get altogether quit of Norah Geraghty; but his present immediate care was confined to a desire of getting Mrs. Davis out of the office.

"Do," said Charley. "Oh, I don't know; I'll come and settle something some of these days, let me see when,—say next Tuesday."

"Settle something," said Mrs. Davis. "If you are an honest man, as I take you, there is only one thing to settle; when do you mean to marry her?"

"Hush!" said Charley; for, as she was speak-

ing Mr. Snape came down the passage leading from Mr. Oldeschole's room. "Hush!" Mr. Snape as he passed walked very slowly and looked curiously round into the widow's face—"I'll be even with you, old fellow, for that," said Charley to himself; and it may be taken for granted that he kept his word before long.

"Oh! it is no good hushing any more," said Mrs. Davis, hardly waiting till Mr. Snape's erect ears were out of hearing. "Hushing won't do no good; there's that girl a dying, and her grave 'll be a top of your head, Mr. Tudor; mind I tell you that fairly; so now I want to know what it is you're a going to do." And then Mrs. Davis lifted up the lid of a market basket which hung on her left arm, took out her pocket-handkerchief, and began to wipe her eyes.

Unfortunate Charley! An idea occurred to him that he might bolt and leave her. But then the chances were that she would make her way into his very room, and tell her story there, out before them all. He well knew that this woman was capable of many things if her temper were fairly roused. And yet what could he say to her to induce her to go out from that building, and leave him alone to his lesser misfortunes?

"She's a dying, I tell you, Mr. Tudor," continued the landlady, "and if she do die, be sure of this, I won't be slow to tell the truth

about it. I'm the only friend she's got, and I'm not going to see her put upon. So just tell me this in two words—what is it you're a going to do?" And then Mrs. Davis replaced her kerchief in the basket, stood boldly erect in the middle of the passage, waiting for Charley's answer.

Just at this moment Mr. Snape again appeared in the passage, going towards Mr. Oldeschole's room. The pernicious old man! He hated Charley Tudor; and, to tell the truth, there was no love lost between them. Charley, afflicted and out of spirits as he was at the moment, could not resist the opportunity of being impertinent to his old foe: "I'm afraid you'll make yourself very tired, Mr. Snape, if you walk about so much," said he; Mr Snape merely looked at him and then hard at Mrs. Davis, and passed on to Mr. Oldeschole's room.

"Well, Mr. Tudor, will you be so good as to tell me what it is you're going to do about this poor girl?"

"My goodness, Mrs. Davis, you know how I am situated—how can you expect me to give an answer to such a question in such a place as this? I'll come to the Cat and Whistle on Tuesday."

"Gammon!" said the eloquent lady! "you know you means gammon."

Charley, perhaps, did mean gammon; but he protested that he had never been more truthfully

in earnest in his life. Mr. Oldeschole's door opened, and Mrs. Davis perceiving it, whipped out her handkerchief in haste, and again began wiping her eyes, not without audible sobs. "Confound the woman!" said Charley to himself; "what on earth shall I do with her?"

Mr. Oldeschole's door opened, and out of it came Mr. Oldeschole, and Mr. Snape following him. What means the Clerk had used to bring forth the Secretary need not now be inquired. Forth they both came, and passed along the passage, brushing close by Charley and Mrs. Davis; Mr. Oldeschole, when he saw that one of the clerks was talking to a woman who apparently was crying, looked very intently on the ground, and passed by with a quick step; Mr. Snape looked as intently at the woman, and passed very slowly. Each acted according to his lights.

"I don't mean gammon at all, Mrs. Davis—indeed I don't—I'll be there on Tuesday night certainly, if not sooner—I will indeed—I shall be in a desperate scrape if they see me here talking to you any longer; there is a rule against women being in the office at all."

"And there's a rule against the clerks marrying, I suppose," said Mrs. Davis.

The colloquy ended in Charley promising to spend the Saturday evening at the Cat and Whistle, with the view of then and there settling what he meant to do about "that there

girl;" nothing short of such an undertaking on his part would induce Mrs. Davis to budge. Had she known her advantage she might have made even better terms. He would almost rather have given her a written promise to marry her barmaid, than have suffered her to remain there till Mr. Oldeschole should return and see her there again. So Mrs. Davis, with her basket and pocket-handkerchief, went her way about her marketing, and Charley, as he returned to his room, gave the strictest injunctions to the messenger that not, on any ground or excuse whatever, was any woman to be again allowed to see him at the office.

When therefore on the fine summer morning, with the early daylight all bright around him, Charley walked home from Mrs. Val's party, he naturally felt sad enough. He had one sixpence left in his pocket; he was engaged to spend the evening of the following day with the delightful Norah at the Cat and Whistle, then and there to plight her his troth, in whatever formal and most irretrievable manner Mrs. Davis might choose to devise; and as he thought of these things he had ringing in his ears the last sounds of that angel voice, "You will be steady, Charley, won't you? I know you will, dear Charley—won't you now?"

Steady! would not the best thing for him be, to step down to Waterloo Bridge, and throw

himself over? He still had money enough left to pay the toll—though not enough to hire a pistol. And so he went home and got into bed.

On that same day, the day that was to witness Charley's betrothal to Miss Geraghty, and that of M. Jaquêtanàpe with Miss Golightly, Alaric Tudor had an appointment with Sir Gregory Hardlines at the new office of the Civil Service Examination Board. Alaric had been invited to wait upon the great man, in terms which made him perfectly understand that the communication to be made was one which would not be unpleasing or uncomplimentary to himself. Indeed, he pretty well guessed what was to be said to him. Since his promotion at the Weights and Measures he had gone on rising in estimation as a man of value to the Civil Service at large. Nearly two years had now passed since that date, and in these pages nothing has been said of his official career during the time. It had, however, been everything that he or his friends could have wished it to be. He had so put himself forward, as absolutely to have satisfied the actual chief clerk of his office, and was even felt by some of the secretaries to be treading very closely on their heels.

And yet a great portion of his time had been spent, not at the Weights and Measures, but in giving some sort of special assistance to Sir Gregory's Board. The authorities at the Weights and

Measures did not miss him; they would have been well content that he should have remained for ever with Sir Gregory.

He had also become somewhat known to the official world, even beyond the confines of the Weights and Measures, or the Examination Board. He had changed his club, and now belonged to the Downing. He had there been introduced by his friend Undy to many men, whom to know should be the very breath in the nostrils of a rising official aspirant. Mr. Whip Vigil, of the Treasury, had more than once taken him by the hand, and even the Chancellor of the Exchequer usually nodded to him whenever that o'ertasked functionary found a moment to look in at the official club.

Things had not been going quite smoothly at the Examination Board. Tidings had got about that Mr. Jobbles was interfering with Sir Gregory, and that Sir Gregory didn't like it. To be sure, when this had been indiscreetly alluded to in the House by one of those gentlemen who pass their leisure hours in looking out for raws in the hide of the government carcase, some other gentleman, some gentleman from the Treasury bench, had been able to give a very satisfactory reply. For why, indeed, should any gentleman sit on the Treasury bench if he be not able, when so questioned, to give very

satisfactory replies? Giving satisfactory replies to ill-natured questions is, one may say, the constitutional work of such gentlemen, who have generally well learned how to do so, and earned their present places by asking the self-same questions themselves, when seated as younger men in other parts of the House.

But though the answer given in this instance was so eminently satisfactory, as to draw down quite a chorus of triumphant acclamations from the official supporters of Government, nevertheless things had not gone on at the Board quite as smoothly as might have been desirable. Mr. Jobbles was enthusiastically intent on examining the whole adult male population of Great Britain, and had gone so far as to hint that female competitors might, at some future time, be made subject to his all-measuring rule and compass. Sir Gregory, however, who, having passed his early days in an office, may, perhaps, be supposed to have had some slight prejudice remaining in favour of ancient customs, was not inclined to travel so quickly. Moreover, he preferred following his own lead, to taking any other lead whatever that Mr. Jobbles might point out as preferable.

Mr. Jobbles wanted to crush all patronage at a blow; any system of patronage would lamentably limit the number of candidates among whom his examination papers would be distributed. He longed to behold crowd around him,

an attendance as copious, as Mr. Spurgeon's, and to see every head bowed over the posing questions which he should have dictated. No legion could be too many for him. He longed to be at this great work; but his energies were crushed by the opposition of his colleagues. Sir Gregory thought—and Sir Warwick, though he hardly gave a firm support to Sir Gregory, would not lend his countenance to Mr. Jobbles—Sir Gregory thought that enough would be done for the present, if they merely provided that every one admitted into the Service should be educated in such a manner as to be fit for any profession or calling under the sun; and that, with this slight proviso, the question of patronage might for the present remain untouched. "Do you," he would have said to the great officers of Government, "appoint whom you like. In this respect remain quite unfettered. I, however, I am the St. Peter to whom are confided the keys of the Elysium. Do you send whatever candidates you please; it is for me merely to say whether or no they shall enter." But Mr. Jobbles would have gone much further. He would have had all mankind for candidates, and have selected from the whole mass those most worthy of the high reward. And so there was a split at the Examination Board, which was not to be healed even by the very satisfactory reply given by the Treasury gentleman in the House of Commons.

Neither Sir Gregory nor his rival were men likely to give way, and it soon appeared manifest to the powers that be, that something must be done. It therefore came to light that Mr. Jobbles had found that his clerical position was hardly compatible with a seat at a lay board, and he retired to the more congenial duties of a comfortable prebendal stall at Westminster. "So that by his close vicinity," as was observed by a newspaper that usually supported the Government, "he might be able to be of material use, whenever his advice should be required by the Board of Commissioners." Sir Gregory in the meantime was instructed to suggest the name of another colleague; and, therefore, he sent for Alaric Tudor.

Alaric, of course, knew well what had been going on at the Board. He had been Sir Gregory's confidential man all through; had worked out cases for him, furnished him with arguments, backed his views; and had assisted him, whenever such a course had been necessary, in holding Mr. Jobbles' head under the pump. Alaric knew well on which side his bread was buttered, and could see with a glance which star was in the ascendant; he perfectly understood the points and merits of the winning horse. He went in to win upon Sir Gregory, and he won. When Mr. Jobbles made his last little speech at the Board, and retired to his house in the Dean's

yard, Alaric felt tolerably certain that he himself would be invited to fill the vacant place.

And he was so invited. "That is 1200*l.* a year, at any rate," said he to himself, as with many words of submissive gratitude he thanked his patron for the nomination.—"That is 1200*l.* a year; so far, so good. And now what must be the next step? Excelsior! It is very nice to be a commissioner, and sit at a board at Sir Gregory's right hand; much nicer than being a junior clerk at the Weights and Measures, like Harry Norman. But there are nicer things even than that; there are greater men even than Sir Gregory; richer figures than even 1,200*l.* a year!"

So he went to his old office, wrote his resignation, and walked home meditating to what next step above he should now aspire to rise. Excelsior! he still said to himself, Excelsior!

