WHICH IS THE WINNER?

THE
SELECT LIBRARY OF FICTION.

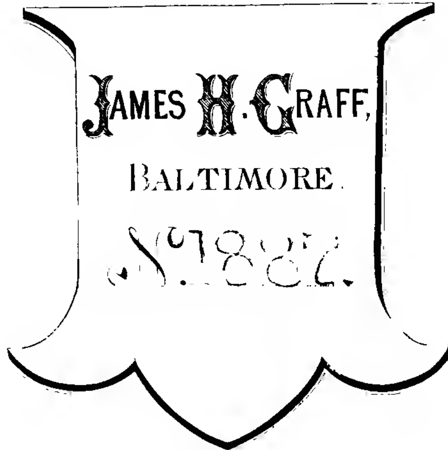
PRICE TWO SHILLINGS PER VOLUME.

The best, cheapest, and most POPULAR NOVELS published, well printed in clear, readable type, on good paper, and strongly bound.

C … *the day.*

O … there is none
whic … hands of the
publi … ct Library of
Ficti … themselves,
they … in clear and
excel … from some of
the c … nd which so
sorel … d in railway
carri…

… *en.*



VOL.
1 … *harles Lever.*
2 … p., 3s. *harles Lever.*
4 … 72 pp., 3s.
5 … *harles Lever.*
6 … *e C. Lever.*
… pp.
7 … *arles Lever.*
10 … *harles Lever.*
11 … *rs. Oliphant.*
12 … *Mrs. Grey.*
… *rs. Trollope.*
15 … *John Mills.*
17 J…
18 C … in, 704 pp., *arles Lever.*
20 T … *ary Howitt.*
… *Charles Lever*

22 Harry Lorrequer *Charles Lever.*
23 Knight of Gwynne, 630 pp., 3s. *Charles Lever.*
25 Dodd Family Abroad, 672 pp., 3s. *Charles Lever.*
47 Mr. and Mrs. Asheton "*Margaret and Her Bridesmaids.*"
48 Sir Jasper Carew *Charles Lever.*
49 Mrs. Mathews *Mrs. Trollope.*
50 Marian Withers *Miss Jewsbury.*

THE SELECT LIBRARY OF FICTION.

VOL.

51 Gertrude; or, Family Pride *Mrs. Trollope.*

52 Young Heiress *Mrs. Trollope.*

53 A Day's Ride *Charles Lever.*

54 Maurice Tiernay *Charles Lever.*

55 Constable of the Tower *W. H. Ainsworth.*

58 Mafter of the Hounds "*Scrutator.*"

60 Cardinal Pole *W. H. Ainsworth.*

61 Jealous Wife *Miss Pardoe.*

62 Rival Beauties *Miss Pardoe.*

65 Lord Mayor of Lond *W. H.*

66 Elsie Venner *Oliver*

67 Charlie Thornhill *C*

68 House of Elmore *F.*

72 Country Gentleman "

73 La Beata *T. Adolp*

74 Marietta *T. Adolp*

75 Barrington *C*

76 Beppo the Conscript *T. Adolp*

77 Woman's Ransom *F.*

78 Deep Waters *Ann*

79 Misrepresentation *Anna H. Drury.*

80 Tilbury Nogo *Whyte Melville.*

81 Queen of the Seas *Captain Armstrong.*

82 He Would Be a Gentleman *Samuel Lover.*

83 Mr. Stewart's Intentions *F. W. Robinson.*

84 Mattie: a Stray *Author of "Carry's Confession."*

85 Doctor Thorne *Anthony Trollope.*

86 The Macdermots *A. Trollope.*

87 Lindisfarn Chase *T. A. Trollope.*

VOL.

88 Rachel Ray *Anthony Trollope.*

89 Luttrell of Arran *Charles Lever.*

90 Giulio Malatesta *T. A. Trollope.*

91 Wildflower *F. W. Robinson.*

92 Irish Stories *Samuel Lover.*

93 The Kellys *Anthony Trollope.*

94 Married Beneath Him *Author of "Lost Sir Massingberd."*

95 Tales of all Countries *Anthony Trollope.*

96 Castle Richmond *A. Trollope.*

l

rs. Marsh Caldwell.

he Projector *W. H. Ainsworth.*

ams *Anthony Trollope.*

ortunes *Augustus Mayhew.*

rcy *Mrs. M. Caldwell.*

Avenger *rs. Marsh Caldwell.*

Spell *F. W. Robinson.*

arborough *Whyte Melville.*

106 Slaves of the Ring *F. W. Robinson.*

110 Emilia Wyndham *Mrs. Marsh Caldwell.*

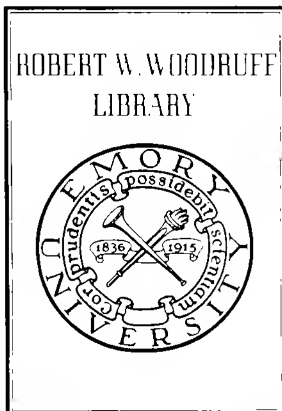
111 One and Twenty *F. W. Robinson.*

112 Douglas's Vow *Mrs. Edmund Jennings.*

113 Woodleigh *Author of "Woman's Ransom."*

114 Theo Leigh *Annie Thomas.*

116 Orley Farm. 3s. *Anthony Trollope.*



THE SELECT LIBRARY OF FICTION.

VOL.

117 Flying Scud *C. Clarke.*

118 Denis Donne *Annie Thomas.*

119 Forlorn Hope *Edmund Yates.*

120 Can You Forgive Her? 3s. *Anthony Trollope.*

121 Ned Locksley, the Etonian *Anonymous.*

122 Miss Mackenzie *A. Trollope.*

123 Carry's Confession *By Author of "Mattie: a Stray."*

124 Griffith Gaunt *Charles Reade.*

125 Belton Estate *Anthony Trollope.*

126 Land at Last *Edmund Yates.*

127 Dumbleton Common *Hon. Eleanor Eden.*

128 Crumbs from a Sportman's Table *By Charles Clarke.*

129 Bella Donna *Percy Fitzgerald.*

130 Captain Jack *J. A. Maitland.*

131 Christie's Faith *By Author of "Mattie: a Stray."*

VOL.

132 Polly: a Village Portrait *By a Popular Writer.*

133 75 Brooke Street *By Percy Fitzgerald.*

134 Called to Account *By Annie Thomas.*

135 A Golden Heart *By Tom Hood.*

136 Second Mrs. Tillotson *By Percy Fitzgerald.*

137 Never Forgotten *By Percy Fitzgerald.*

138 Clyffards of Clyffe *Author of "Married Beneath Him."*

139 Which is the Winner *By Charles Clarke.*

140 Archie Lovell *By Mrs. Edwards.*

141 Lizzie Lorton *By E. Lynn Linton.*

142 Milly's Hero *By F. W. Robinson.*

143 Leo *By Dutton Cook.*

London: CHAPMAN & HALL, 193, Piccadilly.

SOLD BY

G. ROUTLEDGE & SONS; WARD, LOCK, & TYLER;

WARNE & CO.; W H. SMITH & SON.

Edinburgh: JOHN MENZIES. Glasgow: MURRAY & SON.

Dublin: W. H. SMITH & SON.

New York: ROUTLEDGE & SONS. Toronto: CAMPBELL & SON.

Melbourne: GEORGE ROBERTSON.

SOLD BY ALL BOOKSELLERS, AND AT ALL RAILWAY STATIONS.

WHICH IS THE WINNER?

OR,

THE FIRST GENTLEMAN OF HIS FAMILY.

By CHARLES CLARKE.

AUTHOR OF "CHARLIE THORNHILL."

NEW EDITION.

LONDON:
CHAPMAN & HALL, 193, PICCADILLY.

[*The right of Translation is reserved.*]

CONTENTS.

CHAP.		PAGE
I.—SPRING VALE		1
II.—THE FAMILY CONCLAVE		10
III.—MR. BRADFIELD'S PROPOSAL		23
IV.—LORD MENTMORE		38
V.—THE MORNING'S RIDE		52
VI.—A PARVENUE BEAUTY		65
VII.—THE LOWER CLASSES		80
VIII.—THE HIGHER CLASSES		90
IX.—NEWMARKET		102
X.—TRAINING		111
XI.—A WALK IN THE COUNTRY—SOMMERTON		125
XII.—AUNT PHILLY'S STORY, NOT TO BE SKIPPED		134
XIII.—ABEL BRADFIELD AT HOME		144
XIV.—BROTHER AND SISTER		155
XV.—A BALL AND ITS VARIOUS RESULTS		170
XVI.—MORE ON MARRIAGE THAN LOVE		191
XVII.—OUR TRUSTWORTHY DOMESTICS		204
XVIII.—NOT TO BE DISPOSED OF		214
XIX.—THE HUNT BREAKFAST — LAURENCE BRADFIELD CULTIVATES THE COUNTRY GENTLEMEN		221
XX.—ABEL BRADFIELD CATCHES A TARTAR BEFORE HEADING THE FOX		245
XXI.—HINTS FOR A SENSATIONAL NOVEL		255

CHAP. PAGE

XXII.—A SLOW RECOVERY PREPARATORY TO FALLING AGAIN 270

XXIII.—A LITTLE SOCIETY, QUITE A 1 . . 279

XXIV.—THE FIRST APPROACHES . . . 289

XXV.—A MYSTERIOUS AND UNSUCCESSFUL SEARCH . 296

XXVI.—SILVERMERE 303

XXVII.—AN AMBUSCADE 319

XXVIII.—THE EGGS ARE SAVED, BUT NOT THE BACON . 327

XXIX.—LAURENCE BRADFIELD BEGINS TO ACT. . 337

XXX.—HE TAKES COUNSEL, BUT NOT COMFORT . 347

XXXI.—UN EMBARRAS DE RICHESSES. . . 354

XXXII.—AWKWARD DISCLOSURES . . . 361

XXXIII.—THE TWO THOUSAND AND HOW IT CAME OFF . 369

XXXIV.—AN INTERVAL BENEFICIAL TO THE READER . 380

XXXV.—THE FINISH: A DEAD HEAT BETWEEN TWO, AND THE REST NOWHERE. . . 390

WHICH IS THE WINNER?

CHAPTER I.

SPRING VALE.

"Prisca gens mortalium."—HOR., *Epodes* ii. 2.

To the lover of the picturesque, the Midland counties of England are presumed to present but few attractions. The presumption is unjust. Warwickshire is full of beauties: its magnificent glades and gently undulating woodlands, which intersect the county, give to the eye a park-like appearance, scarcely surpassed in any part of this island; the varieties of its substrata present a series of fruit-bearing pictures to the agricultural speculator; and the great extent of rich pasture-land assimilates to its neighbouring counties of Northampton and Leicester. In the case of these two we have to deal with hardy sceptics, who can imagine no associations with such names but leather breeches and scarlet coats. It is a commonly-received opinion among the uninitiated, that every field is a dead level, whose ingress and egress is by a double post and rails, lately improved by wire fencing; that there are trees in the county, but few and far between; and that the lovely tints of our woodland scenery are replaced by patches of gorse, at stated intervals of four miles, for the convenience of the Nimrods who people the district. They and the foxes are supposed to wage continual war, and to have devastated the land of all save the fat beasts which graze on the hundred-acre pastures. Broken collar-bones and beef, to supply tea to the wounded, are the staple commodities of the happy hunting grounds.

We never yet heard of a tourist who made Melton or Leicester his head-quarters, or of an artist who settled at Market-Harborough to cultivate his taste, or to idealise the picturesque. The extent of such local ambition is a favourite hound, or hunters at grass; the latter an imaginative concession to the beautiful, which is never realised in either of the counties above mentioned. A bobtailed nag up to his hocks in clover may give some notion of Mr. Jorrocks's crack country in the months of May, June, or July; but the only run that a Northamptonshire hunter, even in a poor man's stable, is likely to get, during the summer, is a run in a light buggy, when magisterial business, or a market-day, may chance to take him to his post town.

But whatever the notion of the Midland counties formed by those whose knowledge has been limited to the graphic reports of embryo sportsmen, to encyclopædiac readings, or to a flying transit through the fens, we can assure our readers that there are spots which vie with the most beautiful scenery of southern or western England; and as the eye roams over miles of country, always bright, winter and summer, with its emerald green, it seems to encounter a succession of woodlands which ought to belong to Sussex or Kent. This arises from the peculiar magnificence of the hedgerow timber,—the long lines of which, from the sloping sides of a country rather undulating than flat, give an appearance of extreme richness and fertility. Here and there, at the proper season, the yellow grain, at intervals, relieves, or agreeably excites, the eye after the repose it derives from the constant recurrence of green fields.

It is in the most beautiful part of one of these counties that the scene of our story is laid. It was a calm, clear, but rather chilly afternoon, towards the end of October, that two figures (without pretending to rival the inimitable G. R. P James) emerged from the market-place of the little town of Saxonby. Saxonby itself has but little to recommend it. A High Street, which seems to belong to every town, and two limbs of an isosceles triangle, branching from it at either end, contained the nucleus of about four thousand inhabitants. It had had a trade, but short-sighted policy deprecated the approach of the railway, and it woke too late to mourn its folly in a renunciation of its rubbers, suppers, assemblies, and society in general. For the rest, it has a

Town Hall of moderate dimensions, where, every Wednesday, choleric gentlemen convicted poachers, assigned a vagrant population to a distinct locality, and fatherless babies to responsible papas, under the able direction of Mr. Hugh Darville, clerk to the justices, and Conservative political agent, of whom they will hear more who are willing to wade through the following pages. On other days of the week, Sunday more particularly, Saxonby was as stupid a place as can well be conceived ; and the only time when any excitement prevailed was when the county hounds passed through on their road to or from cover, or the roystering patrons of that great national sport wanted gruel and brandy-and-water for their horses and themselves.

Out of the market-place of this little country town of Saxonby there rode two persons, one Wednesday afternoon, towards the end of October, 185—. One was (*place aux dames !*) a young lady, of eighteen or twenty years of age, of great beauty of form. Her habit of dark blue was admirably fitted for the exhibition of every feminine grace, without any constraint. From her waist she moved with each caracole of her dark chestnut horse, who seemed proud of his burden ; and whose action, as it should be, was on the extremest limit of freedom, and yet within a moment's control of his graceful rider. Every market-cart that passed him on the descent stirred the warm current of his blood ; but the silken thread with which he was held seemed as potent as though he were spell-bound. The girl wore a man's hat, of a suitable shape, which gave a firmness and dignity to her pliant figure. Had she been in the middle of Rotten Row, instead of on the Market Hill of her own post town, she could not have been " mieux gantée " than she was. Her throat was piquantly collared, without being gentlemanly (a great difficulty, it would appear, if we may judge by our own experience), and her whole appearance had that finish which is essential at all times to the true gentlewoman, but more especially on horseback. She wore a half veil—that mysterious softener of asperities, or guardian of beauties, which forbids me to indulge at present in any lengthened description of her features. We can only say that the farmers stood aghast, as they met her in their market-day state, sobered by her presence ; and the smock-frocked yokels grinned from ear to ear as they touched their

long-napped broad-brims in involuntary homage to an irresistible "nescio quid," which they could not explain.

Her companion was older than herself by four or five years. He was very tall, very slight, not a remarkably fine figure, though rather a gentlemanly one on horseback. His dress was that of a country squire, consisting of Bedford-cord breeches and black polished boots, known by the name of butcher boots. His legs were eminently correct, being guiltless of what is called a calf; a characteristic which we may regard as a misfortune to any gentleman desirous of shining (about the legs) in the field. His upper person was clothed in an ordinary cutaway coat, buttoned over the chest. He carried a light hunting-whip, and rode a powerful but remarkably well-bred horse, as if the saddle were his natural element. His features were thin, his complexion clear, his hair and eyes in colour inclined to the Norman strain of blood; and without being what is called handsome, he was a good type of the English gentleman of the best school—the landed aristocracy. Such were Stafford and Evelyn Carrington, of Spring Vale Manor. They were followed by a well-mounted groom at a respectful distance.

"Well, Stafford, what was there doing at the Town Hall to-day? Who was there?"

"There's to be a contest, after all, for the county; and Sir Michael is not very well pleased at the opposition. Who do you think is the rival candidate?"

"Lord Skeffington, or that odious Mr. Briggs, the Chartist," said the girl with a laugh, evidently not regarding the opposition of the latter as of much importance. They had cleared the town, and were ascending the hill which led into the country on the road to Spring Vale. Her brother threw the reins on his horse's neck, and pulled out a cigar, which he proceeded to light.

"Some one even more odious than Mr. Briggs. What do you think of young Bradfield? Piece of impertinence!"

Evelyn Carrington opened her eyes, but did not immediately reply. Young Carrington proceeded. "Darville tells my father that the address will be out to-morrow. Why in the world doesn't he go to some of his manufacturing constituencies; it can only be done to put us to an additional expense. Besides, who the devil is Bradfield, that he should disturb the peace of a county?"

"His father's enormously rich; and after all it's better to have a man of education and a gentleman, than——"

"That's just the reason why my father will be so annoyed. If it had been Skeffington, or one of the old county families, they would have had some pretension. But a parvenu, a stocking-maker, a cotton-spinner, or whatever he calls himself!"

"Stafford, you're unjust. You know young Bradfield was one of the cleverest men in the university. I've heard you say how he distinguished himself; and——"

"Not very difficult to distinguish himself after six hours a-day hard reading; you seem rather interested in him."

"What nonsense you talk, Stafford. I've never seen him above half-a-dozen times in my life; and you know you quarrelled with me for a week, because I danced one quadrille with him at Lady Sarah's; I was almost the only person he knew in the room."

"Just what I said; a confounded snob, whom nobody knows, to come here and contest——! Upon my soul, I've no patience with the absurdity. Thank Heaven he's no chance."

"Thirty thousand a-year has a chance anywhere."

"Ah! that's just what the women always think."

The brother and sister were in a magnificent country. On the right were large undulating grass fields, with every fence well kept, and the land well stocked, and in the highest state of cultivation. About two miles from the road on that side was Sommerton, a large village, which had grown into almost a small town, under the fostering care of the Bradfields. In the middle of it stood the hall, a building of great pretension, magnificently furnished, with a library of almost European reputation, and adorned with pictures and works of art of every description. The village, the hall, and the estate bore the evident marks of great wealth. On the left side of the road ran the remnant of the Carrington Estate; it presented to the eyes of the young people a painful contrast to the other.

"Are you not going over these fields?" said Evelyn, pulling up her horse and pointing to a gate which led into a tempting sward. "We always have a canter here, as far as the canal; the hand-gates are always open."

"Certainly not; they belong to the Bradfields. Come

over here, Evelyn, if you want a gallop. I'm going to jump this horse over the fences on this side. He hasn't robbed us of that, at all events."

"Impossible; I can't get over that big bullfinch at the bottom; besides, if any one was to see me."

"Who is there to see you—the Darvilles? I don't suppose you care about them, or that fool Bradfield, botanising. However, I'm going just inside the fence parallel with the road; and as Johnson's behind, you can keep along the road."

Evelyn looked as if she felt that her brother was unjust; but she said nothing, and cantered quietly along, while she watched Stafford schooling his new horse over the fences towards the canal gate, which was to bring him once more into the road to Spring Vale.

The foregoing conversation does not exhibit Stafford Carrington in an amiable light; but if ever an excuse could be made for an exhibition of temper, surely his was the case in point. It is no slight matter to have to contest a county at all. The representation of it, with its attendance on committees when you should be hunting, the wakeful drowsiness of eloquent members at a time when the rest of the world is in bed, or playing a rubber, your dependence on others, and their expectations of your capability to befriend or assist them, a crown of thorns, which is continually twitting you with your greatness. When this honour is thrust upon one it is bad enough, when a sort of hereditary right, or a presumption of it (which is the same thing), forces you into the vacant seat, it is still a cushion stuffed with tenpenny nails, which defies ease or oblivion; but when you are likely to sweat bodily and mentally for the acquisition of it, and to be made to pay very heavily for *the habit* of being ill at ease, the first glimpse of such a state of things must produce some little irritability of temper. I think a strong substantial opposition in Tiverton would try the good temper of the premier himself. And this was exactly Sir Michael Carrington's case. The old gentleman, though impoverished, and with a curtailed estate, but unrestrained inclinations, had represented ——shire for thirty years. His father had done so before him; and it was fully intended that his son should succeed him. A Whig had not been known in

the family—not in any branch of it—since the days of George II., when they went over to the Hanoverians, as supporters of the monarchy, with as much matter-of-course indifference as they had hitherto supported the Stuarts. The Carringtons were, and always had been, Church, State, and King men, whatever form of Church, State, or King could only prove its claim by possession. Sir Michael always spoke of the county as his own, as naturally as he spoke of the remnant of the Carrington Estates. A Sir Michael Carrington had been standard-bearer to Richard I., in the Holy Land, and the family had lived in the shire ever since. The whole county concurred in believing the old Tory baronet to be the proper representative of its sentiments, and he good-humouredly shared his seat with a younger man, who did the hard work, and held precisely the same opinions as himself. Of late such men had been less easy to meet with than formerly; for the beautifully neat leathers and tops, which was his ordinary dress, were not much more out of date than the very extreme Conservatism which still marked the bucolic mind of ——shire. Everybody, therefore, must allow that an opposition at all was a most unheard-of and impertinent proceeding. Circumstances, I shall show, made it, from the quarter in which it arose, personally and doubly offensive.

When Stafford Carrington jumped back again into the road he had regained much of his usual serenity. The negotiation of a very stiff piece of timber in cold blood had produced a satisfactory result on him, and placed his new purchase uppermost in his mind. The man who can resist the appeal, at his time of life, must be naturally blest with a bad temper, and Stafford's was far from that.

"I hope you saw him jump, dear," said he, rejoining his sister, and reining up his horse, which ambled over the bridge in a state of excitement produced by his late exercise. How delighted my father will be! it's his last present,—be sure you make the most of it at dinner."

"I saw the fences; and how did you expect me to ride over such a place as those rails in the bottom of the hollow? Now a small gap I don't mind, when nobody's looking; and although Selim is a little hot, he never makes a mistake, do you, you beauty?" and the girl patted her horse, and followed her brother to the lodge gate, which opened upon Spring Vale Manor.

The village itself is one of the most beautiful in that part of England. The park attached to the manor, the seat of the Carrington family, is of great extent, beautifully wooded, and well watered by a large reservoir, whose banks were the resort of various kinds of water-fowl. It had a wild appearance, sedgy and osier-like at the extremities, forming a strong contrast with the cultivated look of the rest of the domain. At its limit, a mile from the house, ran the canal, which we have before mentioned; and which had been crossed by the riders; it had been judiciously planted out by firs and spruce, and its banks, which were steep and broken, presented to the eye patches of heather and gorse, a sure find, when the spinneys in the park had been tried in vain. As the brother and sister ascended the sloping road which led through the park to the house, the former thought of the power and influence he might have inherited, had the thousand of acres of rich pasturage, which he beheld around him, and which once were his grandfather's, been now his. There was nothing avaricious about this man's nature; and he was too indolent to be ambitious: but dark tales were afloat of the manner in which thousands had been alienated from the great Carrington Estate, and he could not forgive the present possessor of those acres the fact of being a parvenu.

The house stood in a commanding situation, more so than is usual with houses built about the time of Elizabeth. It was long and low, commanding the length of a terrace walk, from which descended, in a considerable slope, a lawn of great extent; studded here and there with rich trees of great rarity, and terminating in a smaller lake; which, as the equestrians approached, the autumnal sun was gilding with frosty rays. A wide carriage drive extended in front of the house, and passing along the terrace entered a magnificent avenue of limes, which led directly to the other lodge. This gate abutted on to the village near the top of the hill on which it stood. The church porch faced it, and the parsonage stood beyond and above it.

Returning to the bottom of the hill, with the old mouldering park wall on the right-hand side, and the labourers' cottages on the left, with their cheerful gardens, still full of autumn flowers, we come to the village

green. It lay upon the public road which led from Saxonby, and on which Stafford and Evelyn Carrington had been riding. The right-hand side of this green was occupied by a large farm-house, the residence of Farmer Leighton, the baronet's principal tenant; a stout handsome man, happy in his landlord and his daughters, and a good specimen of a ——shire yeoman. Crossing the road and facing the green was a large house, comparatively modern. The bricks appeared to blush for their temerity; there were, however, plenty of them to keep each other in countenance. Some handsome trees in the grounds, and a multiplicity of gable ends, bespoke size and pretension. It overlooked large grass fields on every side; and substantial paling which joined the brick walls of the garden announced "proprietorship," as plainly as if it had been written by a professional wall chalker. This was the house and property of Hugh Darville, Esq., Attorney at Law.

The village therefore consisted, it will be seen, of the squire, as Sir Michael Carrington was usually called; Mr. Darville, the lawyer, whose house of business was at Saxonby; the rector, the Rev. Walter Carrington, a nephew of Sir Michael, who lived as much at the hall as at the rectory; Farmer Leighton, and about three hundred labourers, tenants, small farmers, and little tradesmen, who belonged to the Carrington interest, body and soul, and who would not have thanked Mr. Ward Beecher, or any of his North American brethren, for any efforts at emancipation from their voluntary slavery. There was one more house we had nearly forgotten. Exactly opposite the upper lodge gate which opened upon the lime avenue was a road which led nowhere apparently. It terminated with a sharp pitch, and bending to the left disclosed a swing gate and a charmingly-sheltered cottage and lawn. It was below the southern slope of the churchyard. It was always in beautiful order and enjoyed a remarkable reputation as "The Spring Vale Cottage." It was occupied by a very old lady, the aunt of Sir Michael Carrington; the unmarried sister of his father.

Miss Philadelphia Carrington, or Aunt Philly, as she was called by her relatives, was a character, if ever there was one. At the time of which we are now speaking, she was eighty years old. She had never originally been a tall woman, as most of her family were; she was now nearly double, and so

round-backed as to be positively deformed. She had small sharp dark eyes, on which she wore spectacles when she did not wish to see or to be seen. At other times she laid her glasses aside and looked like a hawk. She had a small, well-shaped nose, somewhat hooked, and a sharp, well-defined chin. Her mouth was long and thin, but furnished frequently with formidable teeth. At other times they were to be seen by her side in a finger-glass of water. She wore a brown wig, with elf-like locks on each side, and a neat broad-bordered cap. She was always dressed in black silk, and wore, as her only ornament, a very massive gold chain. She had the reputation of being a shrewd, well-read, and remarkably honest woman, of most retentive memory and strong principles; eccentric to the last degree. Many feared her for herself; others flattered her for the sake of her nephew. She was remarkably just, and prided herself upon it. Consequently she escaped the distribution of petty alms to her neighbours, who could neither be said to want nor to deserve them. She was capable of making great exertions, physically and mentally; and was never so happy as in caustic denunciations of humbug. The villagers regarded her as all-powerful; something of a "witch." Had she been anything but a Carrington, fire and faggot would have been her portion.

CHAPTER II.

THE FAMILY CONCLAVE.

"Quand le corps se porte bien, le conseil est bon."

"Πολλῶν δ᾽ ἀγρομένων, τῷ πείσεαι ὅς κεν ἀρίστην
Βουλὴν βουλεύσῃ."—Hom., *Iliad*, i., v. 70.

"Dinner, my lady," said the butler, throwing open the door.

"Come, Aunt Philly;" and Sir Michael bent his long thin figure to raise the little old woman from her chair, who as-

sisted herself with a handsome malacca cane. The Rev. Walter Carrington offered his arm to his cousin Evelyn. Lady Carrington passed hers through that of Mr. Hugh Darville, and Stafford followed alone. It was a strictly family party; in fact, a council of war, at which the real actor was content to appear in a subordinate part. The man who pulls the strings is generally least visible, though the play cannot go on without him.