At the same moment Charley was leaving the Internal Navigation, and as he moved with unusual slowness down the steps, he bethought himself how he might escape from the fangs of his Norah; how, if such might still be possible, he might get for himself the love of Katie Woodward. Excelsior! such also was the thought of his mind; but he did not dare to bring the word to utterance. It was destined that his thoughts should be interrupted by no very friendly hand.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CIVIL SERVICE.

If all that has of late been said against the Civil Service be true, it must be in a parlous state. We hardly know which have treated it worst, its friends or its enemies; that is, if we may venture to consider that it has friends. Its enemies are numerous enough. We meet them in the columns of every newspaper. We hear their sarcasms in every railway carriage. They publish pamphlets. They utter their bitter denunciations in street-corners and open market-places. They are loud and wrathful in season and out of season. They are of all classes; the great landed magnate inveighs against the Civil Service; the independent member of Parliament, who doesn't, perhaps, get all that he wants, talks of the miserable creatures of a miserable Government; the prosperous tradesman sneers at the government official, as a dishonest, stupid drone; and even the young lady, who fails to receive her book of beauty, or her monthly fashions in due course of post, learns by heart half a column of abuse from a newspaper, and quotes it eloquently whenever the unhappy

Government is spoken of. Then comes the popular novelist, and, with his sledge hammer, gives it the last blow, and devotes every mother's son in the public offices to lasting ignominy and vile disgrace.

So speak the enemies of the Civil Service; and of the number must be reckoned apparently the whole British public. Its friends, therefore, must be found within itself. And how do they speak, when called on to say a word on the subject? How is the Civil Service spoken of by men behind the scenes; who are themselves in authority therein; who are considered specially qualified to give opinion on the matter, and who, it will be thought, are not likely to foul their own nest unnecessarily? Let us hear what such men say. In the first place, it is for the unambitious, the indolent and the incapable that the sweets of the Civil Service are desired. Those who are unfit for active exertions are placed in the Civil Service, where by attending with moderate regularity to routine duties, they are preserved against the ordinary consequences of old age. The Civil Service is a kind of hospital, in which the parents of sickly sons seek for employment for their puny offspring.

Many of a man's first years are spent in copying, and the remainder of his official life can only exercise a depressing influence on him. He not only begins life with mechanical labour, but ends

with it. No pains having been taken to get a good clerk in the first instance, none are afterwards taken to make the best of the bad bargain which the public has got in the appointment. If any good place be to be filled up, the old clerk is, of course, unfit for it, and Civil servants are thus necessarily discouraged. They feel that success does not depend on exertion, and that idleness will not injure them.

Such is the picture of the Civil Service, as painted by one or two who have been selected as being better qualified than any others to describe the Civil Service truly. All that the newspapers can say in their most ferocious moments, all that the independent member can allege when groaning most bitterly in the sorrow of a refused request; all that the young lady can quote when the fashions have failed to reach her in the middle of the season, all falls short in bitterness of this.

What lazar houses are these public offices to which we see so many elegantly dressed young men trooping from ten to eleven every morning! Let us, at any rate, sweep them clean with a thorough besom, so that we may begin again in some wholesome way, whatever the cost may be. Nothing can, possibly, be worse than this, that the Government should, with its eyes open, continue to hire idle, sickly, incompetent fools, to while away their hours in big public buildings;

doing no work, but doing daily cheat in pretending to work.

But from what point shall this besom begin to work? Shall it sweep upwards or downwards? Shall we commence with some useless drunken tide-waiter, and so make our way up to the Secretary of State; or shall we boldly make a start from Downing Street, and let some Hercules of Reform turn a river at once into the richest stalls of these Augean stables?

The opinions which the author has ventured to quote are taken from a published essay, "On the Organization of the Permanent Civil Service," that is, on the whole Civil Service, excepting those high officers who go in and out with every change of Government. The Civil Service, however, rightly considered, includes more than this. It consists of those who go out as well as those who do not; and as those who are permanent, are entirely under the control of those who are not permanent, the two can not be spoken of justly, unless they be spoken of together.

But are these public clerks as bad as they are made out to be? We often see charges made in the columns of newspapers against men in office, and in what do they result? Such men are accused of red tape and routine. Some enterprising unit of the British public applies on the matter of some grievance to the secretary of some government board, and fails in getting either

that deferential respect, or else that substantial redress which he considers to be his due. His revenge is at hand. He writes to the editor of a newspaper a letter, bitter with sarcasm, overflowing with the gall of offended British public spirit. He denounces routine, and puts the brand of infamy on all who defile themselves for pay with the vileness of red tape.

What he says is not very new, nor yet very logical. The same charge has been made in the same paper scores of times before, under precisely similar circumstances, and the editor has not been slow to allude to the universality of British public opinion, as shown by the frequent addresses to himself. In his mind, public opinion has no other means of declaring itself. Opinion, if it wants to become public, must do so by writing letters to him. Opinion that has had discretion to become public in so respectable a manner should be considered. The editor appeals to his respectable correspondents. The respectable correspondents re-appeal to the all-powerful editor; and thus the world is taught to conceive that red tape and routine are the very devil.

But what would an all-powerful editor, or a respectable correspondent wish that a Civil servant should do for him? Break at once through all trammels of office; dash aside the meshes of routine as unworthy restraints on a thinking soul; offer up a holocaust of red tape, and show

himself a free thinker and a free agent! Oh! thou all-powerful editor, hast thou not many men under thee, able contributors and unable, own correspondents in all parts of the world, penny-a-liners, compositors, printers' devils, a whole world of underlings, who work all like mill horses, in their appointed rounds? What if they become of a sudden free thinkers and free agents? Where would be thy much expected early copy at six o'clock on Monday morning? Do they not all work for thee in due routine? Are they not kept in trammels? Have not they also their red-tape limits which they cannot pass; limits which thou only canst pass, with due counsel in thy governing cabinet?

And even that respectable correspondent, has he not also, if not men, at least probably boys under his control? What if that shock-haired apprentice of his, rising above the thraldom of routine, took upon him to sell brown sugar a farthing a pound below cost price? What then?

There can be no insaner cry than that raised against routine. Let any man who has done much work, and done it well, let any such man say, whether any work can be well done without routine. Ask Sir C. Barry, the architect; ask Peto, the contractor; ask Mechi, the high farmer; ask Dargan, the Irish hero. They will all tell you that any deviation from routine is ruin. No work can be fairly done but by routine. If

there be routine without the work, the shell without the kernel, the purse without the money, in God's name let us amend it. But we shall never amend it by abusing that which is a necessary part of the work.

Englishmen feel at present that they have been doing work and not doing it well. It is thus they think that they did their work in the Crimea. Let them look into it, and they will find that it was not through excess of routine that they failed, but from the want of it. Work came so thick and so heavy, that they could not do it according to rule, and thus the work was ill done. All work so done must be done ill.

But are these public-office clerks as bad as they are made out to be, by these declared friends of theirs, whose opinions we have quoted? Government has put them forward as the men best able to speak on this matter; but others speak also, and tell a very different tale, others who have grown gray in the Civil Service. They say that "the Civil Service has much in it of talent," though "lying waste and going to decay;" that the "Civil Service is better educated than the body of merchants or the Naval Service;" "that it is difficult to overrate the ability and knowledge required to perform a portion of the functions of first-class clerks;" that "clerks and officers of the Civil department generally are faithful, diligent, and competent." One "has

witnessed in his office a demeanour and spirit of which it would be difficult to speak too highly." And another declares that "the assertions that a large proportion of the Civil Service are men unambitious, indolent, and incapable, are, as far as his experience goes, entirely without foundation."

When doctors differ, how shall the patient arrive at the truth? How are we to reconcile this demeanour and spirit of which it is difficult to speak too highly, with the want of ambition, indolence, and incapability which is brought forward in such strikingly dark colours. May we not fairly say, attributing to each authority an anxious desire to speak the truth, that they are both right, and so far both wrong? May we not conclude that there is in the Civil Service, as we believe also in all other services, merit and demerit; that the former should be fostered, rewarded, and so increased; the latter discountenanced, if need be punished, and so decreased.

If the British public expect to find merit in their servants without rewarding it, or to find them free from demerit without punishing it, one might safely prophesy that the British public will be disappointed. Did any man ever secure good servants by any other than the very simple mode of treatment here recommended? One would say not. One would also say that no sensible man would ever try any other mode.

From the early days of our own boyhood, when with glittering prize in one hand, and the odious rod in the other, we were invited to make our election between prisoners' base and prosody, we never heard of any other mode of securing merit.

Many there be who so invited will still choose prisoners' base and the rod—who will elect idleness and bad pay, nay ultimately idleness and no pay. But many also will take prosody and the prize. If, however, you offer no prize, nothing but the rod of penury to energy and idleness alike, how then can you hope that energy will trouble himself to earn that which idleness can get without earning?

The Crown has greatly lamented that the aspiring, energetic, and ambitious among British youths do not flock into its Civil Service. As regards the service this is to be lamented; but as regards the British youths, we hardly think that it is ground for grief. Why should they do so? By what hopes actuated should energy and ambition seek the Civil Service? Ambition climbs. What is there in the Civil Service for her to climb to? Energy expects reward. What reward does the Civil Service offer? Energy and ambition! There is, as it were, an arrogance in the very allusion to such claims on the part of the Crown. Shall we imagine that some parsimonious lady resolves to have a concert, and

endeavours to get the great vocalists of the opera to give their aid for the same wages which would hardly satisfy an itinerant fiddler? As the great vocalists would make answer to the parsimonious lady, so should energy and ambition answer this demand of the Crown.

Ambition seek the Civil Service, or energy waste in so unprofitable a garden the muscles and vigour of its youth! No, not while there be bishops and judges in the land; not while physicians ride in chariots, and write themselves baronets; not while there be glory to be won in the field, and a gallant name in the wars; not while there is a pen for ambition to use, or even a plough for energy to follow!

Capel court and railway shares, low as such be, have more to offer to ambition than Downing Street. Manchester, with her millions of miles of calico, will be a better mart for energy than Somerset House.

The Crown has no right to ask for such things. Ambition and energy are the luxuries of the labour market, and will go to those who pay highly for them. Those who require cheap work, must be content to put up with bad work. Careless men will gain but scanty wages, and scanty wages will gain but careless men.

If the wages of the Crown have been scanty, who has a right to complain that the men have been careless? Certainly not the Crown. Certainly

not those great officers of the Crown in whose hands is the disposition of these things.

Great men sitting at the Treasury, talking over these matters with anxious minds, consider how best they may dissolve the evils of patronage, and open the Civil Service to the educated ambition of the country. But no allusion is made to any project of making due payment for the article required. Much is said of the manner in which young men are to be put in at the bottom of this government machine called the Civil Service, but very little of the treatment of elderly men who may get to the top. Much is said of the required excellence of education; but nothing of the rewards by which such excellence is to be stimulated.

It might certainly be thought a costly remedy for the evil, if any one were to propose to the minister to create lay bishoprics, or deanships and prebends in the Civil Service, for the reward of merit. A palace and 5,000*l.* a year might not be too much for a man whose decretion had pulled the Government through many difficulties; but there would be difficulty in carrying such a measure. Other professions would be jealous, and the House of Commons would hardly consent. But what if the bishoprics, and the deanships are already there? What if the palace be already in existence, and the 5,000*l.* a year already duly paid; duly paid for Civil services,

only unfortunately kept altogether out of the reach of the Civil servants!