There can be no doubt that everyone in that room had his or her mind bent upon one subject. Neither the beauty of the apartment (and it was a handsome saloon, hung with furniture that had once been costly, and with pictures that still were valuable), nor the excellence of the dinner and wines, which was remarkable, attracted a moment's real attention, though they came in for their due portion of the conversation. Lady Carrington "never ate better fish than the man of Saxonby supplied," and Aunt Philly thought the "brown sherry nearly as good as her own;" a present from the Spanish ambassador when in London at the peace in 1815. It is an exceedingly difficult thing to go straight to the point, sometimes even when a whole family have determined upon thinking of nothing else; just as a child picks up all the stale, dry crumbs, before he comes to the well-buttered tit-bit of crust in the corner, or the Irishman tells you of every road in the county before he directs you by the one by which you should go. I suppose there is a certain refinement of delicacy in such reticence; a kind of practical euphemism, which would rather imply than pronounce a truth; *á fortiori*, if it be an unpleasant one.

So Stafford, by way of encouraging the party, went at once into horseflesh. It was seized upon with avidity, and well shaken, as if they had no better use for their teeth. "So you like your new horse, Stafford. Well, I'm glad of that. Jumped those rails out of Leighton's meadow; I've no doubt he did; those quarters are made for jumping."

"Indeed he did, Sir, most magnificently; I don't know who's been schooling him with the curb, but he gets his head up a little; one of the men, perhaps, with not the best hands in the world."

"Oh!" said Sir Michael; "he did so the day I rode him; but if you put your hands down, he always drops his head as he comes to the fence. However, ride him for a day or

two with a martingale on the curb-rein, and you'll have no trouble with him at all."

"Oh! papa dear, he jumps most beautifully. I wish you could have seen him," said Evelyn, becoming enthusiastic in the cause.

"And what became of you, Miss?" said the baronet.

"I stopped in the road, my dear papa; we couldn't afford to risk two necks at a time, you know."

"Then where had you been, Stafford," said his mother, "that you came home by the Saxonby road?" who began to rejoice that the conversation had taken a turn away from electioneering, having due regard to her husband's digestion.

"To Rutherford, mother; we found Skeffington and three or four men come down to begin the season. Mentmore was there; he's going to Newmarket to see his horses, and then he's coming here."

"By your invitation? It's a bad time to have him here."

"By his own, my dear mother. Flattering, was it not?" and Stafford Carrington, who did not conceive that they could have been honoured by anybody's company, smiled listlessly.

"What sort of a person is Lord Mentmore?" asked Miss Philadelphia, shooting out a sharp glance from her twinkling eyes.

"Mentmore, Aunt Philly?" said Stafford in reply, "the handsomest man in England."

"So was his grandfather, Sir, but not the wisest or the best;" rejoined the old lady, who had some piquant recollections of the early days of the Regency.

"Well! Mentmore's not the worst, aunt, at all events."

"I suppose he plays?"

"I never saw him. Indeed, I believe he hates the trouble."

"I hear he lost thirty thousand pounds last year, Sir, and that must have been ingenious in a gentleman who never plays." The old lady looked very astute, and took a sip of her favourite brown sherry. It was quite evident that she had made up her mind that Lord Mentmore was not the best companion for her nephew.

"Excuse me, Aunt Philly, but that's not so difficult

as you imagine. His commissioner managed it all for him."

"And what's a commissioner? He must be a very expensive addition to a gentleman's household."

"Mentmore backs his own horses; and if he were to lay against his own, and back other people's, with his information he might improve his account. They won't let him win till he does."

"I don't see that it makes much difference whether he gambles with dice or with horseflesh."

You see Aunt Philly's was a practical mind.

"Those are antiquated notions, Madam," said Sir Michael, who was suspected of having committed himself on the turf in his early days, and took a more lenient view of such matters than his aunt.

"I don't understand such things, Michael," said the aunt, "but the result seems to me much the same."

"The devil's not so black as he's painted," said Lady Carrington, who was a strong-minded woman. "I hear it was only ten thousand: what shall we do with him when we get him?"

"Send him out with the hounds four days a-week, and let him shoot the covers the other two."

"That's just what he's fit for, I suppose," said Miss Evelyn.

"You don't know him, Evelyn. However, we've not pheasants enough for more than one day, and the leaf's not off yet," said Stafford.

"Then send him out canvassing," said Mr. Darville, who had not taken much part in the conversation. "Lend him a good hack, Sir Michael, and make him useful as well as ornamental."

Canvassing! The ice was broken, and now the current was running freely. Everybody felt that the lawyer had hit the right nail on the head; it was their business to drive it home; and as soon as the dessert was on table, and the Rev. Walter had said grace, the company laid themselves out to their work, like hard-held horses beginning to feel their way.

The first thing they did was to proclaim war to the knife against the impertinent rebel who had dared to disturb the peace of the county. This meant the peace of a very ex-

cellent clique who formed the county. Nor was the violence of their anger directed more against the fact than against the individual. There might have been some excuse for the ambition of a man whose ancestors had had a stake in ——shire, or who were admitted to be of the same class as themselves. There might have been some excitement in breaking a lance with such an one. But there was no glory to be got by the defeat of a retired manufacturer, whose father bought the estate on which he lived, and who had added to it, at the expense of the Carringtons, every acre of valuable land by which it was surrounded. To be honest, there was not much to be said in favour of Mr. Bradfield, senior. He was cruel, purse-proud, and mean towards his inferiors; self-sufficient, even insolent, to his equals in position but inferiors in wealth; and cringing to the real aristocracy of the county, who tolerated a man whose enormous riches could make him inconvenient to them in a thousand ways. He had done well to put forward his son instead of himself; at least, nothing was known of Lawrence Bradfield which could add to the unpopularity of his father. His reputation was a university one, in which he had shone brilliantly. He was known as one of the first men of his year, and contemporary history affirms that he had improved his natural and acquired powers since his degree, by sedulous study of the laws and constitution of his country; facts which fitted him peculiarly for the honours to which he aspired, and which were likely to be attended with more success than the political consistency of a very worthy, but not strong-minded, baronet. Need we say that Mr. Bradfield, senior, had begun life as a violent Radical of the school over which self-interest predominates; he had slowly changed to a Whig, as more acceptable to the great persons with whom he was desirous of associating; and would in his son represent that moderate form of order combined with progression, which may be Liberal Conservatism or Conservative Liberality, according to the views of the popular assembly in which the professor's oratory is to take its airing. One thing was quite certain: he was not a Tory, either in himself or his son; and he was sure to meet with that amount of vituperation which fell to the lot of everybody, great or small, who did not believe in the doctrines of the Carrington charter. Sir Michael had been tried once with a contested election, and was at daggers

drawn for six months afterwards with a minority which numbered many personal friends. Nobody talked Whiggery before him or my lady, whatever they might feel.

"Darville, you know all about this: how did it happen?" said Lady Carrington. She had great faith in Darville. Not in his talents, but in his energy, and in his honesty. Sir Michael talked most to him, but my lady believed in him.

"Bradfield is pig-headed, that's the truth, and fancies slights where none are intended. That's the bottom of it. Perhaps his son's university success, and supposed talents, may have had something to do with it."

"Slights? why the fellow kills foxes," said Sir Michael, "and as an ex-master of the ——shire hounds, no man knew better than he the heinousness of such an offence, or was better prepared to punish it."

"I don't think that was his fault, papa dear; at least, Stafford said it was not; and he discharged his keeper as soon as he heard of it." If any oil was to be extracted for troubled waters from this family, it always came from the younger branches of it. Stafford, however, was in the present case incapable of ordinary justice.

"And there never is an atom of scent over his park. I never saw hounds run over it in my life," continued the baronet, without noticing his daughter's interruption. Whether that was an accident belonging to, or a consequent of, his political opinion, no one asked; indeed, no one doubted that it was the latter.

"Tom Leighton says hounds always ran over it in my grandfather's time," said the rector, who was well posted in foxes and scent, and knew every run in the county that had taken place during two generations, at least.

"That's quite a different thing, Walter; I dare say there were many things, then, in your grandfather's time, which you'll never see again," said Lady Carrington.

"And a great many things now that my poor brother never dreamt of. There's a school for the children, Sir, and a church, and a well drained village, and poor allotments, and ——," this was Miss Philly.

"And an institute, where they talked Radicalism, and teach the poor to despise the gentry. I always said steam would be the ruin of this country. When the new lines come we shan't be able to ride a mile after hounds without a check.

It is all this infernal manufacturing, and building over the country. He's made Sommerton a regular town," said the squire.

"Perhaps that's the reason hounds don't run over that country so well as formerly, Michael," suggested the old lady. "If we had done more for those people, we should have left less for them to do; and then we might have had it all our own way."

"Why, aunt?" said Lady Carrington, with a start.

"Why, aunt?" said Stafford, with a yawn.

"My dear Aunt Philly, what do you mean?" said the little Tory, with the red camellia in her hair.

"I mean, my dear, that if the old county families had done their duty when I was a girl, we shouldn't have had others doing it for us now I'm an old woman. I know they all think I'm cracked, Michael; but I'm not. The world goes on while I stand still, so I've more time to think than if I went with it."

"But, my dear Madam,—my dear Miss Carrington," roared Mr. Darville, "my excellent client, the late baronet, surely——"

"There, that will do—I'm not deaf to-night, it don't suit me. Everybody knows I'm a Carrington, and, as far as an old woman with one leg in the grave can be so, a stanch supporter of the family interest. I'm going canvassing for you, Michael, through thick and thin; but it's as well you should hear the truth sometimes."

Here the old lady took up her spectacles, and adjusted them for observation.

"I suppose Rutherford is all right this time, Darville."

"Yes; he's quarrelled with Lord Laneham, and he'd rather vote against his conscience than not spite him. I'm glad Stafford and his sister were over there to-day; did he say anything about his visit?" asked Brotherton.

"What did Rutherford say to-day, Stafford?"

"Said there were lots of foxes at all his pheasants."

"That's what he always does say: what about the election?"

"Nothing at all; I don't think he knows of the opposition."

"Indeed he does though," rejoined Darville; "I told him myself."

"How long have you known it, Sir?" shot out Aunt Philly.

"How long? Oh, well! known it? I've heard of it, Miss Philadelphia, two or three days. I couldn't help it."

"I hope you haven't helped it, Sir; I think you should have told my nephew instantly. Don't believe a word of it," added the old lady, with an aside which smote the remotest corner of the room.

Darville was a bad-tempered man; but his interest always prevented any breach between him and the Carringtons. His politics were unimpeachable, as well they might be; for he owed all he had to them, besides the occupation and advancement of nephews, nieces, and relations, without end. He was, however, agent, and transacted business in connection with the Sommerton Estate, for the Bradfields, which gave him a less strong position than he would otherwise have held. He bore the old lady's rudeness with moderately well-assumed calm. He was strong in something—either his own integrity or Sir Michael's favour.

"How is the register, Darville? what shall we win by?"

"You by seven hundred, Spence by three."

"Is that a certainty?" inquired Sir Michael again; "what should we do in case of accidents?—fellows will turn round, nowadays, when you least expect it."

"In case of accidents, which are almost impossible," rejoined the lawyer, "we should sacrifice Spence."

"Pleasant for Colonel Spence," said Stafford Carrington; "but a stop-gap is not of much good, unless you can throw him away when you've done with him. He'd feel flattered if he heard Mr. Darville's suggestion."

"What will the Crackborough party do?"

"They'll write to you to say that their tenants will not be interfered with, and that you are at liberty to canvass them; and they'll order Manks to go round the week before, and give them due notice of old Crackborough's preference for tenants who think as their landlord."

"I suppose Packington is dead against us?" asked Stafford.

"Indeed he's nothing of the sort. He's quite sure to be with us."

"Why? He owes Bradfield a lot of money, and I know

he got his brother a good appointment in Manchester, in the Stamps and Taxes, or something of that sort."

"He's got all he can get out of the Bradfields, and he knows there's nothing more to come; so he'll try your party now. The Whigs regard him as safe."

"What a pretty blackguard he must be," said young Carrington; "we should be quite as well without him."

"He can command about thirty votes, so it won't do to be particular."

"What do you think about the Suttons—they're doubtful?" asked Lady Carrington.

"They were; but you left them out of your archery meeting last summer, my lady; and I'm told they haven't forgotten it, and won't forgive it."

"Of course I left them out—so I did some hundreds of others. You know it was a small party made for Lady Sarah and the Duchess; we might as well have asked the Bradfields themselves," replied Lady Carrington.

"The rest could afford to be left out, but the Suttons could not. They were just struggling into society with the old woman's diamonds and the sun's stud at Melton, and——"

"Yes; and have rechristened their lawn and shrubberies Nuneham Place."

"They were just coming to the surface, my dear," said the old lady, "and you shoved them under again. Unfortunately you can't drown them outright, so you should have given them a helping hand."

"I was wrong, Aunt Philly," said Lady Carrington. "I made a mistake like the woman in the shop at Leamington, who was desired by Miss Sutton to send a parcel for her to Nuneham Place. The girl, innocently enough, said, 'What number, please, Miss?' for which inadvertency the custom was withdrawn."

"If my nephew is to represent the county, you must represent your half of it, Lady Carrington; and I think you will be quite as much bored at home as Michael at St. Stephen's."

"How's Doddington, Gorsefield, and round about Chessington? I hear that Bradfield has been buying property there with a view to building and smelting."

"It won't do—there's no railway sufficiently near; be-

sides, the squire at Doddington votes at Chessington in right of the kennels, so he'd be safe to go with you."

"I'm afraid you'll have the Dissenters against you. Growler's a regular firebrand, and he's always talking about Walter as an absentee and a pluralist, and wondering why the work of so important a parish is to be neglected. In fact, that country," added Mr. Darville, "is not what it used to be."

"But Walter has a curate there, who has established night-schools, and reading-clubs, and worsted-stocking subscriptions, and a Dorcas, and all those sorts of things," said Lady Carrington, "and his greatest amusement is coursing, which seems to me to be a very harmless amusement, except for the poor hares."

"That's the reason the Dissenters are so angry," said Darville. "Young Fairchild has beat Growler at his own game. They like a fellow that hunts and shoots a bit; and leaves the people to them."

"Then you'd better send Walter Carrington there, and have the curate here to help Evelyn and me, with the old women," said Miss Philly, who was determined to be equally pleasant all round. Indeed, whether it was that the family spirits were soured by the contemplated opposition, or, that the weather was against charitable feelings, the conversation had taken a turn which appeared to unite them all in hostility to everybody else. If the impression upon the reader is bad, we regret that he should see a very amiable family at an unamiable time; and only hope, for their sake, that he has been placed in the same circumstances himself. It is right to speak well of our enemies, but religion and politics are exceptional cases, in which all one's charity is wanted for the support of one's friends. The Bishop of O——, when he recommends to his clergy an uncompromising distinction between that of the Church and all other creeds, has seen necessary to add an injunction to avoid giving offence. Perhaps the right reverend divine will explain this difference between precept and practice, and carry the latter into the intricacies of a county election.

"Do you know young Bradfield, Stafford?" said his mother after a pause, while the wine was being placed on the table, and handed round by the brown-wigged and gouty old gentleman who called himself "the butler."

"I know him by sight, that is, I did when he was up at Christ Church," replied young Carrington, when thus appealed to. "But Evelyn knows him better than I do." This was said with a smile; but smiles vary, and this carried with it a trifle of badinage. Lady Carrington and Aunt Philly looked up at once. "What sort of a person is he, Evelyn?"

"Tall, fair, rather good looking, and evidently a very clever man," said the young lady without hesitation, but with heightened colour. "I have met him a few times during the last season; but mamma knows as much of him as I do, only she doesn't dance."

"What was he like when you knew him at Oxford?" demanded the great aunt.

"Very slow; but you know he wasn't in my set."

"I presume not; was he a clever man?"

"He got a good first; but I shouldn't think he would set the Thames on fire."

"Nor the college, Sir, as I'm told you and Lord Skeffington very nearly did between you."

"Skeffington had more to do with water than fire, aunt. It was he who put the pink on to the mercury during a frost and broke the ice all round."

"For which he was sent away, and you were rusticated, I believe, Sir."

"We thought it rather hard though, especially after his excuse about the fine arts, and the colouring of the antique, to say nothing of an execrable pun about putting the mercury into water colours, which the dean capped by something worse, to the effect that they had long had their mercury in lake, and were perfectly satisfied with it as it was."

"Will he fight, Stafford?" asked the old man.

"If he begins, he will; but I should think it was sorely against the grain; he's much more given to hard study than to hard fighting."

"I think he's had nothing to do with this himself: it's his father, and Crackborough's at the bottom of the whole affair. Darville, what are you drinking?"

"Sherry, Sir Michael. They have stopped the port."

"Gout? that's bad;" and the baronet sighed to see a lawyer with the gout, which in former days could not be

earned by everybody; and was hereditary only with those who had grandfathers.

"What is the first thing to be done, Darville? the address will be out to-morrow."

"Most probably, Sir Michael. Then we must have yours, and you must be off to Saxonby; we'll have the 'Lion' as usual; and you must give us a speech next market day. The Church is a capital watchword, because they all think they understand that, and that flatters them; colonial self-government is another, because none of them understand that, and that is flattering to you. Say a good deal about cheap bread, meaning cheap labour, which between ourselves it does not mean, and the injustice of the income tax; and blow up the French Emperor, he's very unpopular just now, on the score of additional expenses; and be sure to finish with some allusion to fox-hunting; the farmers like that; it has a liberal sound, and costs nothing."

"And what will Bradfield go for, do you suppose?" asked Sir Michael, of his legal adviser and political tutor.

"He'll go for the education of the poor on scientific principles, which won't suit the farmers, who have no idea of seeing the people better educated than themselves, especially when they're asked to pay for it. Of course he'll be of the peace party, which he'll wish to obtain by alliance, and you by war. I don't suppose he's fool enough to talk about the ballot; but you've nothing to do but to say it's un-English, and that, if it were not, it wouldn't answer the end proposed."

Sir Michael had long been in leading-strings. On all social questions he submitted implicity to Lady Carrington; in politics Mr. Darville had not only managed his entire business for him, but had presented him septennially, or whenever there was a dissolution, with a creed ready cut and dried. So that he was not more the exponent of the doctrines of a party, than of those sentiments which were likely to attract the majority of the landowners, and cultivators of the soil of ——shire. It would have been quite sufficient to have known that the manufacturing interest advocated a principle of right, for the worthy squire of Spring Vale to have raised his standard in favour of wrong. He was honest, proud, prejudiced, and a thoroughly good man. But his convictions were purely based upon externals, and,

though frequently in accordance with right, were almost entirely the offspring of prejudice or pressure.

The discussion we have heard at the family conclave was one of many which had taken place, and which might have taken place, whenever an opposition was talked of, had it been three times a week. A farmer, a glorious half-educated, drab-breeched, and top-booted agriculturist, was a sort of household god which had its favourite niche in Spring Vale Manor; he could do no wrong, excepting by riding over a hound; to be a farmer, like Horace's philosopher, was to be a king. On the other hand, if the agricultural interests had got it into their head that the county was made for them, and if long use and gentle titillation had persuaded them of the fact, the last few years had seen a totally opposite faction usurp a situation to which their antecedents had given them no claim. It was not in their case the growth of intelligence but that of wealth, which from time to time gave signs of a revolutionary action, and which it was hoped might break forth into open opposition to the reigning powers. These innovators had in many cases bought up the estates of needy noblemen and gentlemen, and had made no secret of their hostility. The Earl of Crackborough, an hereditary Whig, who had long lived in hopeless despondency, in amity with his fellows, was the great patron of this division. His interest and property were great in the county; he had the character of a generous man, which he did not deserve. He saw an opening at the present time, and proceeded to select a cat's-paw to do his work. Had he started his own son or nephew, there would have been some growlings, a fight, and a renewal of former friendships; but the body of new men, who had lately crept into the county, were barely noticed by the aristocracy; and Bradfield, notwithstanding many advantages, was one of the least popular of his class. Certain reasons, connected with the property he had acquired, had tended to make him particularly obnoxious to the enmity of the Carringtons, and by consequence to that of many other of the county families. His notions were extreme, even for his own party; his private character was unamiable, his ostentation absurd, and his meanness and ill-temper remarkable. The Earl of Crackborough had made a mistake, and soon he knew it.

It was the fashion in Sir Michael's house for the ladies to

sit after dinner a considerable time, indeed as long as the men. Lady Carrington liked wine in moderation, and she liked men, much better than her own sex. Besides this, she usually managed to quarrel with her aunt, or fall asleep with her daughter, so that on strictly private occasions the table rose together. They were about to do so now, when a servant entered the room and presented a card. Sir Michael read aloud, "'Mr. Bradfield, Sommerton Hall.' Where is he?"

"In the library."

"Then make the fire up, and put a lamp into the room. Say I will be there in a minute or two."

"What's the meaning of this, Darville?"

"Let me see him for you, Sir Michael," said Darville, who seemed nervously alive to some *contretemps* in the meeting of his two clients. "Some compromise perhaps, some offer to make an arrangement, probably."

"Arrangement indeed; a d——d scoundrel who comes here to rob me of my seat, or of several thousand pounds. No, no, Darville, I'll go myself. You can't help your client's impertinence, I know: but I'll go myself, and if I want you I will send for you. You'd better go to my lady and talk the matter over with her."

The baronet rang the bell and proceeded to the library without more ado.

CHAPTER III.

MR. BRADFIELD'S PROPOSAL.

"Dem Entschlossenen ist nichts unmöglich."—*Germ. Prov.*

MR. BRADFIELD, sen., was shown into the library, as Sir Michael had been told; and in a few minutes the servant had made a bright cheerful blaze, and placed a lamp upon the table. The room was remarkable for its size, and the beauty of the richly-carved old oaken panels with which it was surrounded. The single lamp did but little towards lighting it, and the fitful gleams of the bright wood-fire

gave it a vivid and gloomy appearance. There was something inexpressibly grand not only in its proportions, but in its colour; half light always impresses us with solemnity, and solemnity with a sense of age. Spring Vale Manor House was one of the most beautiful in the Midland counties. A part of it had been built in the reign of Henry VII., and no portion of it was more modern than the time of his granddaughter Elizabeth. On one side of the room in question were four long and deep oriel windows looking to the lawn, on the opposite side were handsome bookshelves at intervals, separated from each other by elaborately carved panels. At each end was an open and beautifully-sculptured chimney-piece, from one of which the gigantic half-burnt log, newly stirred by the servant, emitted its fitful sparks. The ceiling was highly enriched with scrollwork, towards which the spiral circles of the bookshelves pointed; and on the panels, between the bookcases, were the grim warriors of the middle ages, the loosely robed statesmen of the Stuarts, a poet of the reign of Anne, and a scarlet-coated truncheoned general of the time of George III. Such was the character of the room in which Mr. Abel Bradfield found himself, with one lamp, awaiting the coming of Sir Michael Carrington. He had a few minutes to himself, and it is not astonishing that his mind took that turn with which the externals of the place impressed his senses.

Now what sort of a person was Abel Bradfield? Had he been of an imaginative turn of mind, in those few minutes he might have peopled that room with the shadowy outlines of an age long past. The rebellious baron of feudal times would not have been misplaced at the head of his retainers, rousing their passions, or inflaming their appetites with the incentive to rude intemperance. It was a room of solemn state for the deliberations of a monarch, for the cruelties of an Inquisition, for the condemnation of a traitor, for the very execution itself of the condemned. There the ear of fancy might have drunk in the sounds of barbarous revelry, of chivalrous determination, of political sagacity. The solemn hymns, the forbidden ritual of the first martyrs, might well have floated through those groined arches, or the spiritual world have sent back the troubled and wandering manes to haunt the scenes of unassoilzed guilt. In fact there was nothing of the grand, the terrible, or the mysterious which

might not have been connected with the room, and the time; there was nothing of light, of cheerful, and of commonplace, that seemed capable of any connection with it.

But Abel Bradfield was neither a poet, nor an historian, nor an antiquary. Taste he affeeted, refinement he affected, but he had neither. He was a purse-proud, dissatisfied tradesman, in all but the name, and though he might have talked of these things, he never felt them. When therefore he looked at the room and the books and the pietures, he felt envious of their possessor. "Curse this man," said he to himself, "why cannot I have these things—have them? I will have them; what money can buy, I can buy." At the same time he saw that though Sommerton had cost thousands more than Sir Michael had in his whole estate, there was nothing like the library at Spring Vale Manor. There was one thing he could not have; and, strange to say, for a strong-minded, practieal, business-like man, the want stirred him eruelly. It seems odd enough to you or to me that sueh a man could have felt the absence of what could apparently have been of no praetieal use to him. It seems almost childish. Yet as he looked round the room he coveted really nothing but those grim warriors, those statesmen, that poet, and field marèchal with his bâton. He knew he could buy everything else, but he could not buy them. If Spring Vale Manor itself belonged to him to-morrow, with everything in it, as it stood, those pietures would still be the possessions of an age and a name with which the Bradfields had had nothing to do.

What a strange thing this is—this family pride! this love of ancestry! and with this man it was a ruling passion. He knew he might have been great, had he not been mean; his son probably would be so. He might have been good, or learned, or aeeomplished, *Sapiens et Rex;* he was wealthy; he might have everything that money eould proeure; but neither he nor his son eould be noble. It was a sore point with him. He could persuade others of almost anything, even of his high birth; but he could not persuade himself of it. Whenee this desire in men of no weakness? probably from its very inaeeessibility. Wealth eould proeure him everything! but he never could be a Carrington. It soured his disposition. Although the pretension to high birth in those who have it not is despicable, it holds a high rank in

the qualifications of those who really possess it. They are frequently and strongly impressed by it; and when higher motives are deficient it has been known to exercise a great and good influence. For the highly-born we should be sorry to see it despised, to the lowly we recommend the cultivation of a better principle of action. Abel Bradfield's thoughts had taken a shorter cut, and a different one, to our discussion, and in the midst of his reverie the baronet entered the room.

These two men stood face to face, and as Sir Michael advanced towards the fireplace, near which his neighbour was standing, this chill October evening, the most casual observer might have remarked the difference between them. They were types of two classes, wide asunder at that period; and they were as wide asunder as the two types could be. Both had their faults, but there was scarcely a virtue or vice which belonged to them in common.

Sir Michael Carrington was very tall and thin; he stooped more than slightly, from the neck, not from the shoulders, which were straight and flat. His face wore the stamp of high breeding; the features were thin and delicate; the eyes grey, with strong, dark brows and long lashes; the mouth set, and rather obstinate; the nose large, but the nostrils long and handsome; the forehead high, but narrow; and the hair covering the head, but straight and grey; complexion sanguine and clear, as of one much given to the open air; his hands a little coarse for a man of such palpably high breeding, probably from field sports, as they were said to be the finest on a young horse that England had ever produced. He was plainly dressed in black, and wore short breeches and black silk stockings. He had not yet begun trousers, either night or day.

Abel Bradfield was a tall man too, but not so tall, upright as he stood, as the baronet with his stoop. He had come from Sommerton without those graces of the toilette in which Sir Michael had risen from the dinner table. He was dressed in a plain frock coat, coloured trousers, and ordinary boots; he wore a coloured neckcloth, and his coat was buttoned at the top, but opened below, where an old-fashioned watch-ribbon and seals were manifest. His face was hard and flat; his features straight, and, though they

were well shaped, his eyes had a wasted-out appearance, and looked cruel. He was closely shaven and cropped, and his face was without a particle of colour. Under ordinary circumstances, he looked like a wealthy man of the middle class, sufficiently conscious of his own powers ; at present he was the picture of well-feigned humility. He might have been any age from forty to sixty. He was nearer the latter. He was standing when Sir Michael entered the room.

"To what am I to attribute the honour of this visit?" said the baronet ; and, as he spoke, he continued to advance towards the table, on which he placed a small silver candlestick, without extinguishing it, or making any movement towards taking a seat. We regret to add, for the honour of Sir Michael's hospitality, that he forgot to offer one to his guest, too.