Is not this at present pretty much the case? Has not the Chancellor of the Exchequer 5000*l.* a year and a palace? a dingy palace indeed, but still a palace? At this suggestion up rise with loud screech the eloquent bulwarks of our constitution, and explain to us, not for the first time, how impossible it is that there should be any amalgamation between parliamentary and permanent Civil services. With similar screech were the Catholic claims repelled, reform of Parliament taboed, and corn-laws defended.

When shall we as a people cease to think that the existence of an evil is its sufficient excuse? Touching this Chancellorship of the Exchequer, let us see whether it be in any way possible that a clerk commencing with 100*l.* a year should attain to so high a place. Would not such promotion be a great advantage if possible? Would it not in itself go far towards curing the ill complained of? If a young clerk, commencing at 100*l.* a year, might, by due diligence and proved genius, become a Chancellor of the Exchequer, then ambition and energy would be tempted towards Downing Street.

It may be surmised that in selecting the head financier of the country, it would not be amiss to provide that the man selected should know somewhat of finance. Such an opinion is not orthodox,

but nevertheless can hardly be gainsaid. At present the men selected know nothing on the matter, unless it chance, which is rarely the case, that he have before held some kindred office. The excellent literary baronet who now rules the budget is doubtless a useful man; the somewhat speculative member for the university of Oxford is most eloquent, most energetic, most talented, a man indeed of highest genius: his predecessor in the office is also a man of genius, one, who if he have not mastered finance, has at any rate mastered his party, and won for himself a considerable name. But were any of these financiers when they entered into the office, or indeed had their antecedents made it possible that they should have become so? This evil would, at any rate, be cured by the appointment of a man who had been educated in the duties to which he was called.

But a Chancellor of the Exchequer must be a politician, and have a fixed line of politics. He must have a seat in parliament. He must go in and out with a certain party. He must therefore be a man of fortune, he must possess influence in the country, and on all these accounts cannot be selected from the office clerks.

That the Chancellor of the Exchequer shall be a politician may or may not be necessary. Some time since it was thought necessary that the Chancellor of England should be such, and now

it is not so thought. But granting this necessity, why should not a clerk in the Exchequer Office be a politician? No doubt such clerks are politicians. All good men are so more or less. Men by the time they reach the age of forty years have declared pretty plainly to those around them what is in them, and what are their modes of thought. We cannot think that there could be much evil, but rather much advantage in having occasionally selected for high government offices, men who have not too peremptorily bound themselves to one way of thinking on public matters. Alas! does not such peremptory binding generally lead to unbinding as peremptory, not without some cost of character, and also some national disgrace?

The seat in Parliament is doubtless necessary, and such seat, according to the constitution, cannot be at the command of government clerks. It cannot be at their command unless special provision be made to that effect. But that there is any valid objection to such provision we believe has never been clearly stated. It is an ancient myth of the constitution that no man shall vote or debate in the House of Commons, unless he be sent thither by the Commons. Clearly this is a myth. Till the other day a large proportion of these Commons were sent to this House, not by any of the people, but by some great land magnate. And even in these reformed days, the

great land magnates have very much to say to it. Ask the still operative shade of Dod if this be not so; Dod, whom no man ever contradicted. Who, again, returns the members for Devonport, for Portsmouth, for Chatham, for Dover? It is notorious that the Government returns them, and yet the constitution lives on.

It might sometimes almost be wished that this constitution of ours might be put an end to, lest it should put an end to us. If the constitution be made for us English, and not we for it, surely it cannot be meet that the constitution should deny us any benefits, of which a new course of policy may be capable. It is only necessary for the nation to say that the holders of certain offices should be *ex officio* members of the Parliament, and the evil is at once vanquished. Even the constitutional bugbear may be respected if the nation should so will, for the necessary object would be gained if their Chancellor of the Exchequer were merely a talking and not a voting member.

But the Chancellor of the Exchequer must go in and out with other ministers—granted. And must, therefore, be a man of fortune. This surely is another myth. Because a man has been Chancellor of the Exchequer, and is no longer so, his vital powers are not paralyzed; he is not physically prevented from earning his bread. But it is absolutely a myth. Had not the country

the rich benefit of Lord Lyndhurst's services as Chief Baron after he had occupied the woolsack? Was not Sir Thomas Fremantle for some time Chief Secretary for Ireland, and does he not now, no doubt worthily occupy, some subordinate office? Is not Lord Monteagle Chief Teller of the Exchequer, or holder of some equally unintelligible position, although he acted for some years as Chancellor of the Exchequer? Yes; but Lord Monteagle is not degraded by any labour. His place is a sinecure. The work we presume leaves the stain, not the wages!

There is nothing that is not mythical in the arguments as to the necessity of employing men of fortune for all high offices; mythical, mysterious, and most mischievous. The choice of the country in her servants is thus narrowed within the closest confines, and the energy, genius, and talent of the people are banished from the noblest employment of mankind. It is so in no other country. In no other country is it now necessary that state power and private wealth should go hand in hand together. In Venice such usage existed, but Venice has fallen.

In what does this necessity consist? If a Cabinet retire, the Chancellor of the Exchequer must retire with his brethren and thus lose his salary. Granted. Let us grant also that he cannot return to the same office which he before held. He is not disgraced because he has gone

out with the ministry. He is fit for any of the numerous positions for which Government finds it so difficult to get men of adequate talent; and if none such be ready for him, the country will not begrudge a suitable maintenance to men who have thus achieved high position, and have thus lost it.

A great minister, however, should be a man of great influence in the country. Yes, of such influence as his talents and character may command. With other influence in such offices, the country may well dispense. Few men now-a-days wish to see the Cabinet filled with dissolute marquesses, only less dull than marquesses generally are, or with earls and barons recommended to public notice by long pedigrees and large domains.

For these remarks the Chancellor of the Exchequer has been spoken of, not because his office should be more than others accessible to government clerks. It was necessary to speak of one, and he is specially looked upon as the head of this service of which we are speaking. The first Lord of the Admiralty, or the Secretary for the Colonies, might, with equal benefit to the constitution, have entered the service of the Crown, the one as a midshipman, and the other as a clerk.

"For all high government offices rich men have been and must be chosen!" Does not this seem

to be reason and argument enough for the majority of men? It is shocking to many minds that such time-honoured rules should be broken through. Could the original causes of such rules be seen, they also would, in the majority of cases, be equally shocking, and to as many.

Stringent rules such as these, binding as the laws of the Medes, are not in themselves a blessing; nay, they are rather a curse, if their peculiar use is not discernible and cannot be defined. It might be that gentlemen should agree among themselves to employ none as butlers but such as had red hair. Butlers would be difficult to get, and the price of red-haired men would rise in the market. But if it could be shown by evidence that the flavour of the wine was mellowed by such an arrangement, gentlemen might not be considered wrong. But what if evidence would show no such result? What if it were clear that neither that nor any other beneficial result could come from a selection so narrowed?

It has been suggested that some dozen seats in Parliament should be at the disposal of the Crown to enable the Government to secure in high places the services of men who have shown peculiar fitness for such offices. That the full number of such dozen seats should ever be filled by the Crown, or even the half of the number, would be improbable. It is not intended that Cabinet

Ministers should, as a rule, be selected from government clerks; but that there should be no bar to the advancement of a government clerk, if he show himself capable of great things; that thus some places of high honour may be open to this profession as well as to others, and that energy and ambition may thus be invited to serve the Crown. Men who have any choice in the matter will not be willing to come into Parliament on a footing which will render their seat dependent on the duration of a ministry.

So much for the lay bishoprics which one would wish to see placed within the reach of the Civil servants of the Crown. As to the lay deanships and prebends, to these we think they have a peculiar right, which should be held to be indefeasible. Not only should it be possible that government clerks should reach these, but it should be impossible that any one else should do so.

These are the offices which are held by permanent Civil servants; by Civil servants who do not, and need not, and, we believe, cannot sit in Parliament; who do not go out when the Government is changed, and who are the working heads of the public offices.

If it be rational that the bench of judges should be recruited from the ranks of the bar, or the bench of bishops from the ranks of the working clergy, it is also rational that these

situations should be filled from the ranks of the Civil servants.

It may probably strike many men with surprise to hear that such is not the case: to learn that there is a service in which the lieutenants and captains never rise to be colonels, in which the colonels have never served as lieutenants and captains; yet such is strictly the case.

There are very many situations such as these alluded to. Enough of such exist to make the Civil Service quite other than the despicable profession it is, were they bestowed as they ought to be. There are in all offices, even the highest, secretaries and under secretaries, chairmen and deputy chairmen, commissioners, inspectors, and such like, who have no more to do with the politics of a government than a junior clerk in the War Office. Nothing appertaining to the peculiar tenets of the party that is in, as opposed to the tenets of the party that is out, in any way forms part of their work.

But this promotion, which appears to be so natural a thing in the church, the army, the navy, and at the bar, is at present considered to be quite out of the question in the Civil Service. Were the present judicious chairman of the Board of —— to resign to-day, there would exist no idea of looking for his successor among the officers of his establishment. Poor fellows! They are so remarkably deficent in that ambition

of the lack of which the Government complains, that it may be doubted whether any among them would dare to raise their eyes to the supreme seat. As a matter of course the Government would put in a partisan of its own.

In those published papers respecting the re-organization of the public service, to which allusion has before been made, this state of things is not only not denied, but excused. Government clerks are really so bad that fitting men cannot be found among them to fill these second-rate offices. Besides, we are told that few public servants would feel the appointment of some barrister of known eminence to an important position like that of an under Secretary of State! Let us turn the tables, and say that few barristers would feel the appointment of some Civil servant of known eminence to an important position like that of the Master of the Rolls! O shades of Leeches and Langdales, how would ye rest in your graves were your seats defiled by some wretched produce of a government office!

By no means send a government clerk to the Rolls. He will probably not do well there, and will at any rate be a usurper. Neither should you send the barrister to the Colonial Office. The one transfer should be as illegitimate and as improbable as the other. Civil servants should not be indifferent on the matter, let the barrister be of ever such known eminence. It would be

well that they should be as indignant at such invasion into their territories, as the barrister would be in the other case.

But what if government clerks are not fit for these high offices? This is arguing in a circle. The rewards for good work are taken away, because men do not work well; but the men do not work well, because there are no rewards for good work. One result follows the other. It is for the employer to offer the reward, and all the experience of the world's history shows that the good work will be forthcoming.

The trial has not been made; nevertheless it is lamented on the part of Government that energy and ambition do not crowd into the Civil Service. Can any lament be more gratuitous or more absurd? In the same breath it is stated that the tyros of the Civil Service lack ambition, and that the rewards of the Civil Service are to be given away from them! Is it possible that, under such circumstances, ambitious men should enter a service, or that any but the least ambitious ought to do so?

So much for the rewards of meritorious conduct in the Civil Service. Much, also, has of late been said as to the present inefficacious mode of recruiting public offices, and considerable attention has been given to the preparation of some better plan, by which the existing evils of patronage may be avoided. But it appears

that we have hardly yet settled what may be the best means of achieving the object which we have in view.

It has been of late admitted that the excellence of French officers of all ranks, especially those of the staff, has been owing to their careful training in those sciences which warfare peculiarly requires. The same has been admitted with regard to Sandhurst—great complaint having been made that men were appointed to our staff who had not been educated at that seminary.

There are, we need not say, colleges especially devoted to preparing men for clerical pursuits; there are Inns of Court for legal studies; schools for medical instruction, for civil engineering, for our artillery and royal engineers. There are schools of design for young artists, colleges for instructing governesses in their future duties, missionaries in their future duties, milliners in their future duties, and even cooks. We would recommend the establishment of a college for the Civil Service.

Let this be done; let provision be made for the instruction of government clerks, and rewards set apart for their encouragement, as is now done for all other professions. Let this be done, and we shall not again be told that admission into the Civil Service is sought after only *by the indolent and the incapable.* Others will then go into it, besides those *who fear competition with their*

cotemporaries, or those whose physical infirmities or indolence of temperament unfit them for active exertions. Men will go there, not to *obtain a livelihood with little labour and no risk,* but to strive manfully and faithfully for such rewards as men in this world seek to get by faithful work. It might then be expected that the service of the Crown would be sufficiently important *to attract to itself some of the ablest of the youth of the country, and that keen emulation would then prevail among those who entered it.*

Reader, the words in italics are not mine. They are those which have been selected by two eminent men as most proper to describe the Civil Service; two eminent men selected by the Crown for this purpose. As to the actual truth of these words no opinion is now offered; but may it not justly be considered that such a state as that thus ascribed to the Civil Service is the natural result of the treatment which that service has received?

One other matter of degradation may be pointed out, to which the Civil Service, or at least a large proportion of it, is most unnecessarily subjected.

In the past ages of the constitution it was considered dangerous that any servant of the Crown, employed either directly or indirectly in collecting the revenue, should vote at an election for a member of Parliament. It was thought

that there should be no connection between him who had to collect and him who had to spend the public funds. The danger to us in these days appears somewhat unsubstantial.

It may, however, have been, that in olden days servants of the Crown were too much under Crown influence to be trusted with the franchise. Such, at any rate, is not now the case. The Civil Service should be on a par with other professions, and so useless a disgrace should be spared. The matter was, we believe, brought under the notice of that great upholder of parliamentary fixings, Lord John Russell; though, if we remember rightly, no sufficiently plain remedy was included in the Bill which he submitted to the House some time since. It may be hoped that soon after these pages are printed, some steps may have been taken towards removing so absurd a restriction.

CHAPTER XIII.

OUTERMAN *v.* TUDOR.

Charley sat at his office on the Saturday afternoon, very meditative and unlike himself. What was he to do when his office hours were over? In the first place he had not a shilling in the world to get his dinner. His habit was to breakfast at home at his lodgings with Harry, and then to dine, as best he might, at some tavern, if he had not the good fortune to be dining out. He had a little dinner bill at a house which he frequented in the Strand; but the bill he knew had reached its culminating point. It would, he was aware, be necessary that it should be decreased, not augmented, at the next commercial transaction which might take place between him and the tavern keeper.

This was not the first time by many in which he had been in a similar plight—but his resource in such case had been to tell the truth gallantly to his friend Mrs. Davis; and some sort of viands, not at all unprepossessing to him in his hunger, would always be forthcoming for him at the Cat and Whistle. This supply was now closed to him. Were he, under his present circumstances, to seek for his dinner from the fair hands of

Norah Geraghty, it would be tantamount to giving himself up as lost for ever.

This want of a dinner, however, was a small misfortune in comparison with others which afflicted him. Should or should he not keep his promise to Mrs. Davis, and go to the Cat and Whistle that evening? That was the question which disturbed his equanimity, and hindered him from teasing Mr. Snape in his usual vivacious manner.

He had positively plighted himself that he would go to the Cat and Whistle, and he felt that there would be something mean in his breaking such a promise to a woman; and yet he knew that if he did go he should be lost. He had not the moral courage which would have enabled him to explain to Mrs. Davis and her barmaid that he had been making a fool of himself and them; and that, wrong as he might have been in what he had done, it was quite out of the question that he should marry Norah Geraghty. He knew well that to do this would be above his power, that he would be a weak tool in these women's hands, and that, in all probability, he would not leave the house till he had bound himself to his ruin in some irrecoverable manner.

And here let it not be said that Charley must be altogether despicable in being so weak; that he is not only a vulgar rake in his present

habits, but a fool also, and altogether spiritless, and of a low disposition. Persons who may so argue of him, who so argue of those whom they meet in the real living world, are ignorant of the twists and turns, and rapid changes in character which are brought about by outward circumstances. Many a man who has given token to the world of admirable firmness, has given token also of weakness as deplorable, if the world had only known it. And many a youth, abandoned by his friends to perdition on account of his folly, might have yet prospered, had his character not been set down as gone before, in truth, it was well formed. It is not one calf only that should be killed for the returning prodigal. Oh, fathers, mothers, uncles, aunts, guardians, and elderly friends in general, kill seven fatted calves if seven should unfortunately be necessary.

And then there was a third calamity. Charley had, at this moment, in his pocket a certain document, which in civil but still somewhat peremptory language invited him to meet a very celebrated learned pundit, being no less than one of Her Majesty's puisne judges, at some court in Westminster, to explain why he declined to pay one Nathaniel Outerman, a tailor, the sum of &c. &c. &c.; and the document then went on to say, that any hesitation on Charley's part to accept this invitation would be regarded as great contempt shown to the said learned pundit, and would

be treated accordingly. Now Charley had not paid the slightest attention to this requisition from the judge. It would, he conceived, have been merely putting his head into the lion's mouth to do so. But yet he knew that such documents meant something; that the day of grace was gone by, and that Mr. Nathaniel Outerman would very speedily have him locked up.

So Charley sat meditative over his lock entries, and allowed even his proposed vengeance on Mr. Snape to be delayed.

"I say, Charley," said Scatterall, coming over and whispering to him, "you couldn't lend me half-a-crown, could you?"

Charley said nothing, but looked on his brother navvy in a manner that made any other kind of reply quite unnecessary.

"I was afraid it was so," said Scatterall, in a melancholy voice. And then, as if by the brilliance of his thought he had suddenly recovered his spirits, he made a little proposition.

"I'll tell you what, Charley, you might do. I put my watch up the spout last week. It's a silver turnip, so I only got fifteen shillings; yours is a Cox and Savary, and it's gold. I'm sure you'd get 3*l.* for it easily—perhaps 3*l.* 3*s.* Now, if you'll do that, and take my turnip down, I'll let you have the turnip to wear, if you'll let me have ten shillings of the money. You see you'd get clear—let me see how much." And

Scatterall went to work with a sheet of foolscap paper, endeavouring to make some estimate of what amount of ready cash Charley might have in his pocket on completion of this delicate little arrangement.

"You be d——," said Charley.

"You'll not do it then," said Dick.

Charley merely repeated with a little more emphasis the speech which he had just before made.

"Oh, very well," said Scatterall; "there couldn't have been a fairer bargain; at least it was all on your side; for you would have had the watch to wear, and nearly all the money too."

Charley still repeated the same little speech. This was uncivil; for it had evidently been looked on by Scatterall as unsatisfactory.

"Oh, very well," said that gentleman, now in a state of mild anger—"only I saw that you had a fine new purse, and I thought you'd wish to have something to put in it."

Charley again repeated his offensive mandate; but he did it in a spirit of bravado, in order to maintain his reputation. The allusion to the purse made him sadder than ever. He put his hand into his breast-pocket, and felt that it was near his heart; and then he fancied that he again heard her words—"You will be steady; won't you, dear Charley?"

At four o'clock, he was by no means in his

usual hurry to go away, and he sat there drawing patterns on his blotting paper and chopping up a stick of sealing-wax with his penknife, in a very disconsolate way. Scatterall went. Corkscrew went. Mr. Snape, having carefully brushed his hat, and taken down from its accustomed peg the old cotton umbrella, also took his departure; and the fourth navvy, who inhabited the same room, went also. The iron-fingered hand of time struck a quarter past four on the Somerset House clock, and still Charley Tudor lingered at his office. The maid who came to sweep the room was thoroughly amazed, and knew that something must be wrong.

Just as he was about to move, Mr. Oldeschole came bustling into the room. "Where is Corkscrew?" said he. "Gone," said Charley. "And Scatterall?" asked Oldeschole. "Gone, sir," said Charley. "And Mr. Snape?" said the Secretary. "Oh, he is gone, of course," said Charley, taking his revenge at last.

"Then, Mr. Tudor, I must trouble you to copy these papers for me at once. They are wanted immediately for Sir Gregory Hardlines." It was quite clear that Mr. Oldeschole was very much in earnest about the job, and that he was rejoiced to find that he still had one clerk to aid him.

Charley sat down and did the required work. On any other day he would greatly have disliked such a summons, but now he did not care much

about it. He made the copies, however, as quickly as he could, and then took them into Mr. Oldeschole.

The worthy secretary rewarded him by a lecture; a lecture, however, which, as Charley well understood, was intended all in kindness. He told him how Mr. Snape complained of him, how the office books told against him, how the clerks talked, and all Somerset House made stories of his grotesque iniquities. With penitential air Charley listened and promised. Mr. Oldeschole promised also that bygones should be bygones. "I wonder whether the old cock would lend me a five-pound note! I dare say he would," said Charley to himself, as he left the office. He abstained, however, from asking for it.

Returning to his room, he took his hat and went down stairs. As he was sauntering forth through the archway into the Strand, a man with a decent coat but a very bad hat came up to him.

"I'm afraid I must trouble you to go with me, Mr. Tudor," said the man.

"All right," said Charley; "Outerman, I suppose; isn't it?"

"All right," said the bailiff.

And away the two walked together to a sponging house, in Cursitor Street.

Charley had been arrested at the suit of Mr. Outerman the tailor. He perfectly understood

the fact, and made no special objection to following the bailiff. One case was at any rate off his mind; he could not now, be his will to do so ever so good, keep his appointment with Norah Geraghty. Perhaps it was quite as well for him to be arrested just at this moment, as be left at liberty. It must have come sooner or later. So he walked on with the bailiff not without some feeling of consolation.

The man had suggested to him a cab; but Charley had told him, without the slightest *mauvaise honte*, that he had not about him the means of paying for a cab. The man again suggested that perhaps he had better go home and get some money, as he would find it in Cursitor Street very desirable to have some. To this Charley replied that neither had he any money at home.

"That's blue," said the man.

"It is rather blue," said Charley, and on they went very amicably, arm in arm.

We need not give any detailed description of Charley's prison house. He was luckily not detained there so long as to make it necessary that we should become acquainted with his fellow captives, or even have much intercourse with his jailors. He was taken to the sponging house, and it was there imparted to him that he had better send for two things—first of all for money, which was by far the more desirable of the two;

and secondly, for bail, which even if forthcoming was represented as being at best but a dubious advantage.