"I could not help feeling, Sir Michael," replied the other, looking, not down, nor up, but right away over the baronet's shoulder, "that this movement on our part, of which you must have heard to-day, at Saxonby, must have an—an—unfriendly, a—a—hostile appearance on our part, which it is far from my desire that it should assume." Here the speaker ventured to look at his companion, but he saw nothing in the hardly-restrained temper (for such it was) of Sir Michael to encourage him to proceed. He wisely waited.

"I should be glad to know whom you mean to include in your party before I acknowledge any opponent but yourself, Sir." Sir Michael literally shook with suppressed indignation, and his thin lips closed tightly as his nostrils expanded.

"Let me assure you, Sir Michael, that I have intruded upon you at this time, that I might seize the first opportunity of stating my regret at being the cause of personal inconvenience."

Sir Michael regarded the ex-manufacturer with a contempt scarcely to be expressed. "What! fight the battle with such a cur?" thought he, "upon the terms I would have fought it with the Crackboroughs, or Packington, or Glanville, or any of the old Whig families."

"I don't know what Mr. Bradfield,"—here he looked at the card he held in his hand, as if he could not recall the

name of so insignificant a person without it—"what Mr. Bradfield may consider personal inconvenience, but such regrets are no answer to my question."

"Of course I am aware that the sentiments of the county have been frequently expressed, and so ably represented in the person of your own family, Sir Michael, but times are a little changed. Excuse me for the—the—suggestion; and —and—there is a party——"

"Yes, Sir, there is a party," struck in the baronet, carried beyond all bounds by the recollection of the personal inconvenience hinted at, and by the fawning sycophancy of his opponent, "there is a party, which would never have moved in the matter, but for the meddling interference of other persons, who can have no object in view but the setting a county in flames to gratify their own vanity. The principles you advocate have no sort of claim upon the gentlemen of——shire. They've been tried before. There was some triumph in contesting it with Packington or Glanville, but it doesn't appear that either of these gentlemen is disposed to risk the peace of the county for the sake of putting the Conservatives to a useless expense."

During this speech, which was delivered volubly enough, but with occasional hesitation, caused by the violence of the baronet's anger, Abel Bradfield dropped his eyes and bit his lip sharply. But if it be true that self-restraint is the mark of high breeding, certainly the manufacturer had the best of the blood. In truth, at no time was Sir Michael accustomed to restrain himself. He was not naturally a violent person; in his home he was always a perfect gentleman; his patience and determination with a young horse were exemplary; but he blew up his field in fine old-fashioned language when he was master of the ——shire hounds; he exacted implicit obedience from his tenants, and cursed and swore with a heartiness worthy of the old school at anybody that thwarted him. Sir Michael had neither the dignity of a great man, nor the patience of a good one; but he had his virtues, and one of them was openness, and another courage. Had the squire of Sommerton resented the insolence of the baronet of Spring Vale Manor, it is probable that he might have excited less antipathy than fell to his lot. His Christian

patience was sadly belied; and as he turned the other cheek the baronet did not hesitate to smite it.

"Sir Michael, I am, indeed, anxious that, as neighbours, no ill-feeling should exist between us."

"D—— his impudence," muttered Sir Michael.

"I have, therefore, ventured out to-night, trusting that a few minutes' conversation might perhaps give me a closer insight into your feelings on this subject. With your great experience of county politics, and the influential position you and your family have held for so many generations, is there nothing that you, Sir Michael, would venture to suggest, which would satisfy the—the—reasonable demands of—of—well—a very large party?"

"I don't understand you, Sir; and am as far from the object of your visit as when I first came into the room." The baronet had assumed a dogged appearance of injury in lieu of his suppressed passion, which sat well upon him; he threw himself into a chair on one side of the fireplace and motioned to Abel Bradfield to do the same.

"Has no sort of compromise ever occurred to you, Sir Michael, as possible? It is far from my wish to be at enmity with a near neighbour; and if, by any means——"

"None whatever, Sir. Colonel Spence deserves——"

"Colonel Spence, my dear Sir? Nothing could be further from my intention than to propose anything derogatory to a man of his position; but if it were possible —second thoughts are often best—and if by our retirement I could prove to you my wish to—to—to——" The rest of the sentence stuck in the throat of the manufacturer, for what with the scheme which he had in view, and his apprehension of offending his own friends, and the Earl of Crackborough, he was beginning to doubt the feasibility of his intentions.

"Retirement?" The baronet hardly knew what to make of this suggestion; it was so utterly unlike himself, or his conception of anything that could have happened under the circumstances; and although he hated the man cordially, he was fully alive to the fact of saving some thousands, which he could very ill afford. "Retirement? That's quite another matter. I was at a loss to understand the reason of an opposition. It must be very clear that the chances of success——"

"We'll not enter upon that subject, Sir Michael. The last thing I should wish would be to place myself in antagonism to the general feeling of the neighbourhood; and certainly the hope of saving you from personal anxiety will add to the inducement to retire from the position with which I was to be honoured in the person of my son."

"Mr. Bradfield, it would be absurd to pretend that this contest was of no importance to the Conservative interest; every man has a right to his own opinions. For your personal expressions of regard I ought to be much obliged, and——"

"I trust, Sir Michael, that the unfortunate circumstances which——"

"That's a painful subject, Sir, and the less said about it the better. You must not be surprised that circumstances make it difficult to forget that a stranger has usurped the property which belonged to this family since the days of Henry VIII.;" and Sir Michael flushed with the painful remembrance of the facts, of which every walk, every ride, nay, every prospect from the windows of his house reminded him. Bradfield affected deep feeling of sympathy.

Both were silent for a few moments. Sir Michael was about to rise, when Bradfield rejoined, fixing his eyes on the ground, and speaking with considerable hesitation—"If I might venture without offence, accident has—yes, accident, Sir Michael, has put me in possession—circumstances have arisen which might smooth the difficulties under which the question of your property lies." There was so much embarrassment in the speaker's manner, as well as his words, that none but a person conversant with the circumstances could have understood him.

"You speak in enigmas, Mr. Bradfield."

"Hear me with patience, Sir. I feel the difficulties of my position in regard to yourself; yet there are families of rank in this county, as well as in many others, in which the manufacturing interest, the representatives of the commercial powers of England, are regarded as almost on a footing—yes, Sir Michael—on a footing with the great agricultural interests of the country."

"That, Sir, is a matter of opinion, at all events;" and the baronet drew himself up to his full height.

"The late Sir Robert Peel——"

"Was a deserter from the ranks of those who had pushed him into place and supported him in it. But I don't see the drift of your remarks."

"I have then, to be brief, I have, Sir Michael," aud here agaiu the parvenu stopped, but seeing nothing very threatening in Sir Michael's face, he resumed, looking straight over his shoulder. "I have a son, aud you——"

"Yes, Sir, I have a son too, who, I hope, will represent this county, Mr. Bradfield, wheu you and I are at rest." The good temper of the tone which the barouet had assumed since his expectation of a contest was diminished, eucouraged him to proceed.

"I was not going to say that; I would have said a daughter, Sir Michael."

"Then allow me to state that the coupling of the two names together is, whatever others may think, a gross insult, and I am surprised that you should have come to my own house to offer it." Sir Michael walked towards the bell which he rang violently. "No, Sir, I couldn't purchase the peace of England at such a compromise of personal self-respect. Of your son I know nothing; but if he came here as a pauper to-morrow to ask for my daughter, and she was again the coheiress to every acre of land which your father and you have pillaged from the Carrington property, I would rather have received him as her suitor than as the son and heir of Abel Bradfield. Mr. Bradfield's carriage, Simpson; has my lady rung for tea?"

"Yes, Sir Michael."

"Then I'll wish Mr. Bradfield a good-eveuing."

Simpson stood respectfully at the door, whilst his master walked steadily but quickly out, leaving his late guest in the full enjoyment of the Spring Vale library.

We have said that the manufacturer was not a good-tempered man. Had he been so he might have been forgiven for an outbreak; he was however too much surprised to reply before Sir Michael was gone, and as he followed the servant to the hall door a saturnine sneer was all that betrayed his indignation, as he mutterd to himself, "I cau afford to laugh; let those laugh that win; that last speech has cost you a good five thousand, my haughty friend, and

your daughter thirty thousand a year. I suppose you can afford it."

The servant stood at the carriage door while Mr. Abel Bradfield finished his soliloquy. "Where to, Sir?" said the man.

"Home, Sir, to Sommerton—where the devil should I go to from here?"

"Papa dear," said Evelyn Carrington, as her father entered the room, "your tea's almost cold; I've rung for some more."

"Thank you, my dear, no tea, I don't want any tea," and the baronet walked straight to the fireplace at once. "Darville."

"Sir Michael."

"Do you know what that infernal cur, Mr. Bradfield, wanted here to-night?"

"Probably to ascertain his chance of success by visiting the head-quarters of the enemy. Perhaps to make some proposal. But that's out of rule; he should have applied to me, as your agent——"

"He's not only a rogue, but a coward; have as little to do with him as possible, Darville."

"I see but little of him, Sir Michael, excepting in the way of business; we lawyers are open to all calls upon our time, and you know I never talk politics, except at a general election, and then all on one side."

"Now, my lady, won't your aunt have her rubber? Walter, you and Stafford must make up the table to-night. I want to talk to Darville. Aunt Philly, you must take Stafford instead of me." Saying which the squire walked out of the room followed by Darville.

Lady Carrington looked up from her cards at her son. "I wonder what that man wanted here to-night; your father's put out about something."

"Not very surprising, mother. It's the first time any one of that family ever set foot in the Manor House, I should think (that's the trick and two by honours)."

"Not quite the first, Stafford, unluckily for you," said Aunt Philly, showing her suit, and leading a trump.

"I should think my father, by the look of him, intends it to be the last, at all events. Your lead, Walter."

"Nobody knows what he may do, with Darville at his

elbow," rejoined the old lady; "I can't trust him, Sir; I have a great horror of lawyers generally, and when they tack 'honest' to their name, I despair of them altogether. I can't believe in honest Hugh Darville not being a rogue. 'There is a modest backwardness in virtue to expose her naked beauties; it's the harlot vice who endeavours to set off her charms to attract men's applause.' That was written by Mr. Fielding, my dear," added the old lady, seeing her grand-niece's look of astonishment; it's "too naughty a book to be read nowadays, but it has more good in it than all the modern novels put together." Here the rubber finished. "What have we won, Stafford?"

"A double, single, and the rub, five points; I'll settle with my mother."

"Do so; I'll take tithe of the rector. My dear, ring the bell. I'm sure my maid's come," and the old lady shouldered her crutch.

"Surely you'll have the pony chaise, aunt. They've got it ready."

"No, my dear, I'm much safer on foot; my woman is better than any pony in the world."

"But it takes you so long to walk. The pony is best; you shall drive."

"No, Evelyn, I tell you. I've a stick in one hand, and an honest patient old ass in the other, and that's enough for me. Good-night."

The eccentric old lady rose as she spoke, hobbled slowly to the door with the assistance of her grand-nephew Walter, who offered in vain to see her and her maid to their cottage, and took her way down the avenue. The rector remained to smoke a cigar with his Cousin Stafford.

When Abel Bradfield arrived at Sommerton things were all at sixes and sevens. Mrs. Bradfield had retired to her room. Lawrence was not indoors, had gone out to smoke a cigar, and Ellen Bradfield sat alone at the tea table ready to receive her father. Ellen was the only person towards whom he never exhibited violent temper Mrs Bradfield had for years given way—she was accustomed to bend to fitful blasts of her husband's ill-humour as the only means of leading a quiet and peaceful life. Poor woman! it was just what she was fitted for. She was a kind-hearted, affectionate, sweet-tempered little woman, with

quite sense enough to see the results of opposition; and from the earliest days of married life had always avoided the storm. When she knew it must come, she usually went to bed.

Laurence Bradfield was not equally pacific, for he liked his own way, and usually contrived to have it. But he never descended to the indignity of a personal quarrel. The storm which blew over his mother, appeared to blow all round him and leave him standing without scathe in the midst of it all. It certainly was very provoking to see his patent superiority, and yet to know that he felt none; that it was as much an accident of his nature, as lying to a Yankee, or cruelty to a Russian. While all the world were astonished at it, he did not himself appear to be the least aware of it. Yet it had all the consequences to his opponent of a violent and unsuccessful struggle; it usually sent him away howling or skulking to his own den. Abel Bradfield admired his son without loving him; possibly Laurence loved his father without respecting him. He was not by any means naturally a good temper, but he had arrived at such a thorough command of himself, as to be nearly unamiable from his want of sympathy with an almost universal failing.

The ill-humour in which Mr. Bradfield indulged was of the vulgarest and coarsest kind. It was perfectly undiscriminating as to time, place or person, with some few exceptions. His daughter was one; and she shared the distinction with all men of superior rank to himself. Abel Bradfield was afraid of rank: he had never been accustomed to it. He was neither a public-school nor university man; and though he had been accustomed to wealth and talent, and had rubbed shoulders with many men and minds, he was afraid essentially of a well-born gentleman. Could he only have kept a small, the very smallest of Irish lords as his household god, he would have been temperate in all his sayings, and thoroughly subdued.

As he passed from his carriage to the drawing-room door, it was already manifest that something had gone wrong.

"The lamps never do burn here—everybody else can have his lamps bright enough. Whose business is it to see to the lamps?"

"The oil, Sir, is newly come in, and——" began the footman, in the most obsequious of voices.

"D—— the oil; whose business is it to see to the lamps?"

"Mine; and Williams, Sir, looks after them."

"You and Williams! Then you ean go for your wages to Mr. Compton to-morrow. Where's your mistress?" and, without waiting for a reply, he walked straight to the drawing-room door.

"And so——" began Mr. Bradfield, in a tone of voice evidently meant for his wife; when seeing Ellen alone in the room, he immediately arrested himself, and said, "My dear Ellen, is that you? What's become of your mother?"

"I heard the earriage—here's your tea, papa. I kept you a cup, as both mamma and Laurence have finished some time."

The young lady raised one of the most beautiful faecs possible as she said these words, and resumed her book, which had been interrupted by her father's sudden entranee. He sat down on a sofa at some distanee, and took up a periodieal and a paper-knife.

"What time did Laurence arrive?" said he, after a few minutes' pause.

"Just after you started. He had been detained at his club on business, and eould not get down to dinner."

"What business eould Laurenee have at his club, when I wanted him here?"

"He might have a great deal, pa dear; I believe he was with his friend Cartwright, who wanted an introduetion to Laurenee's publishers—he's bringing out a book on Poland. Another eup of tea, papa?"

All this was said in a distinet, measured tone, with a determination not to see that her father was annoyed, though no one was quieker than Ellen in detecting it. Like most women, she had a quiek apprehension, and, like fewer, an exeellent judgment in making the most of it.

"I wish he was less with his publishing friends than he is. His position in the eounty ought to be of more importanee to him than all the Poles put together. What the devil ean it signify to us whether there's a Pole more or a Pole less in the world?"

"But, papa dear, I suppose it signifies whether the cruelties practised against them are a disgrace to a civilised era or not. Besides, they are people of higher intelligence than their masters, and it seems extraordinary that they should not have found friends enough to maintain their independence."

"Higher intelligence ought to be able to maintain its own."

"They might be of greater use to England than at present by a more extensive importation of our manufactures."

Bradfield, indignant as he still felt, was beginning to soften under the influence of his daughter's imperturbability.

"You know, papa, Laurence has interested himself very much in the question. He has written an article or two on the subject in the 'Continental Magazine,' and holds some peculiar views of his own about the freedom of Poland."

"I should becurious to know what his views upon any subject are."

"Well, he says Poland always has been governed by the women, and the women by the priests; and he says I ought to have been a Pole."

"I don't see it," said her father, who shut his periodical and looked at his daughter, who raised the handsomest blue eyes in England to his face as she replied,

"Because I manage everybody, and make them do as I like, excepting Mr. Scarsdale, the new curate of Sommerton, and he manages me."

This was said with an openness of brow and an evenness of expression which boded badly for Scarsdale, if he had the remotest ideas of anything beyond ordinary friendship; nevertheless her father's brow darkened at once. As he gloomily resumed his book, the door opened, and Laurence Bradfield entered the room. Ellen retired.

Perhaps no two persons, having any resemblance, were less alike than the father and the son. We have already described the father. Laurence was taller by two or three inches, almost gaunt in his proportions, having long limbs, a broad chest and shoulders, but a somewhat slouching gait. He had an appearance of having somewhat outgrown

his proportions, not his strength, which was great. But it was rather the *vis inertiæ*, an unenergetic mass, which required something to set it in motion. Once impelled, it might not so easily be stopped. His face was the *beau idéal* of Saxon beauty; his complexion fair as a woman; his hair chesnut and uncurled; his forehead open and clear, marked with truth and intellect; his nose delicately formed; his mouth tolerably large, well-shaped, and with a short upper lip; remarkably good teeth; the delicacy of his complexion and features were atoned for by a firm determined chin—the only feature which reminded us of his father's hard nature. It was a very peculiar face. It reflected a variety of feelings, no passions. It was thoughtful, calm, yet full of humour and intelligence. Its habitual expression was contentment.

The father and son greeted one another, not cordially. On the one side was a shade of distrust — the good-humoured, confident smile gave way to a thoughtful look Abel Bradfield shook his son by the hand, with an effort at conciliation as it seemed; half afraid of him, and rather deprecating a quarrel, yet not wholly able to restrain a sort of dislike.

"I am sorry I was not in time for your dinner-hour, but I was detained in town by an appointment."

"So Ellen has told me. I have been engaged partly on your business this evening: there's plenty to do to-morrow down here."

"So I understand, Sir. I hope you've not overtasked your powers."

"What do you mean, Laurence? The support promised us is sufficient to make even failure desirable in our case."

"It has never occurred to me that failure in anything is desirable. I have had some conversation in town, and since with my mother, on the subject."

"It doesn't strike me as being of any sort of importance to your mother."

"I take a different view of my obligations, my dear father; however, that's neither here nor there."

Saying which, Laurence Bradfield rose lazily, stretched out his hand to ring the bell, and ordered some seltzer water and the sherry.

"I neither know nor care what your sense of your obli-

gations may be; the first you owe are to me and to the position I have made for you in this county It's not to be kept without some sacrifice of self-indulgence."

"If you had said self-respect, I should have said that no one should know that better than ourselves. But what's the use of quarrelling about such trifles, father? We'll talk it all over to-morrow. Good-night."

"But I wish to talk it over to-night."

Laurence sat down again. He listened with apparent attention and good-humour to his father's account of what had been done, which he already knew; that he himself was to be the Whig candidate; that intelligence of these measures had been already forwarded to Saxonby through Mr. Darville; and that to-morrow an address was to be submitted to a committee, to which the name of Laurence Bradfield would be appended. He then took his candle, with a smile, in which there was a little defiance and a great deal of humour, and wished his father a "Good-night" once more. On the landing he knocked at his sister's door.

"So I hear I'm to be Lord Crackborough's nominee. First step to the woolsack, Ellen." And he retired to rest, with the same comfortable smile.

CHAPTER IV.

LORD MENTMORE

> "Well, honour is the subject of my story."
> SHAKESPEARE'S *Jul. Cæs.*

WHEN Abel Bradfield came down to breakfast the next morning, he came down alone; and, by the look of his face, he was excellent company for himself. Before long, however, he was joined by Ellen, and then by Mrs. Bradfield. When breakfast was nearly finished, Laurence Bradfield appeared.

"Ring the bell, Ellen." Laurence did so.

"The carriage at eleven o'clock," said Mr. Bradfield,

senior; "and Thomas," added Mr. Bradfield, junior, "tell Wilson to put the saddle on the old pony for me."

"Yes, Sir," said the man after the most approved fashion, and retired.

"Where are you going? Surely I'm to have your company, Laurence, to Saxonby. Your address should be out to-day, or you'll have that fellow Carrington all over the county before you've started."

"I am not going to oppose the Carringtons," said his son, with as much good humour as if it was quite an affair of the most ordinary kind.

"I beg your pardon, but you are," said his father, with a very dark brow.

"Indeed, I am not," rejoined the other with a little more determination.

"You are pledged to do so, Sir."

"By whom, my dear father—by Lord Crackborough, or Mr. Packington?"

His father winced a little, and then said, "By me, Laurence."

"Your word is your bond, father, doubtless; but in this instance I cannot allow your obligation to bind me. There are plenty of reasons for this determination. I don't think with them; I don't care for them."

"Not care for them? Lord Crackborough, and the Honourable Louis Packington." And between passion and surprise Abel Bradfield nearly choked himself.

"I'm sorry it should annoy you, but I do not intend to oppose Sir Michael Carrington in any way, directly or indirectly." And, drinking off his tea, he rose from the table very deliberately and took himself to the stables. In half an hour he was in Saxonby in the lodgings of Mr. Scarsdale, the curate of Sommerton.

As Mr. Bradfield, senior, knew his son remarkably well, and was quite aware that remonstrance was thrown away upon him, he contented himself with abusing his wife, and discharging a servant or two; he also gave some orders relative to the cottages in the village of Sommerton which inflicted hardships upon innocent people, and departed to concoct some fresh schemes for defeating the man whom he was unable to cajole.

"So I hear we're to have no contest after all," said Mr.

Parrott, the chief saddler of Saxonby, about a week later, to his friend Mr. Brand, the chief bookseller. "I thought we was to have a bit o' life, John—we've waited for it long enough."

"Yes, what with the coaches that are gone, and the trade that's carried away by the rail to Normanton, and the death of old Doctor Reardon, there's not much doing. As to the election, you know, my brother-in-law's one of the tenants at Sommerton, and he says as the old man wanted to start himself when Mr. Laurence refused, but the party wouldn't let him."

"I shouldn't a voted for the old man, certainly not," said Mr. Parrott; "never set his foot in my shop but once, and then it was to blow up about something or other. The young gent's well enough, they say, and got a deal of book-learnin'; but you know best about that, Master Brand."

"Ah! ah! he's a cleverish hand, I hear, one o' your great college men. Not that I've much opinion of them, myself. But they tell me he does all the good in the parish, and just manages to smooth the ways Squire Bradfield makes rough. He must have a hard time of it, and plenty on his hands." Here old Brand chuckled as if he'd said rather a good thing.

"There are a good many here would have given the young 'un a vote; they'd have divided between him and Sir Michael. We don't see much of Colonel Spence in this neighbourhood, and one likes to have a townsman, if possible. I wonder how old Darville manages between the two; he must have a rough time of it."

"Darville does pretty much as he likes with Sir Michael, and I expect Mr. Bradfield can't get on without him. It's pretty certain they're not of the same way of thinking, though he is his agent. I've often thought there was a something or other that we don't know about."

Here Mr. Brand looked very wisely out of the corner of one eye, and Mr. Parrott winked with the corresponding orbit at him, as much as to say, if I could be quite sure now—he hesitated a moment, however, and then asked an apparently irrelevant question.

"You're getting in years, Brand, and you used to see a good deal of the great folks about here when Saxonby was more of a place that it is now. I've heard say they used to

come in formerly with their carriages and horses of a market-day, and stand about in your shop, and at Bates's, and talk over the counters, just for all the world as we do ourselves ; now, do you recollect ever seeing old Sir Reginald Carrington, him as was killed on the road between Normanton and Spring Vale ? "

" Oh ! bless ye, yes ; it ain't above thirty year ago. Fine handsome old gentleman he was. The present baronet was a tall handsome young fellow then. Ah ! there was some queer stories afloat about Abel Bradfield's father and old Darville. There was a great lawsuit too about some missing papers ; it was tried three times ; but they couldn't make head or tail of it. They never caught the highwaymen, and the baronet was so shook he never got over it. Why that property of Sommerton must be worth twelve thousand a year now, since they found iron and coal, and have taken to smelting and so on. Every acre of it belonged to the Carringtons. There's something wrong surelie, but it'll never be set right now."

At that moment, there turned the corner of the High Street a sight which was always welcome in Saxonby. It was a man in scarlet on a remarkably fine horse, who had returned from hunting rather early in the day. It was the beginning of the season, and he attracted more attention than usual. He came slowly towards the two townsmen, who both stared at him as he approached. Opposite to them he stopped, and said, " Will you tell me which road out of the town I must take to get to Spring Vale ? "

" Certainly, Sir," said Parrott ; " cross the market place, go down the hill past the town hall, and bear to the left—two miles will bring you to Sir Michael Carrington's lodge-gate." Whilst he yet spoke, and as the gentleman was slightly raising his hat to thank the tradesman who had directed him, Scarsdale came down the door-steps of his lodging.

" Scarsdale ! " said the stranger, smiling ; and it was a pleasant face to look at when it smiled.

" Mentmore ! " said the other, somewhat surprised.

" My dear boy, what are you doing here ? blacked, I see by your white neckcloth—but I thought you were to have had the good living of Broomfield ; a family living, is it not ? "

"Yes! but you forget that John Mucklestone has not yet killed himself with the York and Ainstey."

"No; and never will; when men ride as he does, they take a great deal of killing. There are many good ones of your cloth, but he is the very best I ever have seen. I shall have to provide for you at last. Where are your quarters?"

"Here in the town. My cure is about two miles off, at Sommerton; but where have you been, Mentmore, and where are you going, *unde et quò?*"

"I've been with the ——shire. Had a very quick thing, lamed one horse, and am riding the other over to Spring Vale. You know the Carringtons?"

"No! very slightly. I belong to the opposite faction."

"What is the opposite faction?"

"Here it comes."

At that moment an open barouche, of the very best possible pattern, and only disfigured by too ornamental harness, and a pair of horses, if possible, a little too grand for a country market-town, pulled up with a jerk at the chemist's door, near which the two young men were talking. In the carriage was a quiet amiable-looking woman, of middle age; and by her side a lovely girl, with large clear hazel eyes, and a profusion of burnished gold about her brow and face, which invited criticism to defy it. Scarsdale raised his hat.

"What a lovely girl! I should like to belong to the opposite faction; but good-bye. I'll come to see you to-morrow; you must know my friend Stafford Carrington, the best fellow in England—good-bye."

"Who's that, Mr. Scarsdale?" said Ellen Bradfield.

"So he attracted even your attention, Miss Bradfield. He's a college friend of mine. A good man spoiled by fortune."

"But who is he?"

"He has property near my father's."

"A Yorkshire landowner, Mr. Scarsdale?"

"He is; and in various other places too," rejoined the curate.

"And you know him intimately?"

"Very;" and still Scarsdale smiled good-humouredly, as he parried her thrusts.

"And his name? come, tell me, Mr. Scarsdale."

"Lord Mentmore; but good-bye, Miss Bradfield. I am very busy, and already late for an appointment." In another minute he was gone.

The figure that gradually disappeared down the principal street of Saxonby was remarkable. Looking at him from behind, he was tall, upright, broad, and flat-shouldered; he sat on his horse with an ease, even at a foot's pace, which proclaimed, to the initiated, the finished horseman. His whip hung loosely in his right hand, and his reins were held as loosely in his left, his knees were turned slightly outwards, and his length of limb in that attitude exhibited unusual power over his horse. Regarding him as Mr. Brand and Mr. Parrott had first seen him, he was a handsome man of about thirty years of age. He had an open sincerity in his deep grey eyes, which was unmistakable. No man could have doubted his truth, though he might have suspected his firmness of purpose, had he seen his mouth; at present it was covered by a thick, soft, light moustache. His features, and the shape of his face, were characteristic of high blood; and a very close observer might have discovered an undercurrent of temper, rather quick than settled, in the constant play of his expression. He was never the same for many minutes; and from the gayest, the most childish simplicity he suddenly changed to austerity, to almost settled gloom. The horse he rode was quite sufficient to stamp his taste in that particular. He was long, low for the man he carried, and would have been remarkable for his strength, but for the exhibition, in every action, of what is known as quality. He had long quarters, his tail was set on high, but his hocks were low, a little bent, and gave a freedom to every movement, which in his walk was as apparent as in the quicker paces of some horses. Had you or I been riding that horse, the chances are, that we should have escaped observation altogether: as it was, nobody could have looked at anything but the man. He carried his descent from the Plantagenets in every feature and in every limb.