"There's Mrs. Davis, she'd bail you, of course, and willing," said the bailiff.

"Mrs. Davis!" said Charley, surprised that the man should know aught of his personal acquaintances.

"Yes, Mrs. Davis of the Cat and Whistle. She'd do it in course, along of Miss Geraghty."

Charley perceived with a shudder that his matrimonial arrangements were known and talked of even in the distant world of Cursitor Street. He declined, however, the assistance of the landlady, which no doubt would have been willingly forthcoming, and was divided between his three friends, Alaric, Harry, and Mr. M'Ruen. Alaric was his cousin, and his natural resource in such a position, but he had lately rejected Alaric's advice, and now felt a disinclination to call upon him in his difficulty. Harry he knew would assist him, would at once pay Mr. Outerman's bill and relieve him from all immediate danger; but the sense of what he already owed to Norman made him unwilling to incur further obligations;—so he decided on sending for Mr. M'Ruen. In spite of his being so poorly supplied with immediate cash, it was surmised from his appearance, clothes, and known rank, that any little outlay made in his behalf would be

probably repaid, and he was therefore furnished with a messenger on credit. This man was first to call at Mr. McRuen's with a note, and then to go to Charley's lodgings and get his brushes, razors, &c., these being the first necessaries of life for which a man naturally looks when once overtaken by such a misfortune as that with which Charley was now afflicted.

In the process of time the brushes and razors came, and so did Mr. McRuen.

"This is very kind of you," said Charley, in rather a doleful voice, for he was already becoming tired of Cursitor Street.

Mr. McRuen twisted his head round inside his cravat, and put out three fingers by way of shaking hands with the prisoner.

"You seem pretty comfortable here," said McRuen. Charley dissented to this, and said that he was extremely uncomfortable.

"And what is it that I can do for you, Mr. Tudor?" said McRuen.

"Do for me—why bail me to be sure—they won't let me out unless somebody bails me. You know I shan't run away."

"Bail you," said McRuen.

"Yes, bail me," said Charley; "you don't mean to say that you have any objection."

Mr. McRuen looked very sharply at his young client from head to foot. "I don't know about bail," he said; "it's very dangerous, very; why

didn't you send for Mr. Norman, or your cousin?"

"Because I didn't choose," said Charley,—"because I preferred sending to some one I could pay for the trouble."

"Ha—ha—ha," laughed McRuen; "but that's just it—can you pay? You owe me a great deal of money, Mr. Tudor. You are so unpunctual you know."

"There are two ways of telling that story," said Charley; "but come—I don't want to quarrel with you about that now—you go bail for me now, and you'll find your advantage in it. You know that well enough."

"Ha—ha—ha," laughed the good-humoured usurer; "ha—ha—ha—well upon my word I don't know—you owe me a great deal of money, Mr. Tudor. Now, what o'clock is it by you, I wonder."

Charley took out his watch—the Cox and Savary, before alluded to—and said that it was past seven.

"Ay; you've a very nice watch, I see. Come, Mr. Tudor, you owe me a great deal of money; and you are the most unpunctual young man I know; but yet I don't like to see you distressed. I'll tell you what now—do you hand over your watch to me, just as a temporary loan—you can't want it here, you know; and I'll come down and bail you out to-morrow."

Charley declined dealing on these terms, and then Mr. McRuen at last went away, leaving Charley to his fate, and lamenting quite pathetically that he was such an unpunctual young man, so very unpunctual that it was impossible to do anything to assist him. Charley, however, manfully resisted the second attack upon his devoted watch.

"That's wery blue, wery blue indeed," said the master of the house, as Mr. McRuen took his departure—"ha'n't you got no huncles nor hants nor nothin' of that sort."

Charley declared that he had lots of uncles and aunts, grandfathers and grandmothers, and a perfect wealth of cousins, and that he would send for some of the leading members of his family to-morrow. Satisfied with this the man supplied him with bread and cheese, gin and water, and plenty of tobacco; and, fortified with these comforts, Charley betook himself at last very lugubriously, to a filthy uninviting bed.

He had, we have seen, sent for his brushes, and hence came escape; but in a manner that he had little recked of, and of which, had he been asked, he would as little have approved. Mrs. Richards, his landlady, was not slow in learning from the messenger how it came to pass that Charley wanted the articles of his toilet so suddenly demanded. "Why, you see he's just been quodded," said the boy.

Mrs. Richards was quite enough up to the world, and had dealt with young men long enough to know what this meant; nor indeed was she much surprised. She had practical knowledge that Charley had no strong propensity to pay his debts, and she herself was not unaccustomed to answer the emissaries of Mr. Outerman and other greedy tradesmen who were similarly situated. To Mrs. Richards herself Charley was not in debt, and she had therefore nothing to embitter her own feelings against him. Indeed she had all that fondness for him which a lodging-house keeper generally has for a handsome, dissipated, easy-tempered young man; and when she heard that he had been "quodded," immediately made up her mind that steps must be taken for his release.

But what was she to do? Norman, who she was aware would "unquod" him immediately, if he were in the way, was down at Hampton, and was not expected to be at his lodgings for two or three days. After some cogitation Mrs. Richards resolved that there was nothing for it but to go down to Hampton herself, and break the news to his friends. Charley would not have been a bit obliged to her had he known it, but as it turned out Mrs. Richards acted for the best. There was a train down to Hampton Court that night, and a return train to bring her home again—so off she started.

Mrs. Woodward had on that same afternoon taken down Katie who was still an invalid;—Norman had gone down with them, and was to remain there for some few days—going up and down every morning and evening;—Mrs. Woodward was sitting in the drawing-room; Linda and Katie were with her, the latter lying in state on her sofa as invalid young ladies should do; Captain Cuttwater was at Hampton Court and Norman was on the water; when a fly from the railway made its way up to the door of the cottage.

"Mrs. Richards, ma'am," said the demure parlour maid, ushering in the lodging-house keeper, who in her church-going best made a very decent appearance.

"Oh, Mrs. Richards, how are you?" said Mrs. Woodward, who knew the woman very well—"pray sit down—are there any news from London?"

"Oh, ma'am—such news—such bad news—Mister Charley——" up jumped Katie from her sofa and stood erect upon the floor. She stood there, with her mouth slightly open, with her eyes intently fixed on Mrs. Richards, with her little hands each firmly clenched, drawing her breath with hard, short, palpitating efforts. There she stood, but said nothing.

"Oh, Mrs. Richards—what is it?" said Mrs. Woodward, "for Heaven's sake what is the matter?"

"Oh, ma'am, he's been took," said Mrs. Richards.

"Took!" repeated Mrs. Woodward. "Katie, dear Katie,—sit down, my child—sit down."

"Oh, mama! oh, mama!" said she, apparently unable to move, and certainly all but unable to stand.

"Tell us, Mrs. Richards, what is it—what has happened to Mr. Tudor," and as she spoke Mrs. Woodward got up and passed her arm round her younger daughter's waist—Linda also got up and joined the group.

"Why, ma'am," said Mrs. Richards, "he's been took by the bailiffs, and now he's in prison."

Katie did not faint. She never had fainted, and probably did not know the way; but she clenched her hands still tighter, breathed harder than before, and repeated her appeal to her mother in a voice of agony. "Oh, mama! oh, mama!"

Katie had no very accurate conception of what an arrest for debt meant. She knew that next to death imprisonment was the severest punishment inflicted on erring mortals, and she now heard that Charley was in prison. She did not stop to think whether it was for his life, or for some more limited period. It was enough for her to know that this terrible misfortune had come upon him, to him, who, to her young fancy, was so bright, so good, so clever, so

excellent, upon him who had saved her life—upon him whom she so dearly loved.

"Oh, mama! oh, mama!" she said, and then in agony she shut her eyes and shuddered violently.

Mrs. Woodward was greatly afflicted. She was indeed sorry to hear such tidings of Charley Tudor, but her grief was now deeper even than that. She could not be longer blind to the sort of feeling which her child evinced for this young man; she could not think that these passionate bursts of overpowering sorrow were the result of mere childish friendship; she could not but see that her Katie's bosom now held a woman's heart, and that that heart was no longer her own.

And then Mrs. Woodward reflected of what nature, of what sort, was this man whom she had allowed to associate with her darling, almost as a brother does with his sister; whom she had warmed in her bosom till he had found an opportunity of inflicting this deadly wound. With terrible bitterness she upbraided herself as she sat down and bade Mrs. Richards go on with her tale. She knew that nothing which could now be said would add to Katie's anguish.

Mrs. Richards' story was soon told. It simply amounted to this—that "Mister Charley," as she always called him, had been arrested for debt at the suit of a tailor, and that she had learnt the

circumstance from the fact of the prisoner having sent for his brushes.

"And so I thought the best thing was to come and tell Mr. Norman," said Mrs. Richards, concluding her speech.

Nothing could be done till Norman came in. Linda went out with Mrs. Richards to get some refreshment in the dining-room, and Mrs. Woodward sat with her arm round Katie's neck on the sofa, comforting her with kisses and little caressing touches, but saying nothing. Katie, still unconscious of her passion, gave way to spasmodic utterance of her own grief.

"Oh, mama!" she said—"what can be done? What can we do? you will do something, mama, won't you? Poor Charley! Dear Charley! Harry will do something—won't he? Won't Harry go to London and do something?"

Mrs. Woodward did what she could to quiet her. "Something should be done," she said. They must wait till Harry came in, and then settle what was best. Nothing could be done till Harry came in. "You must be patient, Katie, or else you will make yourself really ill."

Katie became afraid that she would be sent off to bed on the score of her illness before Harry had come, and thus lose the advantage of hearing what was the step decided on. So she sat silent in the corner of her sofa feigning to be asleep, but pondering in her mind what

sort of penalties were the penalties of imprisonment, how dreadful, how endurable, or how unendurable. Would they put chains on him? would they starve him? would they cut off his beautiful brown hair?

Mrs. Woodward sat silent waiting for Harry's return. When first she had watched Katie's extreme misery and guessed the secret of her child's heart, she had felt something like hard bitter anger against Charley. But by degrees this feeling softened down. It was by no means natural to her, nor akin to her usual tenderness. After all the fault hitherto was probably more her own than his.

Mrs. Richards was sent back to town. She was thanked for the trouble she had taken, and told that Mr. Norman would do in the matter all that was necessary to be done. So she took her departure, and Linda returned to the drawing-room.

Unfortunately Captain Cuttwater came in first. They none of them mentioned Charley's misfortune to him. Charley was no favourite with Uncle Bat, and his remarks would not have been of the most cheering tendency.

At last Norman came also. He came, as was his wont, through the drawing-room window, and, throwing himself into a chair, began to tell the girls how much they had lost by not joining him on the river.

"Harry," said Mrs. Woodward, "step into the dining-room with me for a moment."

Harry got up to follow her. Katie and Linda also instantly jumped from their seats to do the same. Mrs. Woodward looked round, and motioned to them to stay with their uncle. Linda obediently, though reluctantly, remained; but Katie's impulse was too strong for her. She gave one imploring look at her mother, a look which Mrs. Woodward well understood, and then taking silence for consent, crept into the dining-room.

"Harry," said Mrs. Woodward, as soon as the dining-room door was closed, "Charley has been arrested;" and then she told him how Mrs. Richards had been at the cottage, and what was the nature of the tidings she had brought.

Norman was not much surprised, nor did he feign to be so. He took the news so coolly that Katie almost hated him. "Did she say who had arrested him, or what was the amount?" he asked.

Mrs. Woodward replied that she knew no more than what she had already told. Katie stood in the shade with her eyes fixed upon her cousin, but as yet she said nothing. How cruel, how stony-hearted must he be to hear such dreadful tidings and remain thus undisturbed! Had Charley heard that Norman was arrested, he would have been half way to London by this time. So, at least, thought Katie.

"Something can be done for him, Harry, can there not? We must contrive to do something —eh, Harry?" said Mrs. Woodward.

"I fear it is too late to do anything to-night," said Harry, looking at his watch. "The last train is gone, and I could not possibly find him out before twelve."

"And to-morrow is Sunday," said Mrs. Woodward.

"Oh, Harry, pray do something!" said Katie, "pray, pray, pray do! Oh, Harry, think of Charley being in prison! Oh, Harry, he would do anything for you!" and then she burst into tears, and caught hold of Harry's arm and the front of his coat to add force to her entreaty.

"Katie," said her mother, "don't be so foolish. Harry will, of course, do whatever is best."

"But, mama, he says he will do nothing; why does he not go at once?"

"I will go at once, dear Katie," said he; "I will go now directly. I don't know whether we can set him free to-night, or even to-morrow, as to-morrow is Sunday; but it certainly shall be done on Monday, you may be sure of that, at any rate. Whatever can be done shall be done;" and, without further talk upon the subject, he took his hat and went his way.

"May God Almighty bless him!" said Mrs. Woodward. "How infinitely greater are truth

and honesty than any talent however brilliant!" She spoke only to herself, and no one even guessed what was the nature of the comparison which she thus made.

As soon as Norman was gone, Katie went to bed; and in the morning she was pronounced to be too unwell to get up. And, indeed, she was far from well. During the night she only slept by short starts, and in her sleep she was restless and uneasy; then, when she woke, she would burst out into fits of tears, and lie sobbing hysterically till she slept again. In the morning Mrs. Woodward said something about Charley's misconduct, and this threw her into a wretched state of misery, from which nothing would rouse her till her mother promised that the prodigal should not be thrown over and abandoned.

Poor Mrs. Woodward was in a dreadful state of doubt as to what it now behoved her to do. She felt that, however anxious she might be to assist Charley for his own sake, it was her bounden duty to separate him from her child. Whatever merits he might have—and in her eyes he had many—at any rate he had not those which a mother would desire to see in the future husband of her daughter. He was profligate, extravagant, careless, and idle; his prospects in life were in every respect bad; he had no self-respect, no self-reliance, no moral strength.

Was it not absolutely necessary that she should put a stop to any love that might have sprung up between such a man as this and her own young bright-eyed darling?

Put a stop to it! Yes, indeed, most expedient; nay, absolutely necessary—if it were only possible. Now, when it was too late, she began to perceive that she had not known of what material her own child was formed. At sixteen, Gertrude and Linda had in reality been little more than children. In manner, Katie had been more childish even than them, and yet—— Mrs. Woodward, as she thought of these things, felt her heart faint within her.

She was resolved that, cost what it might, Charley must be banished from the cottage. But at the first word of assumed displeasure that she uttered, Katie fell into such an agony of grief that her soft heart gave way, and she found herself obliged to promise that the sinner should be forgiven. Katie the while was entirely unconscious of the state of her own feelings. Had she thought that she loved him as women love, had any thought of such love and of him together even entered her mind, she could not have talked of him as she now talked. Had he been her brother, she could not have been less guarded in her protestations of affection, or more open in her appeals to her mother that he might be forgiven. Such was her present state; but it was

doomed that her eyes should soon be opened, and that she should know her own sorrow.

On the Sunday afternoon, Norman returned to Hampton with the tidings that Charley was once more a free man. The key of gold which he had taken with him had been found potent enough to open all barriers, even those with which the sanctity of Sunday had surrounded the prisoner. Mr. Outerman, and the bailiff, and the messenger, had all been paid their full claims, and Charley, with his combs and brushes, had returned to the more benign custody of Mrs. Richards.

"And why didn't he come down with you?" said Katie to Norman, who had gone up to her bedroom to give her the good tidings.

Norman looked at Mrs. Woodward, but made no reply.

"He would probably prefer remaining in town at present," said Mrs. Woodward. "It will be more comfortable for him to do so."

And then Katie was left alone to meditate why Charley should be more comfortable after his arrest in London than at Hampton; and after a while she thought that she had surmised the truth. "Poor Charley! perhaps he is ashamed. He need not be ashamed to come at any rate to me."

CHAPTER XIV.

EASY IS THE SLOPE OF HELL.

The electors for the Tillietudlem district burghs, disgusted by the roguery of Mr. McBuffer, and anxiously on the alert to replace him by a strictly honest man, returned our friend Undy by a glorious majority. He had no less than 312 votes, as opposed to 297, and though threatened with the pains and penalties of a petition, he was not a little elated by his success. A petition with regard to the Tillietudlem burghs was almost as much a matter of course as a contest: at any rate the threat of a petition was so. Undy, however, had lived through this before, and did not fear but that he might do so again. Threatened folks live long, parliamentary petitions are very costly, and Undy's adversaries were, if possible, even in more need of money than himself.

He communicated his good fortune to his friend Alaric in the following letter:—

"Bellenden Arms,
"Tillietudlem, *July* 185—.

"MY DEAR DIRECTOR,

Here I am once more a constituent part of the legislative wisdom of the United Kingdom,

thanks to the patriotic discretion of the pot-wallopers, burgage tenants, and ten pound free-holders of these loyal towns. The situation is a proud one; I could only wish that it had been less expensive. I am plucked as clean as ever was pigeon; and over and above the loss of every feather I carried, old M'Cleury, my agent here, will have a bill against me that will hardly be settled before the next election. I do not complain however; a man cannot have luxuries without paying for them; and this special luxury of serving one's country in Parliament is one for which a man has so often to pay, without the subsequent fruition of the thing paid for, that a successful candidate should never grumble, however much he may have been mulcted. They talk of a petition; but thank God there are still such things as recognizances; and, moreover, to give M'Cleury his due, I do not think he has left a hole open for them to work at. He is a thorough rascal, but no man does better work.

"I find there is already a slight rise in the West Corks. Keep your eye open. If you find you can realsie *4l. 4s.* or even *4l.* sell, and let the West of Cork and Ballydehob go straight to the devil. We should then be able to do better with our money. But I doubt of such a sale with so large a stock as we hold. I got a letter yesterday from that Cork attorney, and I find that he is quite prepared to give way about the

branch. He wants his price, of course; and he must have it. When once we have carried that point, then it will be plain sailing; our only regret then will be that we didn't go further into it. The calls of course must be met; I shall be able to do something in October, but shall not have a shilling sooner,—unless I sell, which I will not do under 80*s*.

"I was delighted to hear of your promotion; not that you'll remain in the shop long, but it gives you a better name and a better claim. Old Golightly was buried yesterday, as of course you have heard. Mrs. Val quite agrees with me that your name had better be put in as that of Clem's trustee. She's going to marry that d—— Frenchman. What an unmitigated ass that cousin of yours must be. I can't say I admire her taste; but nevertheless she is welcome for me. It would, however, be most scandalous if we were to allow him to get possession of her money. He would, as a matter of course, make ducks and drakes of it in no time. Speculate probably in some Russian railway, or Polish mine, and lose every shilling. You will of course see it tied up tight in the hands of the trustees, and merely pay him, or if possible her, the interest of it. Now that I am once more in, I do hope we shall be able to do something to protect the fortunes of married women.

"You will be quite safe in laying out Clem's money, or a portion of it, in the West Corks.

Indeed I don't know how you could well do better with it. You will find Figgs a mere shadow. I think we can pull through in this manner. If not we must get —— to take our joint bill. He would sooner do that than have the works stopped. But then we should have to pay a tremendous price for it.

"So we were well out of the Mary Janes at last. The take, last month, was next to nothing, and now she's full of water. Many lodes hung on till just the last, and yet got out on his feet after all. That fellow will make a mint of money yet. What a pity that he should be such a rogue! If he were honest, honest enough I mean to be trusted, he might do anything.

"I shall leave this on Wednesday night, take the oaths on Thursday, and will see you in the evening. M'Carthy Desmond will at once move that I be put on the West Cork Committee, in place of Nogo, who won't act. My shares are all at present registered in Val's name. It will be well, however, to have them all transferred to you.

"Yours ever,

"U. S."

"M'Cleury has pledged himself to put me in again without further expense, if I have to stand before the general election, in consequence of taking place under Government. I earnestly hope his sincerity may be tried."

During the month of July Alaric was busy enough. He had to do the work of his new office, to attend to his somewhat critical duties as director of the West Cork Railway, to look after the interests of Miss Golightly whose marriage was to take place in August, and to watch the parliamentary career of his friend Undy, with whose pecuniary affairs he was now bound up in a manner which he could not avoid feeling to be very perilous.

Nor was he altogether happy. He had, it is true, much pleasure in taking his seat in a leathern arm-chair, at Sir Gregory's right hand, and in feeling that by his own unaided exertions he had raised himself to this position, while he was yet under thirty years of age. He had pleasure in his well-furnished room, in the state and rank and appanage of his office, and in the comfortable certainty of his increased income. He had, too, an honest and most praiseworthy pleasure in feeling that he had a scope for his energy, and room in which to exercise his talents. All this was delightful; and he might have been a happy man, had he allowed himself to be content with this. But a career of official industry had not been sufficient to satisfy his aspirations.

He had seen that men grew rich around him, men endowed with no talents higher than his own, with no brighter genius, no more enduring energies; he had watched how nameless nobodies

had suddenly sprung forth to the world's view as possessors of boundless wealth; of boundless wealth, and therefore of boundless honour. Villas and mansions were built on all sides, containing all the luxuries of a luxurious age, and were inhabited as soon as built, by men who had begun the world as empty handed as himself. He had seen this, and had determined not to be last in the race, not to be beaten in the struggle. Why should not he fill his game bag as well as another, —he to whom he felt in the pride of his heart, God had given so much? There was something dastardly in remaining poor, when the great contest going on around him was all for riches. A man who, left to himself, would be contented to walk slowly enough along life's highways, is allured to a quick pace, when those around him are hurrying on. One does not choose to be passed by every one on one's way!