Physiognomy is said to be a doubtful science — rather a speculation. I cannot think so. I scarcely believe in the existence of character without its external development. The deepest water is most moved by a transient ripple.

When I detect anomalies in physiognomy, I believe in an error in judgment of my own; or, an oversight of some of those delicacies of detail which are the strongest indications to a professor of the science. It was only judged in this way, and subject to such scrutiny, that Lord Mentmore's face could have told a tale beyond the proclamation of present enjoyment of all things.

As he rode down the street, he was an object of speculation to more persons than one. Every shop window had its occupant, and many had their customers as well, who ran to the doors, examining a piece of broadcloth, a piece of lace, a ribbon, to have a look at the scarlet coat, and the handsome stranger. Messrs. Brand and Parrott watched him long, before they separated, wondering who he might be.

Scarsdale let him rest on the image of his brain, as a pleasing picture, which relieved him agreeably from troublesome fancies; and Ellen Bradfield mused long and wonderingly on the form of a man of whom she had heard much and often.

"A fine match indeed, my Lady Carrington, for that pretty daughter of yours. Is that the game? What a thing birth is, after all. Poor papa! I've often laughed at his weakness. But it is more than money, laugh as we will. Laurence may live to think so; and here he comes."

Laurence Bradfield was walking, and accepted a seat in the carriage, to go back with his mother and sister.

"Did you meet a man in scarlet, on a beautiful horse, as you came in from Sommerton?"

"No, I came the upper road."

"Then he had turned towards Spring Vale before you got here."

"Who was it, Ellen; anything interesting?"

"No one that we know, dear, though I certainly do feel interested; it was Lord Mentmore."

"Mentmore, Lord Mentmore? are you sure? who told you? Where was he going?" and the young man seemed more interested than his sister.

"One at a time, dear; I am sure, and Mr. Scarsdale told me."

"Scarsdale, how does he know him?"

"Neighbours and old college friends, the high priest of Sommerton says. And he is gone to Spring Vale Manor."

Laurence grew redder than usual, but the blush receded and left him pale enough. These signs were not unnoticed by the vigilant eyes of his sister.

"Did Scarsdale appear very intimate with him?"

"Well, for my chaplain, I think he did. You know brazen pots and earthen vessels ought not to float down quite the same channel."

"I don't think Scarsdale considers himself an earthen pot."

"Perhaps not; but he may be one for all that. But you know Lord Mentmore?"

"Yes, my dear Ellen, slightly."

"And is he so very formidable a person as some seem to think?"

"Far from it. Personally a simpler or nobler fellow does not exist in England."

"Is it his enormous wealth then, Laurence, which has made him the talk of the country and the continent for tho last ten years?"

"Certainly not that alone; and he has succeeded in reducing it to the dimensions of a very manageable income; but it is a combination of extraordinary qualities, which have made him the great person he is, and not the least to those who know nothing about him."

"There is a Monte-Christo-like magnificence in some of his proceedings, which delights the vulgar," said Ellen.

"The very last object he has in view His magnificence is the spontaneous demonstration of his largeness of heart. He can neither think nor do anything small." At this moment Mrs. Bradfield, who had been shopping in Saxonby, appeared at the carriage door; the steps fell, with an important noise; the coachman squared his elbows; the footman drew himself bolt upright; Mrs. Bradfield stepped in, the door closed with another bang, the footman touched his hat and mounted the box, and the gayest equipage, though not quite the best appointed in the county, drove out of the town.

The object of this universal interest was meantime sauntering onwards to Spring Vale Manor. Whilst he goes on his way, we shall have an opportunity of saying who Lord Mentmore was.

Lord Mentmore was a man, at this time, of about thirty

years of age. Without being exactly the richest peer in England, he had a sufficiency, say £60,000 per annum, to have every requisite and some superfluities. He was the remaining scion of one of the highest families in this country, a descendant of a line of kings. He was remarkably handsome, accomplished, and of good natural abilities. He was also unmarried, which added another feather to his cap in the eyes of the women.

But a man might be all this, and more, and yet never have attained the extraordinary and peculiar species of popularity of Lord Mentmore. The universal influence which his name carried with it arose from impressions of a boundless magnificence in all he undertook. He took hounds. It is not enough to say that he did so at his own expense; but the grandeur of the scale had never been equalled in the crack county of England. Never had such a stud in numbers or quality been got together. His house during the winter was full of guests. Those who had no horses were mounted as well and as liberally as himself, and on not rare occasions half-a-dozen second horsemen and twelve horses were provided for those who passed a week at Thrussington Park. He shot; and the slaughter in his covers, on his moors, and over his stubbles, was calculated by hundreds over that of his neighbours. He was the *bête noire* of the fine old sportsman who kept a brace of pointers, and the penny-a-liners of the sporting periodicals, who do the heavy business against the "battues." He took to racing, not as other men do, with a niggardly parsimonious spirit, which regarded its winnings or losings in a banker's book, but he kept a string of fifty horses in training, and gave 1,000 guineas for yearlings, whilst his competitors were wondering whether they might advance another twenty upon a previous five hundred. The postboys who drove him to cover rejoiced in a guinea a-head per ride; and the old women and children who opened the gates were cognizant of nothing under shillings and half-crowns. He had a newspaper for the support and exposition of his party and their opinions; hospitals for his tenants; schools for his stable-boys; gardens and grounds for the recreation of a county; unbounded luxury for his friends; and a mutton chop and a glass of sherry for himself. For nine years he had resisted the blandishments of the be-spangled dowagers, who sought him through thick and thin,

though on more than one occasion their importunities had confined him to his dressing-room, and had once given him a scarlet fever. There are women whom the plague-spot itself would not shake from their purpose, when in pursuit of an undeniable *parti.*

In manner and appearance he was not so young as his years, the last of a school just passing away. He was courteous, chivalrous, and abhorred that questionable fastness and *roué*-ism, the accompaniment of slang coats and zouave breeches. He never had an acquaintance, for they became involuntarily friends; and the poorer and more wanting in countenance and protection that friend might be, the more certain was he of obtaining them from the Earl of Mentmore. He was too secure of his own position to care for the reflected light of any number of satellites. This was the *nature* of the man; that circumstances had modified it we may well conceive.

The curate of Sommerton was a hard-working man and a gentleman. He was also a good parish priest. We do not mean that he had a particularly long frock coat, or very provincial-looking highlows. In fact, to confess the truth, he had a small spice of dandyism in him, and as some thought, wore much too good gloves and boots for a faithful shepherd. There are men who seem to think that the care of others necessarily implies neglect of self. Being, then, as we said, a hard-working man, some little time after this meeting he was asked to visit the union workhouse of Saxonby, for the reigning chaplain. The Saxonby Workhouse was about a mile out of town. It was remarkable for the neatness of its lawn and gravelled walks; and for the evident superiority of its spade-husbandry, which went on under the superintendence of the master, a former corporal of dragoons, in a fustian jacket, and by the combined exertions of a dozen middle-aged men in suits of yellow and grey. The building itself was a comfortable brick house, with a square imposing front, and a couple of less lively looking wings. Creepers grew over it in summer, and there seemed no desire to make a life of dependence more irksome than it necessarily must be.

Thither Mr. Scarsdale wended his way one fine morning in December. It was mild for the time of year, and there had not yet been any stoppage to the hunting.

"Fine morning, Sir," said the ex-corporal and master, saluting with a small cane he carried, as a symbol of authority, while he looked on at the labours of the old men and young boys under his care. "Rather expecting Mr. Lightfoot, Sir; it's his morning."

"I'm come in his place, Dalton; I hope I'm not late."

"Not at all, Sir. Here, Simmons, take the keys to the matron, have the chapel door opened and the bell rung. Tell Sally that old Giles had better go in to prayers. He's an old soldier, Sir; been in foreign parts; and he's uncommonly bad; he don't take much notice of anything, but they like going to prayers, all of 'em, Sir."

"Glad to hear it, Dalton. It's a good sign."

"Yes, it's a change for 'em; but old Morton says he'd like to see the minister to talk a bit; so perhaps you wouldn't mind stopping after the prayers are done: here, boys, in with ye."

Here they ascended the clean white steps and entered the building by the principal door.

Searsdale walked into the chapel. On one side against the wall, and in the angle formed by the side and the end of the room, was a plain reading-desk, serving for purposes of prayer and exhortation, when, on Sunday, that was added to the ordinary service. A corresponding seat admitted the master and matron, schoolmistress and master, the latter of whom acted as clerk. In front of these latter stood the boys, and behind them the girls. A preternatural solemnity pervaded their countenances, as they had only just been detected in a scramble for a piece of sugar, which had been surreptitiously handed to them by one of the mothers. In front of the curate sat a body of old women, whose placid and resigned appearance seemed to say—"To this dreadful state of cleanliness and discipline we are all reduced, but we are bearing it, Reverend Sir, as you see, with great patience and fortitude." The younger women, beyond, all played with the corners of their aprons, and smiled at one another as they saw a young face instead of the grey-haired old vicar, Mr. Lightfoot, to whom they were accustomed; and the old and young men at the back, two or three of whom were in the last stage of helpless imbecility, lounged foward on their arms ready to pay just the amount of attention which should suit their humour. When a man has his bread,

soup, potatoes, and meat weighed out to him, he soon becomes a machine.

Old Morton, as he was called, was a gigantic old man, apparently upwards of eighty years of age. He had thick matted white hair, and was bent nearly double. All signs of intelligence had left his face, and during the service he sat staring, with eyes void of speculation, at the clergyman. When they went back to their rooms, Scarsdale followed the old man, who had taken his seat on a bench, drawn close up to a blazing fire—such a fire as one may have in a coal country, without a grumble about poor's rates, even from a board of guardians. Otherwise the room was empty, and the curate sat down beside him.

"And who be you?" asked the old man almost fiercely.

"The curate of Sommerton. The master said you wanted to speak to me." A gleam lit up the old man's face.

"Sommerton, Sommerton," said he, as if the name had some charm for him, and he was trying to recollect something. One hand was paralysed; and he kept it within his coat. "I'm not long for this world, but I'd like to see Sommerton once more."

"You know it then? But you seem to have suffered from a stroke, Morton?"

"Ay; I should know it; I went there once. There it is, always a running in my head. Sommerton it is, sure enough. There's a mister—a great man—what's his name?—the squire they call him. He's no squire, though. Sommerton, Sommerton to be sure;—and what's his name?" and the old man pulled out his handkerchief and wiped the rheum from his eyes.

"Bradfield, do you mean?" said Scarsdale, more with the view of humouring him than anything else.

"Bradfield, Bradfield; that's the name. Sommerton—yes; I have it; Abel Bradfield, Sommerton Hall, Esquire. Yes! yes! that's right enough. Now I have it."

"I suppose you were acquainted with this neighbourhood formerly?"

"Sommerton? to be sure," repeated the old man, "that was the place. Yes, I knew it well enough long afore that—long afore that—but never after it. Poor old gentleman! But I was away a many years; and one forgets after a matter of forty or fifty years. I suppose no one remember

after so many years?" And the old man looked half as if it were a question, and half a soliloquy.

"That depends upon circumstances, Morton," said Mr. Scarsdale; "some make a great impression, others of no importance——"

"True, Sir, true; so they do. But I've forgot a-most everything; everything but Sommerton and Mr. Bradfield. That's the name." And here the old man rose from the form, and with the help of his stick walked along the room. He raised the latch of the door, and appeared as if about to leave the room. Suddenly he returned, closing the door after him, and came up to where Scarsdale was standing. Bent as he now was with age and infirmity, Morton was nearly as tall as the curate; and it struck him at the moment that he might have been a man of great size and stature. He slowly drew his crippled hand from his breast and opened a paper. It was a large envelope of foolscap paper; and Scarsdale was surprised to see that the hand was not so helpless as was pretended. "If you know Squire Bradfield"—he seemed to have got the name pat enough now—"ask him if he recollects Giles, Morton Giles; and come and tell me how he looks."

"I don't think that will make much difference to him, my good man; besides, you must be thinking of his father." And Scarsdale made a step towards the door, feeling rather embarrassed at the turn the conversation had taken.

"See; would you like to look at that, Sir?" said he, showing the inner folds of the envelope. "Then you shall see something—something as 'ill go agen him still;" and opening a paper, yellow with age, and scarcely holding together, he showed him the following words in ink, plain but brown with time, on a sheet of ordinary letter paper:

"*May* 13, 18—.

"If Sir Reginald Carrington will do me the honour of coming to Patcham, on Wednesday, the 29th inst., I shall be happy to give the release, which is already prepared, on the receipt of Sir Reginald's cheque or note of hand for the balance of the mortgage.

"I have the honour to be, Sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"HENRY BRADFIELD.

"*To Sir Reginald Carrington, Bart.*"

Scarsdale read the paper as requested; and, not knowing what he had to do with the business, only returned it with much simplicity, saying at the same time—"You seem to attach some value to that letter, my friend."

"Value?" said old Morton, with more energy than he had yet spoken, "it's an estate, Sir, that's all. But good day, Mr.—Mr.—ah!—ah! Well, it don't much matter. Be sure you tell Mr. Bradfield about Morton Giles."

As Scarsdale, after inscribing his name in the chaplain's book, and giving a summary of his duties at the union, prepared to descend the steps he was arrested by the lowest of curtsies by the matron. She had a smiling, good-humoured face, and was the figure of a bustling, tidy woman, accustomed to the impudence and disorders of paupers, and not likely to be inconvenienced by them.

"And how do you find old Morton to-day, Sir?" Here she smoothed her apron.

"He seems very well, Mrs. Dalton. Of course infirm, and has lost his memory; his faculties generally, to a certain extent."

"Not so much as people give him credit for; he's sharp enough sometimes. I sometimes think he's playing a game."

"Where does he come from?" said Scarsdale.

"Well, Claygate's his parish. He was a long time out of England; but before he went abroad he didn't bear the best of characters, Sir."

"And what name does he go by here? for he has some curious story, as it seems to me, and calls himself Morton Giles."

The matron stood the pumping remarkably well, and responded glibly,—

"In country parishes, you know, Sir, they often go by two names; there are reasons you know, Sir; and when he came in he was known as Giles, but his name on the parish books was Morton, after his mother. All his friends were gone from Claygate, and those who might have known him before pretended not to recollect anything about him, except his bad character; so here he is. He don't give much trouble, unless he gets hold of a gentleman like yourself to talk to. Mr. Lightfoot's a bit shy, and when he goes among 'em he always reads the Bible or the Prayer Book; but he don't ever talk to 'em or encourage 'em. To be sure, they don't

many on 'em want it, as Dalton says, and he knows the world pretty well."

When Scarsdale took his leave, he pondered over old Morton and his fancies for a quarter of an hour; but he had plenty to do and to think of, and the old man's message had escaped his memory before the end of the week. It returned to his mind some months after, when circumstances occurred which led to a reconsideration of the subject.

CHAPTER V.

THE MORNING'S RIDE.

"*Equam* memento rebus in arduis
Servare." Hor., *Ode Parodied.*

"The course of true love" does not often run "smooth;" but why that proverbial asperity should be confined to what is true, we are unable to say. For our own part that eternal smoothness has but little charm; and the ripple which reflects sunshine and shade, bright gleams and darkening clouds, in love as in nature, gives brightness and variety to the prosiest poetry in the world. That slow, smooth stream appears to us always to hide more than it exhibits; there is a deepness and duplicity in its slowly-gurgling waters, which may conceal some hideous deformity which a more active current would have brought to the surface, or have tossed from its bosom for ever.

A determination to true love-making in this civilised world of ours, is a disease which is always subjected to the management of the pruning knife of papas and mammas, just as much as a determination of blood to the head belongs to the family physician. In good society it is under as much regulation and discipline as a Surrey volunteer; in the middle classes it is at least guided by rule, though the discretionary power is relaxed; in the lower classes, where it has found a freer vent, where women do not stipu-

late for pin money, nor men for little dinners once a fortnight, it has run such riot as to serve rather for a beacon and a warning, than an example to be followed.

No two persons ever came together, perhaps, with a more complete reticence on such a subject as marriage, and with a more perfect impression of what was expected of them as well-bred people, than Lord Mentmore and Evelyn Carrington. It was an understood thing that Lord Mentmore was to marry, as soon as an eligible person presented herself. He had never said so himself, but then everybody had said so for him ; and it was quite impossible that an Earl, a Plantagenet, with large estates in half a score of counties, should be allowed to go down to the grave unmarried. Had not the Duchess of Fixington declared it? had not the old Marchioness of Rougenoir predicted it? had not Lady Postobitville striven for it? and twenty-thousand mouths young and old watered for it? It was as well-known a fact, before fulfilment, as the frost of January 1, 1864.

In such a case as this, there were certain qualities, on the part of the bride, indispensable. She must be well born, well bred, moving in the highest society, of personal grace and beauty, according to taste ; not his lordship's, but up to the standard of fashionable social life. She should be troubled with no incumbrances, which could bring discredit on her husband's position, in the way of peculiarities in herself or her connections. She should be not too clever; but she should be well versed in the moderate accomplishments of high society, and capable of receiving with that dignity which would be of necessity a part and parcel of the Countess of Mentmore. She required no money, no ardent affections or aspirations, no ambitions beyond those of *haut ton*, no remarkable amount of courage, moral or physical, no self-denial, no wit, no genius, and only just so much brains as would suffice for the management of these large family mansions and a London establishment. Such was the verdict of the world of fashion ; and at the present moment, Evelyn Carrington was the culprit, found guilty of such capabilities for encompassing the match of the day.

"My dear duchess, so Mentmore is gone to the Carringtons' —dear clever creature that Lady Carrington ; and it is quite time he was married and settled at last. They do say, indeed——"

"No such thing. You mean that stupid story about *La Gitana*. No truth in it, marchioness, believe me. My only objection to Evelyn Carrington is the want of money. They can't give her anything."

"Mentmore want money? Oh! impossible. His racing pays, and you know he never plays or gambles in any other way. He cleared seventeen thousand last season, at least so Rougenoir tells me."

"But his expenses are enormous. His living, his princely extravagances; he's been borrowing money for years; and all the Woollenborough property has been in the hands of Cater, the banker, for the last ten years."

"Still it would be a great match for the girl; and as the Carringtons know nothing about his want of money, it does not take from the talent displayed by Lady Carrington," said the Marchioness Rougenoir, who was not well affected towards that lady, having herself, in early life, cast her eyes on Sir Michael Carrington, when she saw but little prospect of a well-born pauper beauty attracting so large a gudgeon as the Marquis of Rougenoir.

"Let me put you right, marchioness. It was entirely Mentmore's own doing. He's very intimate with Stafford Carrington, and having nothing better to do, is gone to the ——shire hounds for the beginning of the season. He has seen the girl, and has expressed an admiration of her; but, strange to say in this case, both mother and daughter are guiltless. She has all the qualities, except money, that his aunt, Lady Elizabeth, would like; and as he is as reckless of that, as he is impulsive in everything else, I presume it won't be long before we hear that it is all settled."

Shortly after the duchess took her leave.

Mentmore was not ignorant of what was expected of him; but he was one of those persons, not only capable of, but determined upon, judging for himself. It is probable that he would have been married before this, but for the desperate assaults of every seasonable belle that had come out; and although the charms of *La Gitana* had not been sufficient to bring about a secret marriage as some ladies averred, the impolitic struggles of matronly anxiety had driven him into *liaisons* which might be attended with awkward results.

Lord Mentmore's tastes led him but little into London society. When he went, he evidently regarded it as a duty

rather than as a pleasure. His natural openness and simplicity revolted against the shams of which he perceived it to be in a great measure made up. His residence in Belgravia was usually as short as it could be with decency to his order and its requirements. Yet so remarkable was he in elegance of manner and in those external qualities and accomplishments of the world, that the most distinguished woman of the day had pronounced him, in these respects, perfect. His winter was spent in dispensing the hospitalities of the best hunting quarters in England, where a stud unrivalled in quantity and quality was ever at the service of himself and such of his guests as chose to avail themselves of his liberality. Newmarket and its attractions, which had now become a business, waited for him from the first spring meeting. A retreat to the most beautiful country-seat in England, and the affection and necessities of a thousand dependants, claimed him for a short time after the Goodwood week. His various shootings in England and Scotland, his fisheries, and the healthy pursuits which have raised up and keep together an unrivalled class, called the country gentlemen of England, were in his eyes worth all the gilded *salons* and Apician feasts of the metropolis of this country or any other. The enthusiasm with which Lord Mentmore entered into all of these gave him only time for occasional visits to London, between the race meetings, or during the frost, if Thrussington were free from guests.

It was during one of these short sojourns that he happened to meet, at a small supper after the opera, a very attractive girl; attractive to him, indeed, from her perfect artlessness, and the evident indifference with which she found herself the object of his lordship's attentions during the evening.

Having ascertained from his hostess that she was the sister of his friend Stafford Carrington, he took an early opportunity of being introduced to Lady Carrington and Sir Michael; and no great difficulty presented itself to his wish to have a few days with the Saxonby hounds at the beginning of the next season. To say that such a visit was unimportant even to a person of Sir Michael Carrington's position is not true; and with the well-understood possibilities to her daughter, Lady Carrington, with all her good-breeding, may be forgiven for a very little additional excite-

ment at the flattering proposal. Of all the country houses on his visiting list few held out equal attractions to Mentmore, exclusively of the daughter of the house. Without any costly extravagance, Sir Michael was one of those men who, from mere habit, had what they had of the very best. He could not afford to rival Abel Bradfield in the magnificence of his gilding, and the numbers of his servants; but the furniture was more comfortable, and the appointments of a higher class. The shooting at Spring Vale was limited in extent, but as good as could possibly be expected from the size of the covers. The stables and the equipages were childish in comparison with those of Silvermere; but the ex-master of the Saxonby foxhounds was unsurpassed in the perfection of management, and no man in England vied with him in price for the few good horses which he selected for his son. He had ceased to ride, as he informed his friends, when he gave up the mastership; but it took a very good man to find his way over a country in front of the squire (a name he retained from early and untitled years) when he chose to go for a spurt on one of his jumping hacks. Great dinners and profusion were forbidden by a moderate income; but those who shared his hospitality were loud in their praise of the *cuisine*, and the company was rather select than numerous. Some wondered at his hold upon the county without a more frequent recurrence, or a more extended scale, of hospitality; but the good old families recollected what Sir Michael had been, and who he was, rather than what the member for the county might have given away.

The sun shone brightly in at the windows of Spring Vale Manor one Thursday morning (there were no hounds on Thursday within reach), and Stafford Carrington lounged into the breakfast-room.

"What are you going to do with Lord Mentmore to-day, Stafford?" said Lady Carrington; "there's no hunting, and he'll find it stupid, I'm afraid."

"Mentmore never wants amusing in the country, I should think, mother; and if he does, we can shoot the two covers at the back of the home-farm. There's only about three hours' work, so we can begin at two o'clock after luncheon. I suppose he's not down yet?"

"Not yet—he seems to be a tolerably early riser, how-

ever, and the most punctual man alive. A good example for you, Stafford."

"Very—though I've never discovered that I stand in need of it; besides, he's late this morning, at all events. Why, Evelyn, where have you been to get such a colour?"

"Down to Aunt Philly's. We had some business to do in the village, so I breakfasted with her an hour ago."

"Have you seen Lord Mentmore?"

"That's scarcely probable, if he's not down yet. Stay! didn't he say something about killing a duck or a snipe before breakfast?"

"Yes; he talked of having the keeper out at seven o'clock, and going down to the farther end of the lake to look for a widgeon; but that's not very likely," rejoined Stafford, who was inclined to judge of men's aptitude for rising by his own.

"I should think Lord Mentmore a very likely man to do anything he said he would," said Evelyn, in a tone of voice which implied very little embarrassment, as it appeared to Lady Carrington.

At that moment Lord Mentmore walked into the room, and, after a comprehensive "Good-morning," and a friendly greeting from Lady Carrington, took his seat at her side.

"We were just talking about you, Mentmore, and my sister would have it you were gone shooting with the keeper to look for wild-fowl."

"I feel flattered by Miss Carrington's interest," and Lord Mentmore's colour rose slightly as he said so; "and what did you say on the subject?"

"Of course all that could be said—that you were in bed rather later than usual; whilst Lady Carrington held you up as a pattern of punctuality to me."

"Miss Carrington was right; and I am obliged to Lady Carrington for her good opinion of me. I was shooting for two hours this morning, and have left three couple of snipe and a wild duck with your man for the larder. And what have you been doing, Carrington?"

"What you see—preparing for the labours of the coming day. There's a choice of evils; billiards, the library, Saxonby, a few pheasants behind the home farm, scarcely worth the walk, and a ride; Sir Michael's best hack is at your service."

"You can scarcely have a better yourself, Lord Mentmore; only pray arrange with Stafford what you would like to do."

"I had an idea of walking, or riding, into Saxonby, Sir Michael; I have an old acquaintance living there I find. I know what Stafford means by the library; the lightest literature I could find was Hallam's 'Middle Ages,' with which he was preparing himself for magisterial duties or political life." Lord Mentmore never wanted courage before to say what he wished; but he could no more have proposed that Evelyn Carrington should have accompanied them in a ride or walk than he could have proposed to walk away with the remains of the breakfast-table. It must be confessed that Lady Carrington herself saw no means of making any such proposition; she was in a similarly delicate situation. And the two persons concerned would not have come together that day until dinner-time, but for the opportune arrival of old Aunt Philly, who after some very discursive questions as to the occupations of the party, said, rather abruptly:

"My dear, you must go into Saxonby after lunch, and bring me out my afternoon correspondence; for I've no servant to spare, and I suppose your grooms have plenty to do; I dare say the gentlemen won't object to ride with you, unless they are otherwise engaged." The opportunity was not lost on Lord Mentmore, who declared his anxiety to give up all or any of his acquaintance, and went so far as to say that Mr. Scarsdale was not likely to be at home, as his duties took him to his parish, wherever that might be. The only discontented person was Evelyn Carrington.

"That's a nice hack, Mentmore, he's by the Cure dam by Autocrat, just the size for a hack; my father's tall, but he never rides anything above fifteen hands;" and as Stafford Carrington spoke Lord Mentmore's groom brought up a neat brown horse, low and long, with the peculiarly well-ribbed up barrel of the Cure, and a quick active movement, which looked like carrying more weight than his size at first sight indicated.

In the meantime Evelyn Carrington was in the saddle. We have seen her there before, and we need hardly say that she had not diminished her attentions to her toilet in consideration of the company in which she was going to ride. The reader must not suppose that one *soupçon* of what is

called love had yet affected her repose, or influenced any action of her life. She was singularly heart-whole as far as Lord Mentmore was eoncerned. It was impossible to be in his company long without liking him, but Evelyn had demonstrated the possibility of receiving even marked attentions from him without falling in love. For Lord Mentmore had been particular in his attentions during the week he had spent at Spring Vale, and had shown but a very faint reluctance to prolong his visit upon the invitation of Stafford Carrington. The two young men got on just as well as possible, not by mutual self-denial, which is the highest virtue in a small establishment, but by a recognised determination of self-indulgence, which is by far the pleasantest mode in the houses of the great. Having all necessary appliances, they did exactly as they pleased, without reference the one to the other, and as hunting and shooting were occupations in which both delighted, and the rest of their time might be passed together, or apart in any room of the house, it was not unnatural that Mentmore should find Spring Vale Manor, and its agreeable society, more to his taste than Thrussington and its solitudes, which he had not yet interrupted this season by his usual invitations. They eould stand over at all events. So he sent for more horses and helpers, and inspected the rest of the accommodation for his hunters to be found in the village. He declared it to be excellent; and as he seemed to think some sort of reason for remaining away from his own home was necessary to satisfy vague scruples, he praised the Saxonby country at the expense of his own, a partiality which was not shared in by others, who as frequently quitted the one for the other, for the opposite reason.