Thus in thinking, as men do think, of the career before him, he had ever tempted himself to spring onwards,—upwards he would have said himself. And faulty as his feelings were, there was nevertheless something noble in his aspirations. He cared little for pleasure, or if he did he was the more noble in resisting the temptation. He laboured hard and truly in his vocation. He put himself honestly to work, to cure what was bad, and promote what was good, in his official career. He aspired to take high station among

great people; but he also aspired when there to use his greatness for the benefit of those below him. "That last infirmity of noble minds," if it be an infirmity, had with him nothing mean in it. He wished to rule. Great men have ever wished to do so. The wealth he coveted, the houses and gardens, the fast horses and liveried servants which he desired, were coveted only as the means to a further end, were desired as being in themselves conducive to greatness, not as the rewards which greatness brings.

So far let us vindicate his motives, and make for him such excuse before the bar of private judgment, as private judgment may be permitted to receive. Before the world's outer bar no excuse can avail anything. With his purblind worldly eyes he had failed to discover that onwards and upwards were not the same; that to advance was not necessarily to ascend. To this he had been blind, and such blindness is fatal to true worth.

But even yet he was not utterly dead to feelings of honesty; though with that fearful callousness which when encouraged so quickly envelopes the conscience, he had contrived to quiet the inner voice which told him that so much that he did was dishonest. He was not yet all dishonest. He made a thousand excuses to himself; and reasoning to himself with falsest logic, gilded over the pill which he forced himself

to swallow. His youthful trusting brow had grown dark and sombre—his eye had become suspicious, as do the eyes of all false men. He hurried to and from his home, and had no time to linger with his wife or play with his baby. Gertrude, though she felt this keenly, did not blame him. She knew how ambitious was his nature, how hard he worked for her and for her child, how intense was his anxiety to rise by his own labours to power and high place; and that his anxiety was for her sake as much as for his own. She knew all this, and forbore to reprove him when he left her to pass her lonely evenings with no companion but her infant.

But he was not happy. Let him smother his better feelings with false logic as he could; let him listen at night as he might to the arguments with which Undy Scott proved that he only did what all mankind were doing, still he had within him a sufficient perception of the immutable rules of right and wrong, to make him uneasy in his career. And then Undy Scott became tyrannical in his logic, and sneered at Alaric's scruples when Alaric had no longer the power, even if he had the will, to pay back the sneers with scorn.

July passed by and was now over, and members were looking to be relieved from their sultry labours, and to be allowed to seek air and exercise on the mountains. The Ballydehob branch line had received the sanction of Parliament through

the means which the crafty Undy had so well understood how to use; but from some cause, hitherto not sufficiently fathomed, the shares had continued to be depressed in value in spite of that desirable event. It was necessary, however, that calls should be paid up to the amount of 5*l.* a share, and as Undy and Alaric held nearly a thousand shares between them, a large amount of money was required. This, however, was made to be forthcoming from Miss Golightly's fortune.

On the first of August that interesting young lady was married to the man—shall we say of her heart or of her feet? The marriage went off very nicely, but as we have already had one wedding, and as others may perhaps be before us, we cannot spare much time or many pages to describe how Miss Golightly became Madame Jaquêtanàpe. The lady seemed well pleased with everything that was done, and had even in secret but one care in the world. There was to be a dance after she and her Victoire were gone, and she could not join in it!

We, however, are in the position as regards Clementina, in which needy gentlemen not unfrequently place themselves with reference to rich heiresses. We have more concern with her money than herself. She was married, and M. Jaquêtanàpe became the happy possessor of an income of 800*l.* a year. Everybody conceived him to behave well on the occasion. He acknow-

ledged that he had very little means of his own—about 4,000 francs a year, from rents in Paris. He expressed himself willing to agree to any settlement, thinking, perhaps with wisdom, that he might in this way best make sure of his wife's income, and was quite content when informed that he would receive his quarterly payments from so respectable a source as one of Her Majesty's Commissioners for the regulation of the Civil Service. The Bank of France could not have offered better security.

Thus Alaric obtained full control of Miss Golightly's fortune, for Figgs, his co-trustee, was, as has been said, a shadow. He obtained the full control of 20,000*l.*, and out of it he paid the calls due upon the West Cork shares, held both by himself and Undy Scott. But he put a salve upon his conscience, and among his private memoranda appertaining to that lady's money affairs he made an entry, intelligible to any who might read it, that he had so invested this money on her behalf. The entry was in itself a lie—a foolish palpable lie—and yet he found in it something to quiet remorse and stupify his conscience.

We have said that Undy Scott became tyrannical in his logic as soon as he had persuaded Alaric to make use of a portion of Madame Jaquêtanàpe's marriage portion. "You have taken a portion of the girl's money," was Undy's

argument; "you have already converted to your own purposes so much of her fortune; it is absurd for you now to talk of conscience and honesty, of your high duties as a trustee, of the inviolable distinction between meum and tuum. You have already shown that the distinction is not inviolable; let us have no more such nonsense; there are still left 15,000*l.* on which we can trade; open the till, and let us go on swimmingly with the business."

Alaric was not addressed absolutely in these words; he would not probably have allowed the veil with which he still shrouded his dishonesty to be withdrawn with so rough a hand; but that which was said, was in effect the same. In September he left town for a few weeks and went down to Scotland, still with Undy Scott. He had at first much liked this man's society, for Scott was gay, lively, clever, and a good companion at all points. But latterly he had become weary of him. He now put up with him as men in business have to put up with partners whom they may not like; or, perhaps, to speak the truth openly, he bore with him as a rogue bears with his confederate, though he absolutely hates his brother rogue on account of his very roguery. Alaric Tudor was now a rogue; despite his high office, his grand ideas, his exalted ambition; despite his talent, zeal, and well-directed official labours, he was a rogue, a thief, a villain who had stolen the money of the orphan, who had

undertaken a trust merely that he might break it; a robber, doubly disgraced by being a robber with an education, a Bill Sykes without any of those excuses which a philanthropist cannot but make for wretches brought up in infamy.

Alas, alas, how is it that in these days such men become rogues? How is it that we see in such frightful and repeated instances the impotency of educated men to withstand the allurements of wealth? Men are not now more keen after the pleasures which wealth can buy than were their forefathers. One would rather say that they are less so. The rich labour now, and work with an assiduity that often puts to shame the sweat in which the poor man earns his bread. The rich rogue, or the rogue that would be rich, is always a laborious man. He allows himself but little recreation, for dishonest labour admits of no cessation. His wheel is one which cannot rest without disclosing the nature of the works which move it.

It is not for pleasure, that men

> Put rancours in the vessel of their peace;

nor yet primarily, for ambition. Men do not wish to rise by treachery, or to become great through dishonesty. The object, the ultimate object, which a man sets before himself is generally a good one. But he sets it up in so enviable a point of view, his imagination makes it so richly desirable, by being gazed at it

becomes so necessary to existence, that its attainment is imperative. The object is good, but the means of attaining it—the path to the object. Ah ! there is the slip. Expediency is the dangerous wind by which so many of us have wrecked our little boats.

And we do so more now than ever, because great ships, swimming in deepest waters, have unluckily come safe to haven though wafted there by the same pernicious wind. Every great man who gains a great end by dishonest means, does more to deteriorate his country and lower the standard of his countrymen, than legions of vulgar thieves, or nameless unaspiring rogues. Who has injured us so much in this way as he whose name still stands highest among modern politicians ? Who has given so great a blow to political honesty, has done so much to banish from men's minds the idea of a life-ruling principle as Sir Robert Peel ?

It would shock many were we to attribute to him the roguery of the Sadleirs and Camerons, of the Robsons and Redpaths of the present day ; but could we analyze causes and effects, we might perhaps do so with no injustice. He has taught us as a great lesson that a man who has before him a mighty object may dispense with those old-fashioned rules of truth to his neighbours and honesty to his own principles, which should guide us in ordinary life. At what point

ordinary life ends, at what crisis objects may be considered great enough to justify the use of a dispensing power, that he has not taught us; that no Sir Robert Peel can teach us; that must unfortunately be left to the judgment of the individual. How prone we are, each of us, to look on our own object as great, how ready to make excuses for receiving such a lesson for our guide, how willing to think that we may be allowed to use this dispensing power ourselves—this experience teaches us in very plain language.

Thrice in his political life did Sir Robert Peel change his political creed, and carry, or assist to carry, with more or less of self-gratulation the measures of his adversaries. Thrice by doing so he kept to himself that political power which he had fairly forfeited by previous apposition to the requirements of his country. Such an apposition of circumstances is at any rate suspicious. But let us give him credit for the expression of a true belief; of a belief at first that the corn-laws should be maintained, and then of a belief that they should not; let us with a forced confidence in his personal honesty declare so much of him; nevertheless, he should surely have felt, had he been politically as well as personally honest, that he was not the man to repeal them.

But it was necessary, his apologist will say, that the corn-laws should be repealed; he saw the necessity and yielded to it. It certainly was

necessary, very necessary, very unavoidable, absolutely necessary one may say, a fact, which the united efforts of all the Peels of the day could in nowise longer delay, having already delayed it to the utmost extent of their power. It was essential that the corn-laws should be repealed; but by no means essential that this should be done by Sir Robert Peel.

It was a matter of indifference to us Englishmen who did the deed. But to Sir Robert Peel it was matter of great moment that he should do it. He did it, and posterity will point at him as a politician without policy, as a statesman without a principle, as a worshipper at the altar of expediency, to whom neither vows sworn to friends, nor declarations made to his country, were in any way binding. Had Sir Robert Peel lived, and did the people now resolutely desire that the Church of England should be abandoned, that lords and commons should bow the neck, that the Crown should fall, who can believe that Sir Robert Peel would not be ready to carry out their views? Readers, it may be that to you such deeds as those are horrible even to be thought of or expressed; to me I own that they are so. So also to Sir Robert Peel was Catholic Emancipation horrible, so was reform of Parliament, so was the Corn Law Repeal. They were horrible to him, horrible to be thought of, horrible to be expressed. But the people re-

quired these measures, and therefore he carried them, arguing on their behalf with all the astuteness of a practised statesman.

That Sir Robert Peel should be a worshipper of expediency might be matter of small moment to any but his biographer, were it not that we are so prone to copy the example of those whose names are ever in our mouths. It has now become the doctrine of a large class of politicians that political honesty is unnecessary, slow, subversive to a man's interests, and incompatible with quick onward movement. Such a doctrine in politics is to be deplored; but alas! who can confine it to politics? It creeps with gradually, but still with sure and quick motion, into all the doings of our daily life. How shall the man who has taught himself that he may be false in the House of Commons, how shall he be true in the Treasury Chambers? or if false there, how true on the Exchange? and if false there, how shall he longer have any truth within him?

And thus Alaric Tudor had become a rogue, and was obliged, as it were in his own defence, to consort with a rogue. He went down to Scotland with Undy leaving his wife and child at home, not because he could thus best amuse his few leisure days, but because this new work of his, this laborious trade of roguery, allowed him no leisure days. When can villany have either days or hours of leisure?