Lady Carrington was a clever woman, of a rather masculine understanding and manners, but she might be forgiven the nourishment of a sentiment common to all mothers, as she looked at two of the mounted figures from the library windows. And it was quite as well that she should take some forethought for her daughter's future, as neither Sir Michael nor Stafford ever cared or thought one iota about the business. They never doubted that Providence, or some unknown God, would do for Evelyn what had been done for all the other women of the Carrington family, and marry her, or kill her, at the proper time and in the most ap-

proved manner. As the figures retreated through the glades of the park, whilst a sickly November sun paled the bolls of the trees on either side, Stafford, who had remained behind to give some orders about his horses for to-morrow, cantered after them; and though he was quite as far-seeing as most people, and of a mind as active as in body he was indolent, he failed to see anything but a very handsome man and a girl very good-looking for a sister, riding before him.

"Where are the hounds to-morrow, Stafford?"

"Four miles beyond Saxonby, and as this is very likely to be the afternoon draw, I must give orders about the earths. Evelyn, let's go round by the keeper's lodge, and into Saxonby by the other road."

"With all my heart; it makes very little difference, and we shall have some turf for a canter," replied the lady.

"Women are always for cantering. I suppose you never walked a horse to Saxonby and back in your life. Did you ever know a woman who was not unmerciful to her beast—at least as far as his legs and feet are concerned?"

"Miss Carrington showed a just discrimination, and, as soon as we get through the next gate, she ought to be indulged."

"Oh! of course Mentmore says 'no' to my 'yes,' while the lady is present; besides, having no sisters, he has not the experience I have."

"Let me profit by yours then," said the earl, in the hope of having to defend his companion.

"Certainly. Having no idea of time, they are always in a hurry, and with such excellent legs and feet of their own, they cannot imagine the possibility of decay in their horses. Their caresses bestowed on their four-footed favourites, are in proportion to their capability of endurance, and resemble the blandishments of newly married wives, or of a schoolmaster to his favourite pupil; and they have a very general opinion that they are all light-weights."

"The condition of Miss Carrington's horse disproves your criticism at all events," said Lord Mentmore.

"You are just and generous, Lord Mentmore; Stafford is neither; and he would like to reduce our energies to a level with his own, I should say, to his want of that quality."

"Do you know my friend Scarsdale, Stafford?" inquired

Lord Mentmore of his friend, who, having given his orders at the keeper's cottage, again joined them.

"Scarsdale? we can hardly be said to know him. My father makes very few new acquaintances about here, and I am seldom here, excepting in the hunting season. Scarsdale is the curate of Sommerton, I believe, but my sister knows more of the neighbourhood and the clergy."

"I know Mr. Scarsdale is a very hard-working person, and has a curacy which tries his talents to the uttermost. Sommerton has become a huge factory of late years. It was my grandfather's property, but now belongs to a Mr. Bradfield, who has found iron and covered the country with smelting furnaces, and a race of artisans in the place of our simple rustics, whom we love much better."

"Bradfield? a tall fair man, a very clever fellow they say; I know him." And here the groom galloped up and opened a gate into a hundred-acre grass field.

"Now for the promised canter, Miss Carrington," and sitting down on his horse, and taking him lightly by the curb, and pressing him firmly, the colt by the Cure started as a horse does start who comes out of such hands as those of Sir Michael Carrington. Miss Carrington following at the same pace, while Stafford's "whoay, gently, be quiet, stupid," proclaimed the horse's intentions, but that his master was at that moment employed in lighting a cigar. This operation completed, he felt that for once he must break through his rule, though sorely against his will; he was with them in time to pass through the next gate as the groom held it open for the other two.

"I forgot whether you said you knew Bradfield, Miss Carrington?"

Miss Carrington drew down her veil, it was a November day, verging in fact on December, and said, "You mean the young one, of course; I have met him once or twice. I was once for a week with him at Lady Sarah Elmsdale's."

"He must have been at Christ Church with you, Carrington?"

"I believe he was," said Stafford, listlessly, and affecting a comfortable indifference to such an epoch, though not many years past.

"He has a great reputation in town, with certain men; but I am very little there," rejoined Lord Mentmore, who

seemed bent on continuing the conversation at all hazards, "What's he meant for? he's gone to the bar."

"Politics, or the woolsack, of course. Having no natural position, excepting such as his money gives him, it is his business to make one."

"No fool either; though about thirty thousand a-year takes a position by storm——"

"I've never tried it," said Stafford, a little tartly.

"I have, and a devil of a deal of trouble it gives one too; what sort of a man was he at the University?"

"Slow and soft, I should think; but I didn't know him."

"He wasn't slow and soft when I made his acquaintance," replied the earl, sharply.

Miss Carrington pricked up her ears, and, still through her veil, ventured to ask how and when that was?

"I was at Tours in 184—. The place was full of English; bad style; and those who were not utter impostors were pretenders to high class; they all played *écarté* for five-franc pieces at the club, and dined at M. Roland's, a good *restaurant*, with a pretty wife. Foreigners are never very discriminating, and all the English who left a card at the palace, had the *entreé* to the Archbishop's parties at Tours."

"The Archbishop's?"

"Yes; one of the duties of the French archiepiscopate is to keep society together, and to see to its *morale*. The Archbishop himself was a finished gentleman, polite to all men, especially benign to us heretics. But to continue this story. We were coming from a palace ball about two in the morning, when we saw flames issuing from a window in the Rue Royale, which did not seem as yet to have disturbed the slumbers or the philosophy of the French commandant, who lived there. The English are a practical people, and we soon woke the household to a sense of their danger. First one sort of head-gear, then another sort, appeared at all the upper windows; then a cry of many voices; then the door opened and out rushed some of the lodgers, and in rushed the wind, and the flames went up to heaven again."

"But what had Mr. Bradfield to do with all this?"

"You seem impatient, Miss Carrington,"—her veil was down all this time, but her face began to glow,—"but we shall come to him directly. One Englishman, called Kerr Beamish, or Beamish Kerr (I forget which), ran up the

street calling out '*fou! fou! fou!*' with all his might, upon which a gendarme from the Hôtel de Ville suddenly appeared and threatened him, with a volley of *sacrés*, but seeing the smoke, happily brought some ladders and assistance, and helped to get the rest of the people out of the bed-room windows."

"It seems to me, my dear Mentmore, that your friend Bradfield is becoming slower than ever." This time it was Stafford who spoke.

"Wait a minute. We can understand a lady's impatience, but yours is quite a new feature;" and then he resumed:—"While we were standing looking at the flames, and imagining that everybody was safe, and that what remained to be burnt was but of little consequence, a voice, increasing somehow or other till it got to us, ran through the crowd, to the effect that a baby or two was left behind in a certain room, indicated by the finger of the mother, as I suppose. Ah! Miss Carrington, that mother's finger was a terrible index, and Bradfield thought it so. It wanted some courage to scale the ladder that still rested against the wall; and while I hesitated I saw a fine, broad-shouldered, light-haired young Saxon step out from the gleams of the firelight, and mount. He was scarcely a minute gone, when he reappeared with the object of their search. The mother met him on the ladder, and returned with the child, but without a thought for her preserver."

"Horrible! how unnatural."

"No, Miss Carrington, wrong again; natural but inconsiderate. By some inexplicable mistake, as the mother put her foot to the ground, the ladder was removed; and in the crowd of congratulations, for a moment—only a moment—the hero of the scene was forgotten. He appeared at the window, and seeing the ladder gone, and the impossibility of remaining longer, he jumped from the room; an ineffectual attempt of a small Frenchman to catch him, resulted in a severe fall for both of them, and the man was picked up with one of the worst dislocations of the foot that can well be conceived." Here Lord Mentmore stopped.

"But how came you to know him, beyond your casual meeting?"

"Ah! I forgot. The French papers kindly attributed

the fire to the smoking in bed of a young Englishman, who was carousing there, aud who had met with a severe aecident in leaping out to save his life. It was necessary to correct this misstatement, and having called upon him, and having some influence with the consul and the authorities, I insisted upon a coutradiction and au *amende*."

"Aud were you successful?"

"He was henceforth known as 'le vertueux eitoyen,' and his accident and my leisure made us companions for some months. If he lives near you, I should like to see him."

"The village is two miles and a-half across the fields, and the hounds meet there next week, on Monday, I think. You'll have an opportunity of seeing Mr. Bradfield then, unless you prefer calling beforehand."

The universal pauacea for all ills is a gallop. We prefer it with hounds; but there are men who, physically or eonstitutionally, are uuable to cujoy it in that form. Therefore we say whatever your ailment—loss of money or health, a runaway bailiff, a bilious headache, a dyspeptic wife, or a disappointment iu love, seek your remedy in the saddle. Desert the road; there you will be reminded only of your ills by every speeimen of miserable humanity you meet. The painted old dowager in her gilded ehariot proclaims vanity and vexation of spirit; the weary pedestrian, the laborious artisan, the waggon load of eoals, or the huckster's donkey, send you back to your domestic grievances. Trotting on a turnpike road may shake your material liver, but it does nothing to exalt your ideas or to take you out of yourself. But turn in at the first bridle gate, select a line of grass fields and practicable fenees for your essay, aud, if you do not come to grief, you will return a wiser and happier man. There you sit, with your reins lengthened on each side, just feeling your horse with the curb, as he arches his ueck and puts his head into place; shorten your stride for ridge and furrow, and when you get upou the headland let him move, and move with him. I dare say it may be vanity, self-applause at the beauty of the performanee (for there is no more beautiful performance in the world); we do not stop to analyse motives; but there you sit, the true representative of the Epicurean. Oh! how the heart bounds, and faney wings

her way far from this dull world, and freedom frets herself upon her rightful throne. We have heard of our native heather; nay! we have been on it; but give us a hundred-acre pasture, with the slightest possible risk of a fall in getting out of it, and we commend the exertions of the pedestrian, without, however, following his example, "Non cuivis homini," &c., &c.; but now you know why I should like to live in Northamptonshire.

When Lord Mentmore, Evelyn Carrington, and her brother reached Saxonby, two of the party were radiant with happiness and beauty, and the third was on the verge of animation in spite of himself.

CHAPTER VI.

A PARVENUE BEAUTY.

"Youre two eyn will sle me sodenly;
I may the beaute of them not sustene,
So windeth it thorowout my herte kene."
CHAUCER.

"WILLIAM," said Stafford Carrington to the groom, as they turned up towards the post-office of the sporting little town. "Get the second-post letters, and follow Lord Mentmore and Miss Carrington. Mentmore, I'll be with you in five minutes; I see Dillon's horse at the town hall, and I want to speak to him; it will save me the trouble of writing. Keep straight along the Sommerton Road till you come to the village, and my sister will show you the way back over the fields; but I shall catch you before that, unless you're going along the road as you came through the last three fields."

Mentmore and his companion, thus directed, turned short round to the left, without going into the town, and proceeded slowly, almost listlessly for the time of the year, along the road indicated to them. Their horses played

with the bits, and occasionally broke from a walk, as a market cart rattled past them; but they were straightway pulled up again; and slowly as they proceeded, neither seemed much inclined to talk. They had been voluble enough in the fields, while Stafford was with them; surely his absence had not thrown a damp on their spirits. The removal of a wet blanket should be immediately followed by a rise in the temperature.

The fact is, that Lord Mentmore began to think: a process, with him, wholly inconsistent with lively conversation. As he looked at Evelyn Carrington, who had again raised her veil, and whose glowing colour now owed nothing to anything but nature and exercise, he thought he had never seen so pretty a girl. She was far from a beauty; very far from his style of beauty. There was but little regularity in her features, and they required perhaps to be set in motion to give them their peculiar charm. But there was a great simplicity and truth about her whole carriage, which charmed his imagination, and disarmed his suspicions. The great fault of Mentmore's character, was the liability to suspect motives in everyone. His education, and the external circumstances of his position, had created this infirmity, from which his nature was eminently free. He was beginning to fancy himself very much in love. It was a curious contradiction in his character, that, without any diffidence, he never gave himself credit for creating impressions by what he was, always by what he had. He had fancied himself in love before this; but was always awakened from his dream by a supposed detection of some hidden design. He might have been well and happily married, but for this inconsistency. Women, as a rule, are the least calculating creatures in existence. There are some, spoilt by too old an education, or made prematurely hard and bright by constant friction with the world (rapid conductors and non-absorbers), who will sacrifice every charm of youth, and every sentiment of affection, on the shrine of ambition or selfish indulgence; but these cases are exceptional. Women are by nature self-sacrificing, true, impulsive: "varium et mutabile" if you will; but not thoughtful, considerate, "tenaces propositi," or self-seeking. Lord Mentmore had not found them so; but he had been rendered suspicious by a case or two, unconnected with matrimony,

and now he looked at them through his own glass—darkly.

Whilst he was turning over in his mind his present prospect of happiness, and the possibility of another indiscretion, the thought of Evelyn Carrington were directed in the same way. Women are quick of perception, especially where they are themselves concerned, and she almost divined his feelings towards herself. This might have had some effect upon her, for she was really wondering how little she was attracted by himself, his coronet, his wealth, or his grudgingly-offered affection. Personally she liked him: his good-nature, his good-temper, his simplicity, and princely liberality. All this was in accordance with the traditions of a half-ruined house, in which she had been brought up. She was plotting at that time a means by which she might prevent a too hasty explosion on his part, for his attentions could not be mistaken by herself. Her instinct told her what a candid avowal she had to expect, if he learnt to know her as she was. She was anxious only to prevent disappointment, to him, to her mother, and to Stafford.

She almost hoped he might fancy some symptoms of his *bête noire* in her; and thus save her the trouble of inflicting pain. Yet his good opinion was too valuable to lose, and her own reputation for sincerity, too dear for the sincere encouragement of such a wish. Some other means must be tried, unless she was so fortunate as to fall in love with Lord Mentmore.

This has taken some minutes to write; it took but a few seconds to design, to investigate, to analyse.

The road on which they were now riding is a narrow road. On the left is an elevated footpath near the town, which merges within a few hundred yards into shapeless mud, and soon ceases altogether. Heaps of stones ready for repairs, and manifestly an allotted task for the able-bodied pauper, line the opposite side; sloping fields of great extent, separated by large bull-fences, extend in endless succession parallel with the road. Its normal condition is twofold; soft yellow stones, half broken, or deep coal-cart ruts of unfathomable mud. Squire Bradfield's iron and coal carts render abortive the attempts of road surveyors and able-bodied paupers alike.

When the morning has been devoted to billiards, books, the bailiff, household cares, and the demands of a parish or a property, custom sanctions a ride, a drive, or a walk, as the occupation of the afternoon. The Bradfields were not different from their neighbours in this respect. When he was not seeing his lawyer, or quarrelling with his tenants, or electioneering, or toadying, or doing something to further his own interests at the expense of other people, Mr. Bradfield accompanied his wife or his daughter for a drive. He was fond of exhibiting himself in state behind his handsome carriage horses, and of fancying he heard a delighted populace shout, "Long live Bradfield the wealthy." On the present occasion he was engaged in giving instructions for a lawsuit, in which he was involved for robbing the public of a piece of road, which completed an angle of his park as he wished it to be completed; so his daughter's carriage came to the door alone, about the time that Lord Mentmore and Miss Carrington were leaving Saxonby behind them.

It was her father's last present to her; and was worthy, almost worthy, the beautiful recipient of his bounty. The carriage was all that Long Acre could do in the way of building: beautifully got up, long, low, substantially put together, but having an appearance of lightness, which it owed really to the elegance of its shape. The ponies, which now pawed impatiently for their mistress's hand, were the best movers in London, and had been rescued from the creditors of a nobleman of remarkable taste by the offer of such a sum as made John Anderson himself open his eyes. When Abel Bradfield meant to be munificent, and it was not often, he could afford to be so; and his daughter's birthday was a great occasion. They had been driven two or three times and approved of. They now waited for Ellen Bradfield at the terrace steps of Sommerton Hall.

"Ellen, are you going to drive those ponies to-day or to-morrow?" inquired her brother, who was cutting the leaves of a new French pamphlet, "Sur l'Evangile," which had made a great noise among the theological critics of the day.

"To-day, of course; and are you going with me, Sir?"

"No, thank you: M. d'—— is more amusing than even Saxonby itself; but you'd better go at once, for that bay

pony has been on his hind legs for the last ten minutes, and seems inclined to stop there altogether."

With this he walked down the steps to help her into her carriage. What he had said was nearly true. Good keep and little work had improved their condition, but not their manners, and both exhibited considerable impatience to be off. The small boy, who seemed to have been bought with the rest of the equipage, was more ornamental than efficient: but Ellen Bradfield never wanted courage, and that natural virtue on her part was now strengthened by ignorance. She sat down behind them with the *aplomb* of the Queen's state coachman on a birthday.

"They look fresh, Ellen: are you sure you can drive them?"

The banter on his lips convinced her that he had no fears for her, so she answered only by taking the reins, and letting them go. A succession of bounds carried them along the drive towards the lodge gate; she was scarcely willing to allow that she felt some degree of pleasure in seeing it open. The boy behind was becoming more alive to the danger, when on turning into the road the bay pony aforesaid gave a very unmistakable kick, which however did not break the splashboard, and which was, therefore, not regarded by his mistress as any symptom of unusual violence. Bad manners in horses are just as contagious as in the human subject. It was quite impossible for Perrot to see Dundreary (so called from the beauty of his mane) disporting himself in this eccentric manner, without joining in the amusement. Before long he began to jump too. Ellen Bradfield was a determined person, and had no idea of asking for assistance until *in extremis*, added to which she had not thought of requiring the services of her useless little boy in any such capacity. Her efforts to restrain her horses had already tired her wrists, and she had not yet gone a third of the way. The road itself was a succession of short hills, so that the ascent, which might have been a safety-valve to their exertions, was more than counterbalanced by the descents immediately following. They had as much idea of settling as Colonel Waugh himself. Still she managed to hold them; and was determined to call, in Saxonby, upon her friend Mr. Scarsdale to go back with her, as a necessary precaution against accident.

At this very moment one of those unfortunate *contretemps* happened, which are common enough in everybody's experience. A cottage door, immediately on the road, suddenly opened, and a woman did what she had been in the habit of doing for the last thirty years; she threw a bucket of dirty water into the road without looking. For thirty years it had been done with no other result than that of making a puddle or increasing the mud. Upon the present occasion the consequences were somewhat different, as we shall see.

"Miss Carrington, what's that?" said Lord Mentmore, using his glass at the same time.

They were about descending a long hill, and looked straight towards an opposite eminence of the same kind at half-a-mile distance. The dip of the hill lay between them.

"What's that?"

"It's a carriage and pair, Lord Mentmore," replied the lady, not using a glass, "and, good Heavens! it's running away; there's some one in it—a lady—alone!"

As she spoke it was easy to see the carriage rock from side to side; now over a heap of stones; again into the road towards the path, as the occupant endeavoured with all her strength to keep her horses straight.

Lord Mentmore beckoned to the groom; and descending lower down the hill jumped off his horse.

"Up on the footpath, Miss Carrington; quick. Nothing can be done till she reaches the bottom of the hill. Here, take my horse."

The pace the ponies were coming gave but little time for preparation; and Lord Mentmore was only just ready for action, as they dashed up the hill with almost undiminished speed. Placing himself in readiness as they neared the spot at which he stood, he ran by the side of the off horse for three or four strides, and turning him suddenly with all his great strength (for without being a giant he was a man of great power and activity, which his country life had confirmed), he brought the whole concern to a stand-still amidst a heap of stones, on the deepest and muddiest roadside he had yet seen. The heads of the ponies were brought to bay in a thick bullfinch, and in another second Miss Carrington and the groom were by his side.

The ponies had had their gallop, and though they were not by any means beat, they seemed satisfied to stand still while Miss Bradfield stepped out of her pony-chair on to the driest stone she could find. She did not faint; and, with the number of horses and paucity of hands, it may be considered fortunate that she did nothing to add to the perplexity. Her beautiful features were, however, as pale as death, and it was quite clear that she could not take the ponies back in her present state. They presented a curious group to anyone coming over the hill, did these five persons; for by this time the little groom had joined them, having been disposed of, as he says, at a heap of stones: the supposition being that he jumped out. Lord Mentmore stood by the ponies, unwilling to leave them; Miss Carrington sat on her horse, having first introduced herself and then Lord Mentmore; William busied himself in looking over the carriage to detect flaws in that or the harness, having surrendered the horses to the little groom, who was otherwise useless; while Ellen Bradfield sat herself down on a heap of stones, and, though her hands shook and her limbs trembled, and her lips had not yet regained their colour, thanked her deliverers, and detailed the causes of the accident with as much presence of mind as though she had been once more in her own drawing-room. The next question was how to get her there.

"Here comes Stafford, Miss Carrington;" and at that moment he appeared, coming over the hill, with his reins hanging on his horse's neck; nor did the unwonted group much disturb his equanimity. He continued his descent at the same pace. Not so a pedestrian who came over the brow at the same time: he no sooner saw the pony-chair, and the groom, and the unusual concatenation of circumstances, that his walk became a trot, which shortly ended in a run—a fair reason for a little apparent indecision in demanding the cause of the catastrophe.

Scarsdale, for it was he, was what one of the best writers of the day is pleased to call a Muscular Christian; not, as we heard it explained from the pulpit by an extemporaneous cushion thumper, a mixture of piety and strong exercise, the soul of a Spurgeon in the body of a Tom Sayers, but a practical parson, who believed his vocation to be that of doing good to everybody, under all circumstances.

in the way most likely to be efficient for the end proposed. He occasionally visited his people in health as well as in sickness. He did not always call upon the old women of Sommerton with the "Visitation for the Sick" under his arm. He threw in many a word of comfort to the labourer in the field, whom he could not have hoped to catch in his cottage. He interested the souls of his flock not unfrequently through their bodies; and occasionally seemed to have no other purpose in his little visits than to enquire after the wellbeing of the pig. He had succeeded a very spiritually-minded young man, with a frock-coat down to his ankles, and a word of advice to everybody, which he never varied. He was always "in season," like the ratcatcher's dog, whenever rats were to be met with. Yet, strange to say, the poor of Sommerton preferred John Scarsdale to his predecessor; and that was quite enough to make Abel Bradfield hate him.

This brotherly sentiment was not shared by either his daughter or his son. They liked John Scarsdale, and admired his practical sense and honesty of character, as did everyone who knew him. There was a little dilemma as to how Miss Bradfield should be sent back to Sommerton. Lord Mentmore offered his services, simply, kindly, not warmly; for, though he could not but feel admiration for the lovely face before him, and sympathy for her accident, he felt more strongly that his duties and his inclination belonged to Evelyn Carrington. She, on the contrary, begged him not to think of her, and not to trust Miss Bradfield to the capacity of any groom. The lady herself, who was rapidly recovering, was firm in her refusal of assistance, and was about submitting to a compromise, that the Spring Vale servant should be spared as her charioteer, and that her own "incapable" should be trusted with Mr. Carrington's hack—a service of which his reviving colour seemed to render him capable. The arrival of John Scarsdale, however, put all to rights.

"Oh! Mr. Scarsdale, you were going to your parish, I'm sure; pray let me take you, or do you take me back; that will save Lord Mentmore and Miss Carrington's servant all further trouble."

Scarsdale's face glowed with delight, as he replied to this request. But Scarsdale was young; and if he cherished

any feeling beyond that of the purest friendship, he was wrong.

"And I'm sure my friend Scarsdale is quite as able as I, or anyone else, to take you home in safety," said Lord Mentmore, shaking hands with him the meanwhile, and raising his hat to Miss Bradfield, whom he now assisted to take the left-hand seat in the phaeton, while Scarsdale gathered up the reins, ready for the drive.

"Mentmore, be so good as to let your man take up that off pony's curb a link or two, and put the near-side rein of the other down to the bottom bar."

Lord Mentmore beckoned to William, who did as Scarsdale had suggested, the little tiger climbed into his seat behind, and with renewed thanks Miss Bradfield was once more on her road home.

"And who the devil is that?" said Mr. Carrington, as they once more got into marching order.

"That's Miss Bradfield, Stafford; you must have seen her before."

"Never, certainly—that's not a face to forget. You said there were no such things as modern Valerias. You didn't believe in them in connection with Turkey carpets and civilisation. That's a Valeria of modern life."

"*A propos——?*"

"Of Whyte Melville's book, 'The Gladiators.' That's a Valeria in character; colouring of the school of Correggio."

"What do you see in her? It must be something distinctive to have attracted such marked notice from your fastidious brother, Miss Carrington."

"Hair of yellow gold," said he, almost to himself, meditatively at least, "dark eyes and lashes, on a tint of snow; an upper lip short and arched; passion and self-respect; a chin handsome but somewhat square; power for good or evil."

"Why not for good alone?" asked Evelyn.

"Because that's impossible."

"What, is there no goodness with power, Stafford?"

"Yes; but accidentally."

"Then pray give her the benefit of the doubt," said Mentmore, "beauty is generally allied with goodness, and a more lovely face than that it would be difficult to see."

He spoke warmly, and Miss Carrington endorsed all he said.

"Power inclines to evil," retorted Stafford. "That face has as much power as beauty. The weak give up their vices as impracticable, and take to respectability as a *pis aller*."

"You're becoming cynical, Stafford; come, you're too young for that at all events."

"No; it is true, whatever you may think. Had she lived with my mother she might have been good, and certainly great; what can happen with the grasping avarice, and vulgar tyranny by which she is surrounded?"

"What's the matter with Bradfield *père?*"

"Nothing particular; he's a tyrant, and a toady, a pretender, and a miser, in one breath; and is suspected of half a dozen rascalities that would have hung poorer men;" and here Stafford Carrington relapsed into silence, and began to whistle.

The fact is, that during the few moments he was present, he had just found time to admire the wonderful beauty he had seen before him. After once raising his hat, as a mere distant act of politeness, he had suffered himself to gaze his fill at a loveliness, which struck him as the more extraordinary, when he heard who she was. His mind was peculiarly formed to appreciate extraordinary physical beauty, and to pass by what was commonplace. Though his prejudices were great, his admiration was so intense, that he felt bound to justify himself by the immediate adoption of maxims by no means just. Hence his philosophical analysis of a beauty which he had but partially inspected.

"And who was that fellow that so coolly took his seat and the reins by her side?" asked he, after a sufficient pause which no one seemed anxious to break.

"That was my friend Scarsdale," replied Lord Mentmore.

"Oh! that was Scarsdale—free and easy?"

"Not remarkably so. I intend to give that fellow a good living; he's a good, practical, hard-working parish priest, a character I much admire."

"He won't stand in need of assistance to get through life, if assurance will do it for him." Why he had fallen foul of Scarsdale it was difficult to say.

"Why! Stafford — what's the matter? that's the first time I ever knew you with energy enough to abuse even your enemies; and I suppose you never saw Mr. Searsdale till to-day."

Miss Carrington pulled her horse up as she spoke, and the groom held open a bridle-gate to the left, leading into a large ridge and furrow field.

"This way, Lord Mentmore." And he passed through the gate after her.

"I didn't mean to abuse Mr. Scarsdale; I dare say he's a good fellow enough, but if he looks closely after his principal female parishioner, he may certainly manage to exist without Mentmore's promised living."

"Is that Sommerton, Stafford?"

"Yes! that's Sommerton; what do you think of it?"

"It's all wall—it looks like money to judge by the bricks and mortar round it. If John Searsdale has an eye to the heiress, he'd better provide himself with a rope ladder. Mr. Bradfield seems to be an exceedingly *in*clusive person."

Here Miss Carrington took hold of her horse, and the party quickened their pace; the day was beginning to fail.

The cottages at Sommerton looked like money, as well as the park wall. Everything has its advantages; and that egotistical "my" which was the leading feature of Abel Bradfield's mind resulted in strong, well-built, well-ventilated, and well-drained cottages for the labourers in his vineyard, and for which he made them pay. Still there they were, unpicturesque truly; but air-tight and water-tight, and not to be met with elsewhere. They had too the Bradfield mark all over them, "A. B., 18—;" and like everything round him, excepting only the atmosphere itself, proclaimed aloud: "I, Abel Bradfield, although a manufacturer and a parvenu, can do more than all the Carringtons and their neighbours put together."

We will go into one of these cottages, an hour or two later than the time at which the Carringtons and Lord Mentmore had quitted the village. It was clean and tidy, but meanly furnished. Four chairs, a round table, a cradle on which had been lavished all the art and extravagance of a poor mother's love. Scraps of coloured gauze and ribbons were the first objects which met the eye of a casual observer. On the mantelpiece there was the usual assort-

ment of tins, dredgers, and saucepans, mingling in an inconsistent familiarity with a sixpenny's worth of porcelain shepherdesses and lambs, and the commonest representation of Carlo Dolce's Salvator Mundi. Above them was a sampler, hanging upon the wall, which purported to be the work of Ann Mason, of the Spring Vale School. The only other article of furniture was a good-looking clock, too good indeed for the rest of the decorations. There were cupboards as in all the cottages in Sommerton, on both sides of the fireplace; and the room was fitted with pegs and other conveniences, which were evidently made use of. We are particular in describing these things, as they bespeak the character of the delicate, pretty young woman who occupied one of the chairs. She was working at some coarse sort of sewing, resembling a labourer's shirt; her foot was rocking the cradle before mentioned; and on the small piece of carpet before the fire were playing two children, which might have been of the respective ages of three and five years. They were handsome black eyed youngsters, clothed not in rags but with many patches, less dirty however than the ordinary run of such children, and at present quiet by the intervention of a thick slice of bread. When children know nothing of butter, it is astonishing how palatable the unadulterated material may be made to appear. The day was long gone, but the mother worked on by the single rushlight in the room, aided by a cheerful coal fire, which threw its flickering glare on the objects around.

Mrs. Job Fletcher was manifestly poor, but she was a tidy woman, better than common, and usually putting a good face upon difficulties. That was evident. She had been better off, and in better houses; the cradle spoke out. She had or had had friends; that was the clock's chime; and she had a husband who was either very hard worked or fond of his beer; his absence from her side proclaimed it aloud. But nothing else, or rather nobody living dared have said so in Mrs. Fletcher's hearing.

There is a step outside, and one of the little ones lifted its brown curls and said, "Daddy." The mother put down her work, trimmed her candle with the point of her needle, and unbolted the door.

An athletic-looking fellow, with dark eyes and dark hair, in the dress of a labourer, but somewhat affecting that of

a gamekeeper, by his brown velveteen jacket, stood on the threshold.

"Well, mother," said he, shaking the ashes from his pipe, and placing it carefully on the mantelpiece; "how goes it? young 'uns not in bed yet? Master Tom, what be you about?" The woman looked up at him, and without replying took his rough hand in hers; there was a great contrast between the two. Her face expressed the smallest possible shade of reproach. He saw it in a moment, and said, "Come, Nanny, I ain't been long. It's not late, and I been put out above a bit, I can tell 'c."

"What was it, Job; something about the club-money? We'll make it all right next pay-day. Miss Ellen's very kind at bottom, though she does make believe sometimes."

"No, Nanny, it's not about the club-money. Though there ain't much charity if they don't convenience us sometimes when we're behind-hand. It's all along o' that young parson of ourn."

"I thought you liked Mr. Scarsdale, Job; I'm sure he's very kind to us, and always takes such notice o' the children."

"Ah! that's all very well; but he's been on again about them pheasants; he says it's the same thing as taking fowls or money. Says as the squire feeds 'em, and pays for 'em, and consequently they be his'n. I can't see it in that way nohow." Here he sat himself down again and began to refill his pipe.

"Well, if he thinks so, you know, Job, God knows all about it, and perhaps Mr. Scarsdale's right."

"That's like you, Nanny, always for the parson. And then he went on uncommon about Dan Morton; and threatens to tell the squire, or Jennyngs, if we don't give it up. Says he hears on it everywhere, and it's his duty."

"And if it is, Job——" said the woman, placing her hand on her husband's arm.

"What! his duty to get you and your little 'uns turned out of the cottage? No, no, that won't do. He wants to make friends with the squire, that's all; wants to marry Miss Ellen belike, and have Sommerton for hisself."

"Nonsense, how should you know?"

"How should I know? Oh, I knows a good deal more than folks thinks for. Wasn't he drivin' with Miss Ellen

this arternoon? Besides, didn't Morton tell me all about it?"

"Morton's always got something to say. I can't think what he finds to talk about. He's got tho best cottage in the parish, and Mr. Jennyngs is often doing him one good turn or another. I'm sure I wish he'd been further first before he came to work on the farm. Why didn't he stick to the ironworks in Lower Sommerton?"

"I know he's a wildish chap, Nanny, but there ain't much harm in him. He knows what he's about; the squire won't make an enemy of him."

"He didn't bear the best of characters in Claygate, and he isn't any good to us, I'm sure;" and Nanny Fletcher brought a good honest sigh from the bottom of her breast.

"Dang it, lass, what are you got again? Dan Morton? We shouldn't a had last night's supper, if it hadn't been for him; and what's thee got to-night? I'm right clammed with the fog."

Nanny did not answer at first. She looked up with a sorrowful expression of face, and then nodded towards the cupboard on the right hand side of the fireplace. Then she took up her baby out of the cradle, and taking the candle from the table went slowly to the door which led to the staircase, and went up stairs. Her foot was heavy for one so young and light as she.

Meantime Job Fletcher lighted another candle, and holding it in his hand, looked first to the door, which he bolted and locked, and then went to the cupboard indicated by his wife.

"Ah! sure enough; here it be. And she ain't touched it—not a morsel. Poor Nanny! now, what can she and the young 'uns a-had for dinner! She said she wouldn't, and dang me if she have;" saying which he brought down from the highest shelf a cold pheasant, part of a loaf of brown bread, two plates, knives and forks, and a couple of rude mugs. He then passed through the door by which Nanny had retired, and shortly returned with a jug of table-beer. Having placed these things comfortably on the table, he called at the foot of the stairs—

"Come, lass, make haste wi' the little 'uns, and come down."

Presently Nanny appeared; but she hesitated to take her

seat at the table, and sat down looking wistfully at her husband.

"Now, wife," said he, good-naturedly, "take the plate; it won't bite ye," and he laughed at her fears. It stood before her untouched.

"I can't, Job, indeed I can't; it's the wages of sin; it's a sacrifice."

"Nonsense;" and he came round to her. "Come, Nanny, to oblige me; you never mind about Dan Morton. Take and eat a bit; it's not pison; and, as to the wages o' sin, if we gets no worse off the farm, there won't be much harm done."

"I can't bear it, Job, I can't indeed;" and one large, slowly-gathering tear, fell on his velveteen sleeve, as he put his arm tenderly round her neck. "It seems as if it would choke me. If anything was to happen to you, what would become of us?"

"Nothin' 'ill happen to us; doan't ye be afeard, my lass; the squire and Dan Morton's too good friends for that." Nanny began slowly to gulp down the pheasant, watered with her tears.

It was not in her nature to be long very sad; and she ate what was put before her, though without much relish for what she knew to be stolen food. Her husband was a kind persuader, where her own hunger failed to convince. She was a good and well brought-up woman; had been in the service of the Carringtons, and an especial favourite of old Aunt Philly in the school. She had married a man a little below her in manners, and without the advantages of the education by which she had profited; but she never repented her choice, for he was the kindest and handsomest man in either parish; and Nanny knew that the rosiest bed has the most thorns. He shocked her principles sometimes, but he never injured her by an unkind word or deed. He made her tremble for himself; for Job Fletcher was an incorrigible poacher, and latterly it had produced its invariable result—evil communications were beginning to corrupt good manners.

CHAPTER VII.

THE LOWER CLASSES.

"And guile and ruffian force were all their trade."
An Allegory.—THOMPSON.

An unsuccessful attempt upon the latch of the door was followed by a loud knock, evidently with a stick. Job returned from his place by his wife's side, and took the pheasant, now half eaten, with the two plates, and placed them carefully in the cupboard, which he locked. He then unbarred the door. Dan Morton stood upon the threshold. He was a giant in size. Job Fletcher was as fine a young man as need be looked upon. His height must have been six feet and an inch or two. As the two men stood together in the semi-darkness of the cottage, there was but very little, if any, difference in this respect: yet Morton looked a giant by the side of the other. His enormous breadth of chest and shoulders, his length of limb, and his ragged and unkempt hair and beard, both of a fiery red, gave him an appearance which could be described by no word so well as brutality. His face was broad and flat, his forehead low and receding, his brow was heavy and knotted above his eyebrows, which were almost bare of hair. His eyes were small and bright, with a cunning ferocity shining in them; his nose was short and flat, telling a tale of more than one long and savage battle in the ring; where his great strength almost served to conquer the superior science of smaller men. His mouth was large and thick-lipped, and his hands and feet even disproportionately large, for his enormous bulk. In looking at him, he seemed to possess every quality for deeds of lawlessness and violence save one. Agility was not his characteristic; and Job Fletcher by his side was endowed, by comparison, with positive refinement. The most conspicuous parts of his dress were a bright-coloured neckcloth, knotted loosely round his throat, corduroy breeches, and very strong leathern gaiters. He carried in his hand a short stick of some heavy wood, and was accompanied by a

mongrel sheep-dog, manifestly a pointer with his tail cut off; which greeted Job with a low growl, and, after looking at the cat, which retired back up and hackles standing underneath Nanny's chair, curled himself up before the fire. He seemed conscious that his master's visit was not to be a very transitory one.

Mrs. Fletcher looked positively frightened; but endeavoured to do the honours of her house with a gentility innate, if not acquired in a better school than that of Somerton.

"Good-evening, Morton; you seem cold; stir the fire, Job; is the fog as heavy as it was an hour ago?" She would willingly have engaged Morton's good feelings, if he knew what such things were, in behalf of her husband.

"Fog," replied he, without removing his hat, and warming his feet on the hob at the same time. "It hangs over the cover-side, as if we should never see a branch of it again. Curate been here to-night, Job?"

"Arn't seen him these three weeks."

"What! not at the old shop? Why, man, you be grown quite wicked," retorted the other, with a malicious laugh, which roused the woman. "You don't look arter him, Mrs. Fletcher. He be a bad boy, be Job Fletcher."

"He saw him the day before yesterday in church, so he ain't so bad as some folks, Mr. Morton; but Mr. Scarsdale's safe at home by this time, I hope."

"He be pryin' about looking after his flock, like the wolf, d—— him," rejoined Morton. "He's been dining at the Hall, and gone up to the night school. Squire be away in Lunnun, so he and the young missus be arter their games; and he ain't been dining on bread and cheese, I'll be bound. Is that all you're got for supper? Come, Job, man, let's have 'em out."

Job laughed, and winked to his wife; who however sat immovable. Then he rose, went to the cupboard, and brought down the pheasant, with another plate, on which he immediately placed almost the remainder of the bird, cutting a huge slice of bread at the same time, and offering it to Dan Morton.

"No! no! dang it; I be tired o' such dainties: to-morrow be Saxonby market, and I means going in for a shin o' Mr. Shamble's beef—there, that'll do for me,"

added he, as he cut off a huge slice of cheese, and helped himself to a mug of beer. "Ah! that's a Charnside bird, I know, they be better fed nor the squire's; but they be nothing to the long wood and the canal bank at Spring Vale."

"You seem to know all about 'em, Morton," said Job Fletcher, who went on with his supper during the conversation.

"Well, I knows a game country, when I sees it. None o' your plashed hedges for me. There's a sight too many wood-pigeons hereabouts."

"What harm do they do?" asked Job Fletcher.

"They're always on the move, d—— 'em," said Morton, who usually uttered a curse on everybody or thing which interfered with his interests; and it was no empty sound with him. He followed it up at most times by active measures to secure its fulfilment.

The men relighted their pipes, and drew their chairs towards the fire, which was replenished by a large piece of coal, unbroken; and Mrs. Fletcher rose, without comment, and produced a bottle and two horns.

"Put a log to warm by the fire, Nanny; we may want it."

At that moment there came a knock at the door; it was not a timid knock, it was decisive enough; but this time it was a finger, not a stick. The door opened, and Mr. Scarsdale entered.

At first he drew back, seeing two where he had expected to find only one man by the fire.

"Good-evening, Mrs. Fletcher; how are you, Fletcher?" said the curate, as the man rose and smiled good-humouredly, bowing with rustic simplicity.

"Pray come in, Sir; it's a bad night to be out," and so great was the effect produced by the natural courtesy of his companion, that Morton rose and removed his hat, which hitherto he had kept on his head.

"Is that you Morton?" said Mr. Scarsdale, at once recognising the giant, when he stood up. "Keep your seat, and don't let me interrupt you. I have to walk to Saxonby, and I want a light for my cigar. I saw one through your shutters, as I was passing, and just turned in, otherwise I must have gone without." He took his cigar to the fire,

and so far was Morton mollified by a parson who smoked, that he screwed up a piece of paper, and held it for him. As he went out of the door, Mrs. Fletcher dropped a curtsy, and an audible "Thank ye, Sir." After making her husband and his guest comfortable, she glided from the room without exchanging a word on the late and unexpected visit.

"Conscience doth make cowards of us all." And though nothing could have been simpler or more innocent than the appearance of the cottage, or more natural than the visit, Job felt uneasy at something or other. He was conscious of not having been caught in the best of company. Even Morton, without those sentiments of respect which actuated the Fletchers, male and female, in their intercourse with their parish priest, tingled with an undefined dislike for affinity with something so different from himself. If Scarsdale had been a psalm-singer or Pharisaical observer of outward ceremony only, no one would have more willingly insulted him than Dan Morton: but it was, in his mind, impossible to laugh at a clergyman who was frank, honest, and practically useful; and who was going to walk through a thick fog to Saxonby at nine o'clock at night, with a cigar in his mouth. It was so different from anything which Morton expected his spiritual adviser to be. He was likely to be a bitter enemy, but he was sure to be an open one.

To a man like Job Fletcher there is something wonderfully attractive in sport, and everything connected with it. As a boy he was always playing truant to go and look at the hounds, when they came into his neighbourhood. As a lad, he was always to be met with at the meets, holding open the gates for the gentlemen, and earning more by his idleness than two or three days' work would have given him. When he grew older, he never omitted an opportunity of learning where the partridges jugged, and from looking at them too often, he sometimes joined in taking them. He could scarcely be then called a poacher, as going out at night was an exceptional case; but he had his eyes about him, when at work, and could see a hare quicker than most men in the parish. His occasional depredations were overlooked, as he was very useful to the keepers. He knew quite as well as they where a fox was to be found; and could have told when and why he was not to be found at the right time.

Abel Bradfield would have been very angry with a keeper who was clumsy enough to have been found out destroying them. It was said the rabbit-traps were conveniently large in the Sommerton covers.

With all these tastes and opportunities, it is not strange that there was nothing repulsive to him in Dan Morton; and there was a positive fascination in his conversation, which always turned on the pursuit of game, and was full of information and adventure; for Morton had been a sojourner in strange lands, and talked of bustards and capercailzies, kangaroo's flesh and jackal hunting, buffaloes and rhinoceroses, as if they were barn-door fowls, or home-bred pheasants. There were tales of endless woodlands, and rivers full of fish to be had for the taking; and altogether he had a life to expose so full of adventure and peril, that Job Fletcher was enchanted in spite of himself and his wife's remonstrances. To do Dan justice, it was his natural element, and he looked less repulsive while relating his experiences among game. He would almost have adorned a felon's dock if the charge had been one of successful poaching, accompanied by murderous assault on a keeper.

"Not much of a night for our work, Job," said Morton, drawing his chair nearer to the fire, and smoking a short black pipe, which he had laid aside for a moment on the entrance of Mr. Scarsdale.

"Well, noe; on wants a little light for it; but what work do you mean?"

Job looked as if he longed for a job, and that there was one in particular waiting for him.

"Oh! nothing particular, but the fog is so dark and cold that I think it's going to freeze; and then we shall have 'em at our pheasants again; eh, Job?" This was such a curious way of putting it, that it made Job laugh in spite of himself.

"And you think as we ought to be first sarved? We'll leave 'em a few, Dan."

"Sure-lie. But if Mr. Jennyngs comes any more nonsense with me about that little bit o' ground as I wants to my cottage, d— me if I doan't shoot 'un some fine night."

"Nonsense about shooting, Dan. What would ye have? You do as you like, you get the best house in the parish, you never has to ask twice of the squire for anything, you takes

half-days when you like, you've come down from the works to the farm below the hill, and now ye talk o' shooting; why what be ye thinkin' on, man?"

"And why shouldn't I, pray? I'm as good a man as the squire any day, and knows more than he does. If it warn't for Miss Ellen, I'd a told him a bit o' my mind before now." The black bottle was getting lower, and taking effect upon Morton, who had been at the beershop earlier in the evening.

"But I don't see what the squire's done to you?" said Job, rather dogmatically.

"Well, then, he's turned the old man into the workus."

"But you'd a had to keep 'un yourself, if he hadn't."

"May be or not; ought to a kept him hisself; and should if I'd a been here; but the old 'un's not so stout as he was."

"Miss Ellen told 'un to stop where he was," rejoined Job, not sorry to say a good word for her. "My missus heard her order Jennyngs out; but the old man wouldn't stop. He'd a bee in the bonnet, Dan."

"Good cause too." Then he paused a little, and looked straight into the fire, as if his mind was wandering among forms and scenes far away. At length he said, "When be the hounds a coming here, Job?"

"Next week, I take it; but the meets ain't out yet."

"Then mind you're at the bottom of the cover; and we mustn't know one another, if we meet—keep a wide berth—we shall see what there is in the low cut; we can afford a night or two up yonder; and we'll give the baronet a turn when the leaves is off. He'll not be shootin' his'n before Christmas, there's time enough. I owe the Carringtons a turn. Master Stafford it was as pressed for a conviction last year."

They smoked on in silence, not saying much to one another, till at length Fletcher said, somewhat unexpectedly, "How's the iron get on, up by them new blasting furnaces?"

"Well, pretty well, I should think, for a new concern; six or seven hundred tons a week, and coal and a rail just handy: he must be coining money all over this estate."

"All the better for Mr. Laurence; he'll have it all, I suppose."

"Not he; it's the girl as gets this property; Master

Laurence takes the big place up in the north somewheres," and he knocked the ashes from his pipe.

"How's that then?" demanded Job Fletcher of his companion.

"The old man left this to her; she'll have a fine fortune she will."

Another pause. "Why don't you go up to the works? I think I shall. The work's hard, but the pay's better. I think I must, for Nanny and the young 'uns."

"Don't you be a fool, Job. I bin there. There's as much as we want to be got here, and you can't work like a horse all day and all night too. I got something as 'ull do for us in a month or two. Meantime there's plenty to eat and to spare too, and you know how to get it."

"But I tell you, Morton, Nanny don't like it. She's better brought up nor I, and doan't see things in the same light, you know. Truth is, I've half a mind to give it up."

"Not yet, Job, wait a bit. She won't mind it when she can get a comfortable bit for the children, and something to pay the rent. We got an order down from London to supply a great house with game at so much a head all we knows how to do; there'll be six on us with you, and there's no covers in the county can stand against us, when the time comes. Ah! she won't mind it when the time comes. Besides, what's wages? just nothing; how's a man to find rent, and food, and firing, and clothes, and just a sup o' beer or somethin' more, and his club, an' all out o' ten shillin' a week? Danged if I couldn't eat as much at a meal," and the huge monster opened his mouth and grinned again from ear to ear at the notion.

"We gets a trifle more than that with one thing or the other, though it is hard work to match it, to be sure. It ain't for me, but it's Nanny as I thinks ou. And there's her brother, second keeper at Sir Michael's—Lord! what would he do if he wor to catch me!"

"Why, let ye go again all the easier, to be sure. What's the use of a brother, if he won't stand in a bit?"

"No chance o' that, Dan; he's a true-bred 'un."

"And so be we true-bred 'uns. He's bred for sarviee, I suppose, and a d—d bad sarvice too. He don't think as the game belongs to him any more nor to Sir Michael, do he?—leastways I don't."

"I don't think so myself, Dan; but if we're caught, what's to become of Nanny and the little 'uns?"

Job looked seriously bent on a new life as he spoke.

"Never you mind about them—they'll be took care on; and as to hurtin' me, or anything belongin' to me, Master Bradfield might as well cut his own hand off."

Job had so often heard the same inexplicable innuendo from the lips of his companion that he had ceased to attach any importance to it; though if he had been accustomed to any logical process of the mind, he might have seen cause to give some credit to the apparently idle boast.

Dan Morton soon after raised himself from his seat, and taking his hat, and relighting his pipe, he gave his dog a kick, which roused him from his sleep, and went out of the cottage with a rough "Good-night."

This is not a bad opportunity to consider the antecedents of Dan Morton.

Of course, Dan had been a baby. There was not much trace of it left, and, like himself, the conception seemed too great for the production of any brain. We can imagine him a boy. He was so once, and the son of not honest nor industrious parents. They lived in the village of Claygate, not many miles from the scene of our story. Until the birth of Dan himself, the parish had been purely agricultural. His father had enjoyed a reputation even then not consistent with the Arcadian simplicity of rustic life. The much-vaunted innocence of the labourer has a close affinity with knock-knees and imbecility of mind: his vices with the uncivilised ferocity of a savage. When Dan was five or six years old, the discovery of iron in the clay, the erection of furnaces, and the employment of additional and skilled labour, added refinement to the village calendar of crime. Among the first to profit by this expanse of education was Dan's father; and, by consequence, Dan himself. His mother, who might have saved him—for mothers do save boys, you know—was dead and gone; and, rather than have a quiet home and a new wife, old Morton lodged at the public, and kept house in the tap-room for himself and his son. One thing the parson of the parish did for the young Rechabite (for at ten years old he would drink nothing but water—with a little gin in it), he sent him to school. This might have been of much service to him—as it was, he only

corrupted the rest; and when he removed him, it was to make four shillings a week by giving assistance on the tramway. He was well up in pitch and toss; he was a head taller than any boy in the village school of his own age, and far behind them in decent acquirements; he attracted notice from all who visited the school for his singular backwardness and ugliness—until he began to believe that the right thing was to be at the bottom of his class and a head above it. Sunday was his holiday; and as his parish priest had often told him that no work should be done on that day, but that a certain measure of innocent recreation was even commendable, he passed it in cock-fighting or badger-baiting, in tracking hares, and setting springes for pheasants. If sold as a young one, he might have been recommended as "fast in all his paces."

As Dan Morton advanced in years, he scarcely grew better. His father was a man whose reputation was so bad as to have subjected him to every suspicion, but he boasted of never having been convicted. This respectable old man held his head high among his neighbours. He had never been found out. His boldness was tempered with discretion. As to Dan, he knew of nothing wrong in the domestic circle—for poaching was a great national virtue in the neighbourhood, excepting among the preservers; and what could a keeper or two in the world signify, more or less?"

Poaching is a very curious phase of the agricultural epidemic—it is almost incurable; and though dangerous enough, as leading to other fiercer maladies, it is regarded as of small importance in itself. Nobody strives to check it, excepting by such remedies as are totally inadequate to the disease. So old Giles Morton, or Morton Giles, as he was indiscriminately called, being of doubtful lineage, and not caring to hand down one name more than another to his son, went through life; and so young Dan had followed him, until a sporting foreman at the works from Birmingham took him by the hand, and finding it strong enough and thick enough to kill an ox, like Milo of old, put him in the hands of the Warwickshire Resurrectionist—a name acquired by his celebrity for bringing beaten men to the post.

Young Dan had pluck and strength, but was deficient in that part of the art of self-defence which requires quickness and intelligence. He was not bad in the Provinces, where

his length and power gave him great advantages with moderate yokels; but when he was put down in the prize ring, he was knocked out of time in fifteen minutes by the Burstall Rooster, and returned upon his father's hands with a broken nose, a damaged reputation, and seven pounds ten collected on the spot for his capacity—to take punishment. His trainer and supposed backer, who had taken his measure beforehand, won good stakes; and no one was the worse for the fight but the men at the Claygate Works who had put down the conters on their man, and the ratepayers of Great Britain, whose pockets support the gaols and workhouses of this happy country.

Ugliness daunts no woman; but some qualities in Dan Morton, physical or mental, had happily frightened the sex, and improvident marriages could not be added to the list of his venial peccadilloes. He was bad before, but the Birmingham journey finished him. As long as there was anything to be got without labour, Dan Morton had no objection to help himself. He was to be found at statutes—why, nobody knew; at horse-fairs, where he enjoyed much vagabond company, and was not averse to taking charge of a few horses, so long as he might ride. Of ratting he was very fond; and would have adopted it as a profession, but unfortunately, at the opening of his career, at the very drawing up of his articles, he was detected with his pockets full of live rats at the door of a barn which he was paid for clearing at the rate of fourpence a head, and the case was so very clear, that even his well-known reputation, either for honesty or as a bully, did not save him. He was now nearly forty-five; at the time he was twenty-three he was a vagabond upon the face of the earth.

The Claygate Ironworks and the Sommerton Estate had belonged for some time to the father of Abel Bradfield. He had bought them for a small sum of money, being at the time a rising man, manager of the Claygate Works. The money with which he was supposed to have bought the Sommerton property was the produce of some other venture. Indeed that property, some said, the old man had not bought at all; but had taken possession of, under a peculiar clause existing in the mortgage deeds, by which the estate had passed from the hands of Sir Reginald Carrington, the uncle of the present baronet. Be that as it

may, the Sommerton Estate was old Bradfield's. The old man was an unscrupulous person, with no pretensions even to respectability of character in a moral sense, and with no feelings of a gentleman in an ethical one. He wanted tools fitted to his hand for many a questionable purpose; and no one in the parish wondered that he should regard with favour two men like the Mortons, who made but a show of labour in his service, but were always treated with the consideration that belongs to the unscrupulous classes.

Some thirty years ago a deed of daring had been done in the county. Nothing had transpired to fix the highway robbery upon anyone in particular; the circumstances of it were mysterious in every way; nor was it till long afterwards, that it was recollected that the Mortons, father and son, had emigrated within no long time of its occurrence. They had returned again to this country three years ago.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HIGHER CLASSES.

> "Girt with many a baron bold,
> Sublime their starry fronts they rear,
> And joyous dames and statesmen old
> In bearded majesty appear;
> In the midst a form divine."
>
> *The Bard.*—GRAY.

SIR MICHAEL CARRINGTON had been religiously silent on the subject of his conversation with Abel Bradfield. He was a proud man, and he felt, wisely or not is another question, exceedingly indignant at the proffered alliance. We hardly know whether he argued the subject very logically, for there was truly a vast difference between the tone of mind in the old country gentleman and the millionaire. We venture to imagine that he rather missed that point, and saw only the enormous gulf between the man of the aristocracy, the descendant of kings, and the man of the people; the one, grand in his impoverishment by the folly of his ancestors and his

own; the other, grovelling and dependent on the resources of paternal and personal industry and management. Be that as it may, the old baronet brooded in silence, not making a confidant even of Lady Carrington. As to anyone else, the thing was to be despaired of. Aunt Philly would have laughed aloud, and probably paraded the advantages of such a match (alliance, by the way, is the word for high contracting parties). Evelyn would have felt some degree of compunction for a man who meant to do her the greatest honour he could, or proposed to himself her as the greatest source of gratification to himself, for there are two ways of reading the text; Stafford would have possibly gone straight to Sommerton, and demanded reparation for the intentional injury, at the point of the sword, and exposed to the whole county, for his own revenge, that of which the worthy old gentleman was so heartily ashamed. He therefore "pocketed up his wrongs," and betook himself to the chase for consolation.