Among other things to be done in the north, Alaric was to make acquaintance with the constituents of the little borough of Strathbogy, which it was his ambition to represent in the next Parliament. Strathbogy was on the confines of the Gaberlunzie property; and indeed the lord's eldest son, who was the present member, lived almost within the municipal boundary. Ca'stocks Cottage, as his residence was called, was but a humble house for a peer's eldest son; but Mr. Scott was not ashamed to live there, and there for a while he entertained his brother Undy and Alaric Tudor. Mr. Scott intended, when the present session was over, to retire from the labours of parliamentary life. It may be that he thought that he had done enough for his country; it may be that the men of Strathbogy thought that he had not done enough for them; it may be that there was some family understanding between him and his brother. This, however, was clear, that he did not intend to stand again himself, and that he professed himself ready to put forward Alaric Tudor as a worthy successor, and to give him the full benefit and weight of the Gaberlunzie interest.

But not for nothing was Alaric to receive such important assistance.

"There are but 312 electors altogether," said Undy one morning as they went out shooting, "and out of these we can command a hundred

and twenty. It must be odd if you cannot get enough outsiders to turn them into a majority. Indeed you may look on it as a certain seat. No man in England or Scotland could give you one more certain."

This was not the first occasion on which Undy had spoken of all that he was doing for his friend, and Alaric therefore, somewhat disgusted with the subject, made no reply.

"I never had things made so easy for me when I went in," continued Undy; "nor have I ever found them so easy since. I don't suppose it will cost you above 500*l.*, or at most 600*l.*, altogether."

"Well, that will be a comfort," said Alaric.

"A comfort; why I should say it would. What with the election and petition together, Tillietudlem never cost me less than 2,000*l.* It cost me just as much, too, when I was thrown out."

"That was a bore for you," said Alaric.

"Upon my word you take it rather coolly," said Undy; "another man would thank a fellow for putting such a nice thing in his way."

"If the obligation be so deep," said Alaric, becoming very red in the face, "I would rather not accept it. It is not too late for you to take the cheaper seat to yourself, if you prefer it; and I will look elsewhere."

"Oh, of course; perhaps at Tillietudlem; but for Heaven's sake, my dear fellow, don't let us

quarrel about it. You are perfectly welcome to whatever assistance we can give you at Strathbogy. I only meant to say that I hope it will be efficacious. And on the score of expense I'll tell you what we'll do—that is, if you think that fair, we'll put the cost of the two elections together, and share and share alike."

"Considering that the election will not take place for at least more than twelve months, there will be time enough to settle that," said Alaric.

"Well, that's true too," said Undy; and then they went on, and for some time separated on the mountain, complaining, when they met again, of the game being scarce and the dogs wild, as men always do. But as they walked home Undy, who regretted the loss of good time, again began about money matters.

"How many of those bridge shares will you take?" said he. This was a projected bridge from Poplar to Rotherhithe, which had been got up by some city gentlemen, and as to which Undy Scott was, or pretended to be, very sanguine.

"None," said Alaric. "Unless I can get rid of those confounded West Cork and Ballydehobs, I can buy nothing more of anything."

"Believe me, my dear fellow, the Ballydehobs are no such confounded things at all. If you are ever a rich man it will be through the Ballydehobs. But what you say about the bridge

shares is nonsense. You have a large command of capital, and you cannot apply it better."

Alaric winced, and wished in his heart that Clementina Jaquêtanàpe, *née* Golightly, with all her money, was buried deep in the bogs of Ballydehob. Though he was a rogue, he could not yet bear his rogery with comfort to himself. It sat, however, as easy on Undy as though he had been to the manner born.

"I have no capital now at my disposal," said he; "and I doubt whether I should be doing right to lay out a ward's money in such a manner."

A slight smile came over Undy's gay unconcerned features; it was very slight, but nevertheless it was very eloquent and very offensive also. Alaric understood it well; it made him hate the owner of it, but it made him hate himself still more.

"It is as well to be hung for a sheep as for a lamb," said Undy's smile; "and, moreover," continued the smile, "is it not ridiculous enough for you, Alaric Tudor, rogue as you are, to profess to me, Undy Scott, rogue as I am, any solicitude as to your ward's welfare, seeing that you have already taken to yourself, for your own dishonest purposes, a considerable slice of the fortune that has been trusted to your keeping. You have done this, and yet you talk to me of not having capital at your disposal! You have capital, and

you will dispose of that capital for your own purposes, as long as a shilling remains uninvested of your ward's money. We are both rogues. God knows it, and you and I know it; but I am not such a hypocritical rogue as to make mock boasts of my honesty to my brother rogue."

This was certainly a long speech to have been made by a smile which crossed Mr. Scott's face but for a moment, but every word of it was there expressed, and every word of it was there read. Alaric did not at all like being addressed so uncivilly. It seemed to tend but little to that 'Excelsior' for which his soul panted; but what could he do? how could he help himself? Was it not all true? could he contradict the smile? Alas! it was true; it was useless for him now to attempt even to combat such smiles. Excelsior indeed! his future course might now probably be called by some very different designation. Easy, very easy, is the slope of hell.

Before they had returned to Ca'stocks Cottage Undy had succeeded in persuading his friend that the game must be played on—on and on, and out. If a man intends to make a fortune in the share-market he will never do it by being bold one day and timid the next. No turf betting book can be made up safely, except on consistent principles. Half-measures are always ruinous. In matters of speculation one attempt is made safe by another. No man, it is true, can calculate

accurately what may be the upshot of a single venture; but a sharp fellow may calculate with a fair average of exactness what will be the aggregate upshot of many ventures. All mercantile fortunes have been made by the knowledge and understanding of this rule. If a man speculates but once and again, now and then, as it were, he must of course be a loser. He will be playing a game which he does not understand, and playing it against men who do understand it. Men who so play always lose. But he who speculates daily puts himself exactly in the reversed position. He plays a game which experience teaches him to play well, and he plays generally against men who have no such advantage. Of course he wins.

All these valuable lessons did Undy Scott teach to Alaric Tudor, and the result was, that Alaric agreed to order—for self and partner—a considerable number of shares in the Limehouse Bridge Company. Easy, very easy, is the slope of hell!

And then in the evening, on this evening and other evenings, on all evenings, they talked over the prospects of the West Cork and Ballydehob branch, and of the Limehouse Bridge, which according to Undy's theory is destined to work quite a revolution in the East-end circles of the metropolis. Undy had noble ideas about this bridge. The shares at the present moment were

greatly at a discount—so much the better, for they could be bought at a cheaper rate, and they were sure to rise to some very respectable figure as soon as Undy should have played out with reference to them the parliamentary game which he had in view.

And so from morning to morning, and from night to night, they talked over their unholy trade till the price of shares and the sounds of sums of money entered into Alaric's soul. And this, perhaps, is one of the greatest penalties to which men who embark in such trade are doomed, that they can never shake off the remembrance of their calculations; they can never drop the shop; they have no leisure, no ease; they can never throw themselves with loose limbs and vacant mind at large upon the world's green sward, and call children to come and play with them. At the Weights and Measures Alaric's hours of business had been from ten to five. In Undy's office they continued from one noon to the next, incessantly; even in his dreams he was working in the share market.

On his return to town Alaric found a letter from Captain Cuttwater pressing very urgently for the re-payment of his money. It had been lent on the express understanding that it was to be repaid when Parliament broke up. It was now the end of October, and uncle Bat was becoming uneasy.

Alaric, when he received the letter, crushed it in his hand, and cursed the strictness of the man who had done so much for him. On the next day another slice was taken from the fortune of Madame Jaquêtanàpe; and his money, with the interest, was remitted to Captain Cuttwater.

END OF VOL. II.

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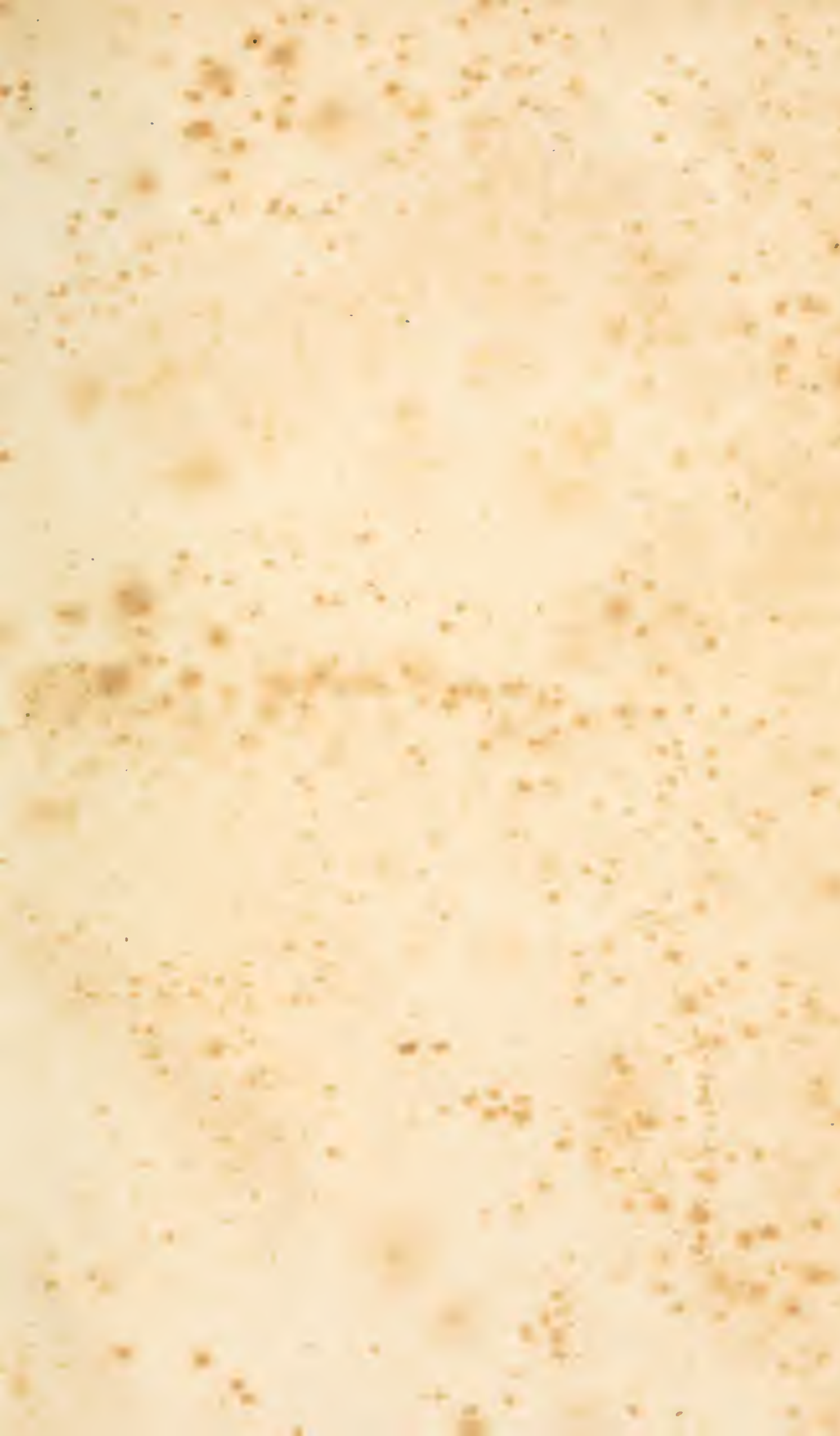

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