This gentleman of the olden school was not perfect. He had his infirmities of temper especially, at which times, I regret to say, he swore roundly. It was a bad fashion, of an epoch passing away. For a week or two nothing went right; and when the opposition was withdrawn, as we have seen, by Laurence Bradfield's unwillingness to fight, still the grooms who brought his horse to the door, and the people who got in his way in the garden, had a bad time of it. I do not think that they went, any of them, to the place to which he sent them; we may presume his threats to have been disregarded; and it should be a warning to others of like temperament not to throw away valuable language to no purpose.

There was, however, something very dignified in Sir Michael's hatred of Abel Bradfield. He utterly ignored his existence, as far as conversation or any interest in his proceedings was concerned; and the whole family of Carringtons seemed to follow in the baronet's steps. It is not to be inferred from this that Sir Michael had any of that childish vanity which overlooks the claims of its neighbours to distinction. He was as kindness and complaisance itself to the poor; shook hands heartily with the farmers and tradesmen, upon other than electioneering principles; was "hail-fellow well-met" with the doctors and lawyers and small fry of Saxonby,

male and female; opened his doors annually to the clergy, and even more frequently to the inferior clergy, some of whom, in that neighbourhood, as in others, had been seeking gentility at the point of their religion, and were trading upon their office for an unprecedented countenance in good society. The Carringtons could afford very well to do all this; but impertinent rivalry was not to their taste. There is little doubt that one gentleman would rather have gone out of the world an attenuated corpse as Stafford Carrington, than have remained in it as a sturdy and uncompromising Bradfield.

"Who dine here to-day, Margaret?" said Sir Michael one morning, after breakfast, to Lady Carrington. He was dressed, as English gentlemen should be dressed, in the whitest of buckskins and black boots, ready for a ride to the magistrates' bench, at Saxonby

"Besides ourselves, Lady Sarah, Skeffington, the duke, George Singleton, Mrs. Augustus Reynard, and that new curate at Chessington, with his pretty wife, that Evelyn called on last week. I don't know him, but she's charming; and old Darby sleeps here."

"Is Aunt Philly coming?" inquired Sir Michael.

"Certainly, my dear; who's to talk to the duke? I believe he'd marry Aunt Philly, if the duchess was to die."

"How's the curate to get here? Does he keep a carriage?"

"No; but I've told him that there's a dressing-room at his service if they like to come early; and we'll send them back at night in the brougham. He has a dog-cart, or pony-chair, I believe."

"Where's Evelyn?"

"Gone to her aunt's, I think. The men are shooting. Stafford has no horse fit, and Lord Mentmore preferred a day at home."

"Does he stay on next week?" asked the baronet.

"I don't think he does. He goes to Newmarket; but talks of returning for the Saxonby ball."

"I hope it will amuse him."

"I've no doubt it will, my dear, or he wouldn't stay" And Lady Carrington had a conscious look, as of one carrying a basket on her head, with something worth getting at within it. Sir Michael did not share her triumph, and was emi-

nently in the dark, at least if there was anything like enlightenment to be desired.

That mental obscurity accompanied him to Saxonby, and spread a halo, if I may say so, on all the proceedings at the magistrates' meeting that day. His friend Darby was there; a pluralist, the editor of the great Tory paper of the county, the "Revolver;" his enemy, Abel Bradfield, was there, who was only so far right in his views, that he contradicted the decisions of the other two, who were as often wrong. When he was wrong, the others were right. They balanced accounts in this manner, until the Saxonby bench had become a paragon of just judgment in the neighbourhood.

They let off an outrageous poacher, because Sir Michael was too proud to contest the point with Bradfield. Bradfield was strong in his acquittal; and himself gave a character to one Dan Morton, as a hard-working, industrious man. Policeman F 164 received a high eulogium from Mr. Bradfield for having done his duty, and was severely censured by Sir Michael for having overstepped it, *in re* one of his tenants. They convicted the wrong man in a case of assault, and had to admonish the plaintiff not to commit himself any more in the same way; then they begged his pardon, and let the defendant off altogether. They wanted to flog a boy of sixteen, and were only prevented from doing so by their clerk, Mr. Darville, who hinted at the illegality of the punishment. However, Sir Michael and the Rev. Darby went their way, and Mr. Bradfield went his, and the people were highly delighted with the administration of justice, which they regarded rather as the corrector of the law.

The pleasures of amalgamation are great: even the stomach delights to bear witness to this truth. Nothing so healthful as a grand variety of viands. The stomach that feeds only on mutton and beef becomes crude, hard, insensible. A vegetable diet is weak and insipid, and tends to paralyse natural powers of digestion. An entire devotion to the extreme delicacies of the table palls, and, without satisfying, overloads the palate. A judicious mixture promotes health, vigour, and enjoyment. It is the same with your guests; and Lady Carrington's table was no exception to the rule.

The duke, a truly sensible man of the highest class in every respect, was delighted with the curate's wife, and in-

dulged in the notion that she was some lady of fashion, who from country tastes, or eccentric inclinations, had not exhibited herself in his orbit. She was far the best dressed of the company, having studied the ornamental and becoming, in anticipation of some such fortunate occasion for display. The duke imagined it to be an ordinary toilette, such as might well appear at a small and rapidly-organised dinner, and secretly wished the duchess was equally well got up. The editor of the "Revolver," once out of the quarter-sessions and the editor's box, was sparring with George Singleton, a master of hounds, who had no serious ideas of any sort or kind, who regarded the quarter-sessions and the county politics with equal disgust, and was deep in the mysteries of earth-stopping, and the Battle of Farnborough, where he chose to believe that he had seen the reverend editor himself.

"Yes, yes; come, Darby, it won't do. I saw you myself, hiding behind the Bishop of Oxford. Plenty more of you, you know; no harm in it at all. Besides, it was quite a national thing." And that end of the table laughed.

"No, no; I protest," said the divine, who was at all times hideously ugly, and none the handsomer for having his mouth full. "Singleton's only joking; he wasn't there himself; and as to——"

"Don't be ashamed of it, Darby. If I hadn't seen you I should have known the article in the 'Revolver.' It must have been yours; and none could have written it but an eye-witness. Finest bit of writing I ever saw; quite Homeric. What with the thumps, and the falls, and the brawn, and the muscle, and the positions, and the finish—finest thing I ever saw. Yes, it was, upon my soul; everybody says so."

After this it was impossible to deny anything, and the Rev. Tom Darby quite enjoyed his holiday after the feasts of politics to which he was accustomed.

Mrs. Augustus Reynard, a very good-looking woman of five-and-thirty, whose husband, Major-General Reynard, had been left behind somewhere in the north or the south,—she didn't pretend to know where,—went to work upon the curate, and mixed up such a quantity of Newmarket information and stable-language, with Sunday-schools and parish exercise, that they were mutually pleased, and, I believe, instructed.

"Fifty children, have you indeed?" said old Miss Philly Carrington, who chose to be deaf for the present.

"In the Chessington schools, Madam," roared the curate; while the old lady, looking grimly enough, as though no *équivoque* had been intended, replied, "I didn't suppose that there was another Danaus at table, Sir. I hope you teach them the distinction between goats and sheep better than my nephew Walter does here."

"What's the matter, aunt?" inquired the rector, who was in the middle of a run with Lord Mentmore, who had at last turned to the rector. He had secured a seat rather nearer the salt than etiquette dictates, for the pleasure of sitting near Evelyn, whom however he had not taken in to dinner.

"The matter is diverting enough, my dear rector; and redounds less to the credit of your scholars' discernment than to their Biblical research."

"Let us have it, aunt," said Stafford, with a wicked look, quite aware of the old lady's love for a good joke.

The old lady thus adjured pretended to whisper, but like many deaf people was loud enough and interesting enough to be heard all over the table.

"I was asking your Sunday-school children, Walter, the difference between the sheep and the goats; and my old friend Miss Parchment, who never was a beauty, and certainly never had an offer of any kind in her life, was with me. They told me the difference, but I was anxious to test their intelligence further, so I asked one of them which she thought Miss Parchment was likely to be."

"A very delicate question, aunt."

"So it was, my dear, more so than the answer, as it turned out. 'A sheep,' said the children: of course I was satisfied, but my friend, who is very particular, would know the why and the wherefore. There was a long silence, which might have been accepted as sufficient for the purposes, until one of the younger ones replied, 'Cos you've gone astray, Mum.' I needn't tell you there's not the slightest truth in it."

At intervals was heard Politics, uninteresting enough from their unanimity; Literature, in which Froude and Miss Braddon, the Gladiators and Whewell's Philosophy, About's Madelon and Wheaton's International Law, were raised

up in admired confusion; Church Decoration; Shakespearian Revivals; the Irish Agricultural Association; the Preservation of Foxes; and the Saxonby Ball.

"Stafford, we've persuaded Lord Mentmore to stay for the ball," said Lady Carrington, attaching evidently considerable interest to the fact.

"To return for it," said he. "Stafford and I are going down to Newmarket next week to look at the horses."

"Is anything of yours to win the Derby, Mentmore?" asked the duke.

"Yes, duke, if they'll let him. My Cambridgeshire horse was got at, as you know."

"I'm told so; and that your trainer, Jackson, advised his brother to buy her at the sale for a large sum, when there wasn't a bid besides."

"My trainer has done many things that have a suspicious appearance at and before the sale. I, however, mistrust report."

"Where do you go for hunters, Lord Mentmore?" said Sir Michael. "You must have a difficulty to get many such as you rode for your first horse yesterday."

"Ireland, Sir Michael; and that market has become so small, that the Agricultural Association has petitioned Her Majesty on the subject."

"And what's the remedy, in your opinion?"

"Government money for cross-country, or hunter's stakes, at the principal meetings, instead of the Queen's plates, or in addition to them, for *bonâ fide* hunters which have never been in trainers' stables."

"But if the turf is in fault, Mentmore," said the duke, "why don't you reform it? you have it to answer for."

"Not at all, duke; all the power's gone: and for every gentleman that owns a horse, there are twenty or thirty blacklegs, publicans, livery-stablemen, and ex-trainers, who keep them. Quantity is the thing, not quality; and if they can only get them pulled often enough in handicaps, the worst of them will make more than he's worth at last. Gambling has ruined the turf as a gentleman's pursuit; and fond as I am of a horse, I shall give it up."

"Saxonby ball. Not go to the Saxonby ball—of course, dear, you'll go?" said Mrs. Augustus Reynard, "it's the best fun in the world. Mr. Stafford Carrington goes, and

Sir Michael naturally, diplomatically or politically—everybody goes. It's far better than that stuck-up county ball at N——, where one goes at twelve in a last season's dress, and comes away again at two, having had a sandwich and a glass of sherry.

"There's Kœnig's music they give us."

"It's all they do give us, for a guinea. Oh, oh! Saxonby for ever! Such crowds of innocence and white muslin. Does your taste lie that way, Mr. Carrington?"

"Would you think me exactly polite, if I were to say, yes?"

Mrs. Augustus Reynard, though a good sort of woman, was not remarkable for the one or the other, and only laughed.

"I take Stafford with me," said his father, "to canvass the women."

"And I always find that they have already promised their votes," said he.

"To whom?" asked the baronet, afraid of more opposition.

"To my father, of course, who has been beforehand with me."

"Have you seen the new church decorations at Sommerton?" asked the curate, not aware that the subject was almost tabooed.

"No, I have not," replied Lord Mentmore, who was equally ignorant of the situation; "have you, Stafford?"

"No: but I've heard of them. The Bradfield arms make a great show among the 'apostles,' I'm told," replied Carrington.

"We've just restored a monument here of Elizabeth's reign. It was destroyed by the Puritans, but sufficient colour remained on it, and we have endeavoured to be right this time," said the rector; "people are so mighty particular nowadays."

"Yes, the colouring's everything; and if they'd be as particular about their facts as they are about their church decoration, nobody would find fault with them."

"Shakespeare," said a voice somewhere about the table —"certainly Fechter is very fine, but less so, if possible, in his Shakespearian characters than in others. As to Othello, it has a ludicrous sound in the mouth of a foreigner; one

is always expecting it to degenerate into nigger language; and Hamlet never could have been intended for the stage."

"But it was acted in James's reign several times, and the copy of the original edition is in the Duke of Devonshire's library," said old Aunt Philly, who was an authority upon Shakespeare.

"I ought rather to have said that its beauties entitled it to much closer attention than we could give it on the stage, Miss Carrington," said the duke, who had been the first speaker.

"The stage in those days occupied the position of the press now, and it was the shortest and surest road to reputation. What could only be read by few was seen by the many," said Stafford Carrington; "besides, what Horace says is perfectly true, and a valuable axiom——"

> "Segnius irritant animos demissa per aurem
> Quam quæ . . . . "

"I beg a thousand pardons, my dear mother."

"Is that for being betrayed into rational conversation before us? Pray go on, Mr Carrington," said Mrs. Augustus Reynard, who was a sincere admirer of the heir of Spring Vale.

When Lady Carrington retired to rest, she certainly had something on which to congratulate herself. Mentmore was the most refined of lovers, but he had not attempted to conceal his admiration for Evelyn Carrington. If mothers ever are flattered, through their daughters, we think the Lady of Spring Vale Manor might have been. And she had such an easy conscience too! Why! if Mrs. Silvertop, or the Duchess of Grace-dieu, or Lady Maria Sackington, or hundreds of others in the world of fashion, had caught such a fish, their struggles and exertions would have taken away their breath before they landed him. Such a rent-roll, such a man, they exclaimed; he was worth the struggle; and they could not deny the fact of having toiled all night, every night, even though they had caught the fish. Lady Carrington had no more idea of angling in such streams than I had. The fish came to her waters and hooked himself, but she was not such a goose as to let him go again, if she could help it. So when she lay down to

rest after dinner, she was happy, for her conscience was clear. She made the squire a participator in her schemes; but he was a very bad confederate; at best an accessory after the fact. Very sleepy, had lost his rubber, and consequently his money—not much, for he did not indulge now in the luxury of high play; but he hated losing a rubber; so that all he said was that he wondered "where Mentmore got such short-legged horses, wished he'd give up Newmarket, and wanted to know what that d—d fellow Bradfield had to do with a coat-of-arms."

There were others of the party, too, who felt happy enough, considering the possible dyspepsia awaiting them in the morning, from the baronet's good table; to which, notwithstanding excellent pretence, they were not much accustomed. Indeed the lady I have in my eye would call Lord Crackborough, of whom she frequently spoke, *Earl* Crackborough; and though he is an earl, it betrayed some want of familiarity with society to have called him so. Her husband gently reproved her for it. Gently I say, for Mrs. Buddicom was not to be rashly approached in the suit she had on that night. "You see, John, others appreciate me, if you don't—the duke was most kind."

"Ah! my dear, if he would but give us a living. He must have lots in his gift; we'll look when we get home what they are. If any becomes vacant I really think one might ask, you know."

They went to bed, and both thought a long time of the possibility of such a thing. Buddicom went for the substantials, but the lady could see beyond the living, a world beyond, a domestic chaplaincy, a very unreserved intercourse with his grace, a godfather for the next little Buddicom, a semi-official seat at the ducal table, and such a rise in the social scale, as should render necessary an everlasting order for *moires antiques*.

The duke smoked his cigar with Mentmore and Stafford Carrington in the housekeeper's room, and declared her to be a remarkably fine woman; and his grace was considered a judge; but that a woman in that dress could want a living, would have occurred to him as simply preposterous.

Lord Mentmore at last fell asleep, after indulging in the most flattering of day-dreams. He was fairly and honestly, as he thought, in love; and without the slightest conceit, had

never been accustomed to believe that his attentions could be unacceptable. It is the good fortune of such positions usually to give an *aplomb*, which in itself half carries its point. Disappointment to such natures comes unexpectedly, and inflicts a severer wound than that felt by ordinary mortals. Oh! what asses we should have been had we all had sixty thousand a year, with our present experience! is a comfortable assurance for the poor man, and a protest against covetousness the most powerful that can be conceived. Lord Mentmore was quite right to go to sleep, satisfied that the game was in his own hands, when he liked to play it, and that Evelyn Carrington could only regard a few weeks *dalliance* as an honourable sacrifice of time and feeling, to the customs of polite society.

And what was that young lady doing, while the gentlemen were smoking their cigars or unmaking their toilettes? She was in anything but that comfortable frame of mind which nine-tenths of her acquaintance would have enjoyed. She sat in that charming apartment known as "my own room," which comprises the mysterious repose of a sleeping-chamber, with the solid comforts and light of a sitting-room. She slept there; and the pillows, on which scarcely a tear had ever fallen, were retired from vulgar gaze by the sort of alcove in which the bed was placed; a raised step almost separated it from the room; and, in winter, heavy folds of rich damask completed its retirement. With equal propriety she not unfrequently breakfasted in the lower part of it, which contained her *chaise longue*, her book-case of favourite authors, her desk, her jewel-box, her Sunday-school and clothing club-books, her little gold and silver-headed whips, a tiny dog-collar (sole relic of the deceased), and half-a-dozen other things in which such girls delight, and all of which are enhanced in value by being called, and felt to be, "my own." It was the only room in the house in which pure luxury had been eared for. Neither Sir Michael nor Lady Carrington cared for signs of state. They new themselves, and were known of theirs. But Evelyn was different in taste, in feeling; and a soft and timid nature, too much so perhaps for her own happiness required to be propped in pillows, and armed with the gentle panoply of velvet pile and or-molu for its due effect.

On the evening in question, Evelyn Carrington sat in a

luxurious easy-chair, facing a comfortable fire. She had taken from her table a French novel which was lying on it (I regret to record a bad habit of the young ladies of fashion of the time), but she was not reading it. She was absorbed in thought; she had inherited a fair portion of pride from her family, and her nature supplied her with a fair quantity of maidenly reserve. Still, the attentions of Lord Mentmore justified an interest in him which would otherwise have been premature. She was far from appreciating the advantages of her position; and she taxed herself fairly and closely as to her own feelings on the subject. They were not satisfactory.

She liked him in common with the world; it was impossible to help it. His manner, especially to women, was not only charming, but positively feminine in its delicacy; and it was so devoted. He forgot himself so entirely. When other men, and they are legion, said, "Can you resist me?" his appeal was always on the other side. Whatever he felt, he always said, "I cannot resist you." He was the most flattering lover in England. It was impossible, too, not to be carried away by his munificence, his noble generosity; and he was almost the only man in whom it would not have been called ostentation. His personal simplicity of manner procured his exemption from that. And yet Evelyn felt she did not love him, and, strange to say, that she never should be able to do so. This once ascertained, she was a girl who never would allow any consideration in the world to deceive him. The grand question was with her how to save him pain. In the event of a proposal, the difficulty of saying "No" would be quite as great as the certainty of having it to say. She sympathised with her mother; with her brother, who liked him better than anyone, and who, with all his *insouciance* and assumed levity, was a clear critic of character. She appreciated the disappointment of her family, and she shrunk from inflicting pain; timid and delicate natures do so. But she had made up her mind that a timely retreat into herself might save stronger measures.

A girl's first dream of love is the most beautiful thing in the whole world. A man has no experience of the feeling, and few men the slightest conception of it. Its first avowal is not pleasant, though taken with an anodyne which lulls.

Its innocence, its simplicity, its truthfulness, its refinement, the mysterious charms of an unknown future, its risks, the venture of all the heart's merchandise in one barqüe, restraints all and each of them; and yet the ministers of a sentiment the most absorbing, a passion the most overwhelming, a gentle stream—let welling into a mighty torrent of eternal happiness or eternal woe.

Evelyn Carrington was not in love, but she was not entirely happy.

CHAPTER IX.

NEWMARKET.

> "Metaque fervidis
> Evitata rotis, palmaque nobilis
> Terrarum dominos evehit ad Deos."
> HOR., *Ode I.*

NEWMARKET! Newmarket! What a quantity of recollections and reflections arise at the summons! What a length of time we go back! Charles I., with his melancholy smile—foreboder of impending fate—watched there the sport we love so well. Old Noll, the fanatic, half preacher, all warrior, changed the venue, but knew too well the influence such tastes had upon the prosperity of his country to turn his back upon the pastime. The man who could have frightened a British Parliament, might almost have made an impression upon the ring. The atrocious depravity of the restored Court "spotted" the heath once more. There were nobblers in those days; for the monarch who sold himself, without doubt sold other people; and the courtier who robbed his friend of all he held dearest, could not have been delicate about rifling his neighbours' pockets. Then we pass in review a better and a nobler age—the golden age of horse-racing. One fine, good, honest English sovereign is there. Over those courses have ridden the Dukes Francis of Bedford and Queensbury, Sir Charles

Bunbury, Lords Grosvenor and Clermont, Kit Wilson, and Frank Standish; and there was a greater than all, whose string was led by Sam Chifney. Those were days when English gentlemen did not fear to assert their own in the face of royalty, and when, happily, dishonesty was the exception, and not the rule.

The present race of legs would have looked exceedingly odd amongst the buckskin breeches and top boots of those glorious pillars of English aristocracy. It would have been worth living for to have seen the stare of astonishment with which one of those gentlemen would have greeted the impertinent familiarity of a leviathan cobbler or a Brummagem artisan, who should have proposed to write down the name in his book which he had only lately learnt to spell. Or the true lover of a racehorse might well compound to have been under the turf now, for the pleasure of being on it then. I suppose there were scoundrels in every age; but the rascality of the low betting-man was not then known, and trainers and jockeys, even, had a delicacy about being found out. That speculative fishmonger, with his pale face and neutral-tinted neckcloth, which has somewhere been described as a white "hayband," was to come, and in his wake the bloodsuckers of unsuspecting youth—the "mimi and balatrones"—but they were not come yet.

Newmarket is an innocent-looking place. There is a simplicity almost suspicious about it. It is a sort of egg-and-butter-looking place, in which quiet market women come and go; and where, out of season, it would be hard for honesty to get a living. Dishonesty finds no difficulty at all about the matter. There never was such a quiet-looking place; and its single street seems almost emblematic of its singleness of purpose. It has a quiet all its own; a downright stupidity, which makes its real sharpness all the more appalling. It is very like a highly successful and respectable leg, whose exemplary conduct in his parish church, extensive charities, domestic tastes, and decent exterior, cover an unparalleled amount of swindling, and make him the admiration, as he is the terror, of minor candidates for honours. So much decent dulness cannot but be the very hotbed of iniquity.

If the stones of that little street could cry out honestly, what would they not recount? How many a mother's

tears! a wife's distraction! What ruin! what disgrace! What hopes! what high aspirations, buried in an early grave, together with the honour of a proud name on Newmarket Heath! And all for what? Love of sport or pastime? Oh! no. Ambition to be first on the list of those who love a horse for himself; and admiration for the most beautiful animal in existence, as he is the most generous? Oh! no. But the "auri sacra fames." Is it possible that, to add to that heap which is already more than sufficient for all the necessaries and comforts of life, and for most of its luxuries, a gentleman will risk position, reputation, the love of friends, his own self-respect, and every obligation he owes to God and man? Is it possible that he will discredit a name which has descended to him pure and unblemished, and which is his no longer to pollute, but which he holds as an heirloom, to be transmitted to his children's children? No man of family has a right to play with his reputation any more than with an entailed estate. Very particular indeed, are we, to put checks on the transfer of our property, to place a strong reservation on the right to alienate our houses and our lands; but it never occurs to us that a spotless reputation is the grandest entail we can leave to our heir, and that, if it has come to us somewhat tarnished, it is our business to restore its brightness, as we should have striven, by honest means, to restore a shattered property to its original value.

Lord Mentmore had fallen on the turf in evil times. The "Io triumphe" which went up to heaven, as soon as it was known that he intended to keep horses, had never been surpassed, and will never be equalled, until the Prince of Wales's string shall once more be seen issuing from stables for their morning exercise upon Epsom Downs, or Ascot or Newmarket Heath. Lord George was dead. The grand reformer of the system, the Neapoleon of the crusade against the legs, was gone; and his mantle had fallen, whole and undivided, upon none. There was still the great Admiral, honest and able, it is true, with a leaning towards the bookmakers and handicapping, short distances, light weights, and other loopholes, because the gentlemen could take care of themselves. If the Admiral had only been a rascal, the system would have fallen; but his well-known honesty kept it, rotten as it was, upon its props.

There was a dearth of money, that is, money to be won. The gentlemen were about cleaned out, and the thieves were nearly reduced to feeding upon one another. Two or three hundred thousand pounds of ready money was a godsend. How they lauded him! the "Halfpenny Gaff," a new sporting paper, established for the benefit of the peculiar classes which had of late years swelled the sporting circles of the metropolitan cities, be-praised and be-plastered him then as much as they abused him afterwards. Never was so princely a patron of sport before. The knowing ones played their cards well, and allowed him to win many minor events, and one or two great things—when they could not help it. One thing they made quite safe: he was never to be allowed to pull off a great stake when the money was on. Mr. Jackson, the trainer, was to take care of that; and, although he took into his councils wiser men than himself (for Lord Mentmore, though clever enough, was too impulsive to be wary), Mr. Jackson managed to get the better of them all.

Mr. Jackson, or Tom Jackson, as he was called, *alias* honest Tom Jackson, was the perfect picture of a perfect treasure. He was rosy-gilled, inclined to corpulence, bald in forehead, with closely-cropped but widely-spreading whiskers, of a light brown or auburn tint, good teeth, and beautifully shorn. No man despised more heartily the modern fallacies of respectability. He was grand, solemn, important, mysterious, and, by consequence, silent. His bow was of the best kind: a mere elevation of the well-twisted broad-brimmed hat, which spoke volumes to his superiors. His ash-plant saved his oratory with his stable boys. He was scrupulously dressed in black broadcloth; it was all broad, his back, his sleeves, and the skirts. His waistcoat was long, large-pocketed, and rounded at the corners, to match his collars; the latter were triumphs of art in their way, and can only now be seen on Jack W—n, the great amateur coachman of his day, and on a few West of England parsons or squires. His trousers were of sombre hue, but strong and serviceable, strapped within the legs, which were tightly made, as became his office, and fastened beneath the broadest and brightest boots in the world, by a single narrow piece of leather. His blacking was of home manufacture. As Tom Jackson never did anything for

himself, he was enabled to preserve his *grande tenue* for at least six or seven hours of every day in the week.

This invaluable treasure, as some friend had *de bonne foi* assured Lord Mentmore that he was, was come of a remarkable family. With one little exception, they had all been in difficulties, had all taken to the turf as jockeys or trainers, or both, and had all got on in the world. They lived well and reputably, and took care never to be found out. The little exception was a small hanging matter, when men were not so particular about fitting a hempen collar round their fellow-creatures' necks. In fact, he was the one that, having been what they called unfortunate, "never held up his head again." It was not a bad way of putting it, and is quite on a par with Hook's "complaint in the chest." During his pecuniary difficulties, however, Tom Jackson had made some strange acquaintances, and they served him now in good stead of better ones. They stuck to him, as might have been expected, and, what is exceedingly to his credit, he to them. In one word, there never was a stable so hampered from beginning to end, from the rubicund respectability of the trainer down to the lowest helper, with specious rascality.

"Hollo! Mentmore," said Tom Thornhill, coming down the steps of the Jockey Club stand, at Ascot, "you should have put us on that good thing, as one of Mentmore's two-year-olds was being led back into the enclosure to weigh, having just won a good race hard held.

"Good thing!" rejoined his lordship; "I hadn't a shilling on her. They told me she couldn't stay the distance, and I've backed the other."

"Deuced odd! there's Scraper has won a good stake. He backed her this morning, at pretty good odds. I ought to have followed him for he's a great pal of Tom Jackson's, and——"

"Pal of Tom Jackson's! I never heard that before."

"Bless your soul," said Tom, for it was in his fast days, before he married Alice Dacre, "he's the man who lent Jackson all the money, and got him out of quod, to go into business."

"The devil!" said Mentmore; but it set him thinking.

"Is it all right this time, Mentmore?" whispered young

Hazard of the 10th, one bright afternoon at Goodwood, as the horses were walking down to the post.

"I hope so," replied he, "for I've put the pot on. It's a certainty, I believe," and the horses started. As they came up the course all the glasses were out, and the Admiral's gruff voice was heard among them.

"Mentmore wins," shouted Charlie Swallowtail.

"No, he doesn't; whose that in the duke's colours, next the rails ?" sung out the Marquis of Chaffbox.

"The duke wins, Turniptop second; Mentmore's beat already," grunted the Admiral, shutting up his glass as he spoke, and turning away to speak to old Lady Mongerton, who had put a pony on Lord Mentmore by the Admiral's advice.

And so it went on; and Mentmore lost and lost, and his friends lost with him; while telegraphic wires were put in requisition after every trial; and when he went to back a really good thing, which had been kept quiet till the last moment, the whole world was before the master of the stable.

Lord Mentmore, like many other men, had an inconsistency, in fact, he was inconsistent, "impar sibi." That peculiar phase of this weakness of which I am about to speak is remarkably common. In twenty-five years a new race of men had appeared upon the turf. They were not only not gentlemen, they were scarcely removed in many instances from the lowest dregs of the people. Runaway officials, bankrupt tradesmen, ex-livery stable-keepers, billiard-markers, ruined pugilists, and cobblers and artisans of the lowest class made up the sum total of the new company which visited Goodwood and Newmarket. Lord Mentmore, notwithstanding his absence of all vanity, was the proudest man alive. When he first came upon the turf, he tried hard to ignore the ring, and to bet only with his equals. As long as he confined his book to a few hundreds, that did very well. But he could do nothing with moderation; a wholesome mediocrity was his *bête noire.* So when he got to thousands, he was obliged to call in the intervention of the genii of the ring. When he avowed his intention of breaking the ring, he could do it with nobody's assistance but their own. They were always ready to back anything, or to lay against anything. So he forgot his

pride, and elbowed his way, and shouted with the best of them, and in better English, "I'll lay against ——, or, I want to back ——," and there was no deficiency of backers or layers when his lordship wanted anything to be done.

Lord Mentmore had an enormous fortune, and a soul quite large enough to have spent every shilling of it, which all men have not. But it had been going and going year after year, and of late years too rapidly even for his liking. He had his cake at a proper time for eating it; when he was hungry and when all his teeth were good. His pride he had put in his pocket for this occasion only. The end justifies the means; besides, everybody else does so excepting ——, and ——, and ——, but then these are old fellows, who have had their day. He might have excepted his friend, Stafford Carrington, but he did not. What wonder that the world should have erected a metaphorical statue to him. They would not have been satisfied with anything under the very largest block; and then in a few years they would have wondered into how small pieces it could be broken. It is always the case with an idol.

However, just when he and Stafford Carrington had decided upon a visit to Newmarket, he was at the height of his popularity. He had thirty horses in training, gave unheard-of prices for his yearlings, lost his money like an English nobleman, was as tolerant of brigands as the government of Naples, and had a book of about 100,000*l.* upon the next Derby, of which he himself had the favourite.

Do these sportsmen and gamblers, like Indian fig-trees, only allow their branches to descend that they may take root more firmly in plebeian wealth; or, like royal houses, may grow again into parent trees, by stooping to the people?

On the Sunday preceding that on which Lord Mentmore and Stafford Carrington were to go down to Newmarket, as they came out of the parish church, at Spring Vale, Lord Mentmore was struck with the beauty of a monument, and turned back to examine it more closely. It was the monument already mentioned. It had been most carefully restored, and the original colours and gilding repaired. It purported to be erected to a certain "Lady Catherine Carrington, daughter of the most noble the Duke of D———, first cousin to Her most gracious Majesty Elizabeth, Queen

of England, the widow of Sir Reginald Carrington, &c., &c., &c.," following which announcement was a long piece of poetry, the counterpart of the productions of the Earl of Surrey and Sir Philip Sidney, full of rare conceits, and no disguised praises, such as are common to modern tombs; and which convince me that having gone through life quietly we shall enter upon death with a flourish, or that we only discover excellences when it is too late to profit by them. "Sublatum ex oculis quærimus invidi."

"Beautiful monument, Stafford, and very perfectly restored."

"Yes—I believe we're rather proud of that," said Carrington, languidly.

"Of the restoration, or the alliance?"

"Both; but I meant the alliance. We have been singularly unfortunate in our marriages."

"How so? Sir Michael has made up for the family defect, and will be able to put by something in the way of supererogation for his successor."

Strange to say, this hazardous speech of Lord Mentmore brought a slight throb and a hesitation into Stafford's face and answer, and he was certainly not given to either one or the other.

"Well, I hardly know how; but we seem to have more than our share of lord mayors' daughters, and goldsmiths' and bankers' heiresses, among the former Ladies Carrington."

"No bad thing either, my good fellow, when the gentlemen are as extravagantly inclined as some of yours are reported to have been."

The two walked on down the steps which led from the churchyard to the manor. Stafford Carrington was thoughtful for a few minutes, and then said suddenly, as though the subject had burdened him,

"Yes; I presume I am destined to reward the extravagance of two generations by installing a wealthy manufacturer's daughter in the seat of honour whenever it comes to my turn to do so."

"And no bad thing either, Carrington; you only meet a difficulty which must come to us sooner or later. See how the great properties change hands. See how these fellows advance upon us. It's better to compromise than be driven

out perforce. What do you say now to Miss Bradfield—the heroine of our adventure ?"

They had reached the stables, and, as they entered, Stafford Carrington busied himself with his cigar-case before he answered,

"Miss Bradfield—our political rival—yes; that's something like money, to be sure. And what would your friend Scarsdale say if you dispose of the young lady in that way ?"

"Scarsdale wouldn't know what to do with it. He'd be for founding a monastery," said Lord Mentmore, pulling aside one of the rugs, and patting the quarters of a favourite hunter of his friend's.

"Perhaps quite as honourable a use for it as propping up an impoverished name." And the words and tone sounded earnest, if not harsh.

Lord Mentmore looked up, surprised at the tone as much as the words. He was silent for a few seconds, and then added,

"One would think, Stafford, that you were beginning to entertain the proposal *au serieux*. Whoever has the luck to marry that girl will have quite as much beauty as money, if her fortune was the largest in England. What a lovely face!"

Stafford did not make a reply at first, but said, "Oh! really, well I hardly know her by sight. Evelyn has met her brother once or twice; but we have no sort of acquaintance. I suppose I must have seen her at the county balls once a year; possibly here and there in London. The old man is on our bench, and is a vulgar purse-proud snob. The son's not a bad fellow, I believe; he was at Christ Church with me, but in a different set. What time do we start for Newmarket to-morrow ?"

Stafford Carrington was a man of considerable character; among other things, he was always very honest to himself, whatever he might be to the rest of the world. To his family and friends he was rather truthful than candid. He would not have said what was not true, but he would have withheld the truth openly and in defiance of them. To himself he was both truthful and candid. He admitted a fact, and practically examined it. The conversation he had just held told him what he had been suspecting; that he felt an

interest in this girl, whom he had seen, as he said, once or twice without looking at, until the day he saw her in the pony carriage. She had interested him far beyond any one whom he had yet seen; and one thing proved it to himself, Stafford Carrington was not a dancing man. He was essentially in ladies' society a lounger. Was seldom seen in town with any but the best persons, and most commonly with married women. He affected to, or did really, undervalue the current conversation of the young women he met; and as he had attained a reputation, not altogether undeserved, of a rising man in society, he was never without it; and was able to choose his own. With all this he had begun to think for the first time in his life of the Saxonby ball. We must be back from Newmarket for the Saxonby ball. What a consideration!

CHAPTER X.

TRAINING.

"Bring up a child in the way he should go."

Honest Tom Jackson was not a man to be caught napping, especially by his master; so that when he and Stafford Carrington walked up to the stables a day or two after their last conversation, everything was in excellent order; and Mr. Jackson accompanied Lord Mentmore and his friend.

In three sides of a square were contained exactly thirty-six race-horses. Every horse had his separate boy, who was now in attendance, the clothing lightly thrown on, and the sponge, combs, and brushes of everyone laid neatly out upon the leathers, which were spread on the left-hand corner of each stall. They were ready for inspection; and no stalls in Newmarket or elsewhere, were supposed to have been built with greater attention to the health and comfort of the valuable property they contained. The yearlings were elsewhere; but from two years old and upwards were to be

seen some of the best and best-looking horses in England. Not a chain, not a head-stall, not a straw, was out of place; and even to a man like Stafford Carrington, accustomed to the "comme il faut" above all in stable management, the sight was a treat. He was, besides this, perfectly able to appreciate that reticence, which is to be observed in stable matters at all times; and Lord Mentmore affected no disguise before him.

"How's that horse's leg, Jackson?" said my lord, looking at a very handsome bay horse, a little fleshy, and with a wet linen bandage on one of his fore legs.

"Better, my lord; no harm done, I think;" and it is to be observed that Mr. Jackson touched his hat during the visit occasionally with one finger, having already saluted with his very best bow at the reception.

"A little short of preparation, isn't he?"

"Think so, my lord?" and a rather supercilious smile crossed his face.

"This one looks as fit as a fiddle, Jackson," said Lord Mentmore passing on to the next, but without eliciting a reply. He therefore turned to Stafford and said, "This is our Two Thousand Guineas colt: he went amiss; some say he was got at."

"Pleasures of a stud," said Stafford as Jackson moved away out of hearing.

"One of them," rejoined his companion. "You'll see the Derby horse by-and-by."

"Shall I ever see him win? What's this? A rare good-looking one."

"Newminster and Lady Kingston. He's a little like Stockwell. Jackson's pet we call him; you shall see him gallop to-morrow."

"How's he engaged? Anything very particular to come off?"

"The first thing is a match for a thousand; and I've backed him, besides, rather heavily on the strength of a trial, which makes it nearly a certainty."

Mr. Jackson continued to walk on, describing each horse, as his boy took off the clothing, and presented his bright, beautiful coat to view.

"Here's the Archer, Carrington. He's a fine horse. Looking pretty well, Jackson?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Is he doing strong work?"

"Pretty well, my lord."

"I suppose he's forward enough, if we don't run him before?"

"Yes, my lord. I should say so."

"Not afraid of his legs standing the training?"

"No, my lord;" with another mild but supercilious smile.

"It's rather his weak point, Stafford," said Lord Mentmore; "and I think he's as safe to win the Derby as that you and I stand here."

"Nothing's certain but the tax-collector and death; but he's a beautiful colt," replied Stafford Carrington, "and my father, who is an excellent judge, says he's the best two-year old out."

"He's never been beaten yet; and Wilfred Jones made me give eleven hundred for him as a yearling. You know Jones?"

"A little, not intimately."

"He owes a lot of money."

"That's not an uncommon failing amongst our acquaintance."

"I suppose he's all right."

"All right, my dear Mentmore! what the deuce do you mean?"

"Mean? why I mean that he knows all the stables just as well as I do."

"Oh! bless you, as honest a fellow as ever lived; d——d hard up; but what does that signify? Jackson knows as much as you and Wilfred Jones put together."

"Well, yes, I really think he is; but 'pon my soul nobody knows."

And as they turned away from the stable and wandered towards Mentmore's house, they met the Admiral. He, too, had come down to see his horses, and to raise a handicap upon the spot.

"Bless my soul, Mentmore," growled the Admiral, "did you ever see such a set of fellows about a place in your life as there are here?"

"Perhaps that's just what they say of us, Admiral," said Mentmore laughing: "they don't give us the best character in the world, you know."

The next morning Stafford got up in good time; he dressed almost by candlelight. He was finishing his toilette when a servant knocked at his door.

"Lord Mentmore will be ready in about half-an-hour, Sir; would you take coffee in here? Breakfast is ordered when you return from the Heath. And I was to ask whether you would like to ride one of his lordship's ponies, instead of your own hack."

"Yes, certainly, I shall be very happy; and I'll be ready in half-an-hour; bring me the coffee and a biscuit or two in ten minutes," and he finished dressing.

One of the most beautiful sights in the whole world is Newmarket Heath in early morning, a week or two before the consummation of one of its meetings. On either side of the town extends to a distance far beyond the reach of the eye, lines of undulating heath, of a sparse and dry herbage, and unprotected from the influences of atmosphere by any shelter of hill or woodland. Of these two sides the one is devoted to the formation of the largest race-course in the country, covering an area of many square miles, and divided into numerous courses; so that, by constant change of locality, judge, competitors, and spectators, may be gratified with a novelty, and the capabilities of the horses tested by different ground, according to the circumstances of age or distance. With this side which lies on the south-east of the town, we have at present nothing to do. I wish my reader to accompany Lord Mentmore and Stafford Carrington to the other end of the town, and to run their eyes over an equal expanse of gently undulating country, nearly level indeed, and which constitutes the training and trial ground of this monument to English love of sport. The Heath exhibits at intervals very few and far between, some stunted trees, or small ragged spinney, which may hold a rabbit or a tout. Up a part of the centre of the course runs a road defended by a hollow belt of half-grown wood; a shelter from the wind only to those who are pleased to watch the gallops from its cover. Below it again stretches a trial ground of considerable extent, towards the lower end of which, some straggling hedgerows proclaim a recommencement of cultivated land. On the further side of this belt Lord Mentmore and his friend smoked their cigars.

The sun was dispelling the hanging vapours, and as they

cleared away there appeared to rise on every side, as though by magic, far and near, hundreds of horses, each carefully clothed in divers colours, and ridden by his boy. In Indian file they crept slowly along, headed by the grave and mysterious trainer, on his sturdy cob, or used-up thorough-bred one, champing at the single snaffle, or boring towards the ground with their arched necks, as their rider dropped his hands to their efforts, save when some unruly young one gave an occasional plunge, and was led back like a refractory schoolboy by the hand of his master to his proper place. Then, here and there were to be noticed men, like our heroes, who were come to see their strings out, and to test the capability of their cracks. It gave them, too, the opportunity of comparing notes, and of watching the movements of their neighbours. There was the great mill-owner, a millionaire, one might say, sturdily plodding it, in thick highlows, and talking to his trainer of the merits of his last purchase, a yearling, from Mr. Blenkiron's lot. The stout and trusty Admiral bestrode a weight-carrier, dividing his attention pretty equally between them all, and drawing out his glasses every minute to take a closer inspection of a lot, as a doubt seemed to arise as to their identity. There was the mighty Israelite, the Jew financier of London, Paris, and all the great cities of Europe and America, who shook thrones by his nod, at this moment trying to solve the question of a double event, and as anxious about its success as his father had once been about a foreign loan. Further on, a prematurely grey young *roué*, whose name and talents had sunk alike from their high and early estate to no doubtful insolvency, took his morning gallop in search of information; of whom it might be said, that if he lost his money dishonourably, he as dishonourably declined to pay. The next man watching the small but select few, in new clothing, and evidently intent upon being recognised, as an owner of a lot, open to criticism, is a successful stockjobber, who finds Newmarket Heath, and a point or two in the odds, the shortest road to social distinction. To complete the picture, you must imagine these persons multiplied to any extent, and the lazy, idle groups which infest the place now busy in their calling, the touts paid and unpaid, private and public, the hangers-on of a small number of patrons, or the clients of the low sporting press, now behind a tree, now seated in a hedgerow, now

boldly inspecting some well-known favourite, whose trial was not yet to come, and the reader may have a fair and not unfavourable glimpse of Newmarket, as the sun rose upon it on the morning in question.

"Do you see him coming, Stafford?" said Lord Mentmore to Carrington, who was looking towards the town through the belt of trees.

"Not yet; unless this is your string. I can't distinguish them from here, but there are two, four, six, eight. Oh! yes; they must be yours; and here comes Jackson himself." And as he spoke the lot defiled at a distance, and then came slowly on, headed by Jackson, who was here, there, and everywhere, towards the lower trial-ground.

"What's this coming, Mentmore?" said Stafford, as three horses came streaming past at a fine pipe-opening gallop.

"They're the Marquis of Appleby's crack, and the two he bought of the duke. The crack's in the middle. He goes well, doesn't he?" said Mentmore.

"Very; but he wants size for a Derby horse. He hasn't grown as they expected, they tell me."

"He has grown up instead of down. Here come four of that ruffian Shoplifter's. The first of this lot has been pulled in every handicap for the last two seasons. She's good enough to win the Oaks; and now she's in the City and Suburban at 6st. 7lbs., so that she can't lose. His party have made her first favourite, and it's even betting she don't start at all."

Here Jackson walked his horses slowly through the belt of trees, and touching his hat respectfully turned short round to the right, and after crossing the road directed them to walk along the bottom until he came down to them. He stopped behind and held a mysterious conversation of five minutes' length with Lord Mentmore. He then rejoined his charge.

On the very morning of which I am speaking, there passed along the back streets of Newmarket a remarkably big, burly-looking man, dressed in a ragged velveteen shooting jacket, corduroy trousers, and a slouched cap with a peak to it, from beneath which a short crop of red hair might be seen; a grizzly beard fringed a very coarse, repulsive face. To be brief, it was our old acquaintance, Dan Morton. It seems difficult to conceive what he was doing in

Newmarket. Yet he had a purpose, as was indeed plain from his stealthy manner, so unlike the bold bravado which he assumed in the village of Sommerton, when we were last in his company. As he crossed this street, or that, he looked uneasily up and down them ; not precisely as knowing what he feared, but with that indefinite vague discretion of rascality, which betokens a cat on the look-out for cream somewhere or other. Finding no let or hindrance, in the way of police or acquaintance, he came at the back of the town towards the Heath, and pulled up deliberately enough behind Mr. Jackson's house, where a window looked towards the open country. Having taken up his stand, in the early morning, near to this window, he was attracted by a light which shone in the room ; and peering through the darkness and fog, he saw, by the light of a candle, the great Mr. Jackson, just commencing the elaborate shave for which he is famous.

"Bless my soul," said Mr. Morton, to himself; "well, I'm d——d ; who'd 'a thought it ? "

Having paid an attention, which we call "delicate," but which our neighbours, with much greater truth and wit, call "presque violente," to these signs, he reluctantly left the window, as though two minds agitated that body, and which was, indeed, big enough for both. He then walked, still in the fog, on to the Heath, and the first person he met was a very small man, so enveloped in clothes, neckcloth, and gaiters, as to look like a little baby wrapped up in its papa's clothes, playing at being grown-up.

"Hallo, young feller, who be you ?" said the gruff voice of Dan Morton; "and where be you a-goin' to in such a hurry ?"

"What's that to you ?" replied the precocious young gentleman, in the very choicest Billingsgate. "You're looking out for a mount, that's quite clear, by the look of you; and to judge by your countenance, one needn't ask where you're going to." Saying which the small bundle of greatcoats and comforters resumed his walk, leaving Dan Morton not much wiser than when the conversation began.

The next person he met was more communicative. He was a thin, long, active-looking man, with a sealskin cap, and waistcoat, knee-breeches, and groom's gaiters, and a drab coat with outside pockets, in which his hands reposed,

as safe from all labour. He was crossing the Heath diagonally, and nearly ran into Dan Morton in the fog.

"Young man, who lives in that house at the corner of the Heath, with the stabling at the back?"

"The biggest rogue in all England," replied the man, without hesitation.

"I thought so," said Dan; "and what's his name?"

"They call him honest Tom Jackson."

"And what's honest Tom Jackson a-doin' of here?" While this colloquy was progressing, Dan Morton was lighting his pipe.

"He's got Lord Mentmore's lot to look after, so it don't do to say much about him."

"Great man is he?" asked Morton, in an off-hand sort of way.

"Greatest in these parts. Does as he likes with the 'osses."

"Have a bit o' baccy?" said Dan, handing it out to the other, who quickly found his pipe. They smoked and walked in silence for a few minutes.

"Got anything very good?" was Dan's next inquiry.

"See any green?" was his companion's reply, who was now well into the middle of the "'baccy."

"You'd better keep a civil tongue in your head, young feller," said Dan, "or I shall punch it for you." And as he seemed exceedingly likely to do it, the conversation continued more politely across the Heath.

In the course of it, Morton learnt all he required to know about Jackson and his employer. In the latter he seemed to take some interest, probably from his temporary connection with Spring Vale and Sommerton. At present it was not easy to connect Dan Morton and Lord Mentmore in the interest of our story. Be that as it may, a couple of hours before the appearance of Lord Mentmore's horses he had shaken off his companion, and ensconced himself in a dry ditch, within easy range of the gallop, where he found shelter from the cold.

Mr. Jackson himself had been busy before starting, arranging the saddles and weights, in which first the colt by Newminster, out of Lady Kingston, was to be tried at even weights with a three-year old; and then the Archer was to take a spin at very high weights, to settle his

Derby pretensions one way or the other. Honest Tom Jackson's measures were very simple: he took care to let the boys who rode see and feel the saddles; and he took care to put them on himself, with his own hands, having inserted about a stone more, unknown and unsuspected by anyone. The trial proved under these circumstances to be a failure; and the news of the old one having won easy, went to London with such suspicious celerity, that that afternoon Mr. Jackson was able to get considerable odds against his horse, Lord Mentmore having already backed him at even. Nor was his lordship allowed to know the real truth, for a very obvious reason. Lord Mentmore was much too straightforward, and his appearance in the ring would have left no doubt as to the capacity of his horse.

"Let them go down to the bottom, Jackson; bring them along slowly up to the turn, and let them race for the last quarter of a mile. Mr. Carrington will be the winning-post, and I will start with them at the run in."

Away they came, the old horse leading at a moderate pace, their light clothing, without hoods, fluttering in the morning breeze. As they passed the corner, the young one was allowed to go up, but still, only to the girths of the leader. The boy sat still, and the Newminster colt was pulling. He was a fine slashing goer, and looked like winning all over. Then as they neared Lord Mentmore, the pace increased, until they reached him, when dropping into his saddle he went racing by their side, and watching his young one with an anxious look. Disappointment succeeded to hope, as he saw him die away in his final effort; and knew that if that was the criterion, his money was gone.

"That's not good enough to win, Jackson?"

"It's not good enough to back, my lord; but you must have a run for the money. 'Many a slip between the cup and the lip.' Besides, we may improve that form before the day."

With the Two-Thousand Guinea horse, a different game was pursued; and as Mr. Jackson had opened a commission to lay against him, the horse was to be made at the shortest possible odds. When his trial came, the additional weight was put upon the other back; and as the colt ran at least a

seven-pound better horse than he really was, his master backed him with sufficient confidence to bring him to the short odds at which his trainer desired him to be. The trials over, and the rest of the business satisfactorily concluded, the two friends returned to their breakfast, and Mr. Jackson himself took care of the saddles.

After a few days spent in Newmarket, Stafford proposed a return to their hunting quarters. A proposal to which Lord Mentmore responded, as lovers alone respond to an approximation to their mistress.

Mr. Jackson had relieved his mind of its cares, his body of its coat, and his feet of their boots. Dressing-gown and slippers had replaced the latter, and a bright fire, a good cigar, and a strong and hot glass of whisky-toddy, promoted circulation. He was thinking, as men will think, of his successes, his gains, and calculating in how many years he might be keeping his own race-horses, with another to train for him? No, no, none of that. He knows the value of personal superintendence himself too well. No secret so close as that between a man and his horse. Certainly his present condition offered a brilliant contrast to a time on which he was meditating. Mr. Jackson was eminently consistent too, for whether he lost or won, it was always without reference to the capability of his horses, or to the convenience of his master; it was entirely for the benefit of himself. Just now he was running over in his mind's-eye a series of domestic pictures, cartoons of the life and adventures of honest Tom Jackson. He was a boy, a dirty snivelling little boy, with a pinafore and a slate, shirking his lessons, and stealing his schoolfellows' marbles and toffy. Then he was grooming horses, and riding them at exercise and in their gallops, where he was kept at work only by an ash-plant, unhesitatingly made use of: it was a fortunate circumstance for the racing world that he soon out-fed his weight, or that nature had embellished his person with early corpulence, for his natural talent for roping, lying, welshing, and general rascality was such as would have mystified even a Greek patriot, and have ruined a score of stables. He had powerful friends in the trade, and was only found out once; and it is somewhat remarkable that though his friends were always willing to recommend him, they none of them employed him. They found him

more useful in their neighbours' stables than in their own. Then the foreground of the picture darkened considerably. There was a Quarter-Sessions judge and jury, and a young man at the prisoner's bar, and an acquittal; and then a change of country and some very rough life, which finished at the diggings; and some very rough customers indeed, among whom was one Dan Morton. To which succeeded a very wholesome picture full of good luck, and external respectability, and a Lethean forgetfulness of all that had been wrong a quarter of a century before; and such wholesale robberies, but so safe and so profitable, that they set conjecture almost at defiance, and swallowed up all previous felonies in their Tartarean blackness.

Mr. Jackson had arrived at this point, when he was roused by a short, but distinct and decisive knock at his kitchen door. It was opened by one of the boys, who remained after stable hours to assist in the embellishment of Tom Jackson's person, by cleaning his boots and brushing his clothes.

"Who's there, William?" inquired he as the boy presented himself.

"Won't give no name; says he must see you, Sir."

"Really. Shut the door. What does he look like?" asked Jackson.

"German giant, as we see at Ascot last year; a'most as big, and quite as dirty."

"He must be a nice sort of individual. Show him in, William. Got some information pr'aps."

"Don't look it, anyhow," rejoined the boy; but he went out and returned, bringing after him Dan Morton. Both were speechless until the boy had left the room, when Jackson rose and went to the door.

"William," said he.

"Yes, Sir," said the boy, who was not out of hearing.

"Take the saddle and the leading rein we borrowed of the duke's people down to Mr. Miller's and say I'm very much obliged to him. I'll attend to the house till Mrs. White comes in." And Jackson returned to the room, after seeing that his orders were likely to be executed.

In the meantime Morton proceeded to the adjustment of his proper person with those *petits soins* which indicate some intimacy. He pulled out his pipe, and proceeded to smoke,

drew a chair to the fire, and arranged himself in it, as is the manner of squatters, with his arms and elbows over the back of it; taking then a retrospective view of the blazing logs. They were pleasant enough to look at.

"And now, Morton," said the other, as he entered, "what is it? What brings you here? I heard you were well employed in ——shire, and that General H——'s covers had seen the last of you."

"Oh! you heard of me then; but you didn't think it worth while to inquire after an old friend? I've been back long enough."

"The new country and this are different. Tell me what you want, and if I can do it for you, I will." And Jackson continued standing, in order to shorten the interview as much as possible.

"Bread, meat, clothes, money,—everything; and I don't think you're the man to turn your back upon Dan Morton."

"How did you find me out?"

"Easily enough; my employments are various since I came to England. Some gents as do a little in the ring sent me down here to look arter a pal, as isn't on the square. I have been arter him on their account; I come arter you on my own."

"I'll be honest with you, Dan Morton," said Mr. Jackson, putting his thumbs through the armholes of his waistcoat, after having ascertained that his cigar had gone out in his excitement.

"Thank you for nothing," returned the other.

"I'll be honest with you, Dan Morton. Since I've been home, I'm in a different position to what I was when you found me at the Creek."

"Are ye honester? 'Cos, if you are, you're not much use to me, nor to yourself either."

"May be, or not; but it don't suit me to have you seen about my premises; if you want a trifle to help you," said Tom, magnanimously drawing out his purse, "I won't say no to an old comrade; but we must make an end of it here."

And here Jackson put on his hat, which was singularly well brushed, and stood on the table before him; it is less imposing with a dressing-gown than any other style of coat.

"I should a' thought that you might have found a good reason. However, you know your own business best," said the other sulkily, and knocking the ashes out of his pipe. "Now you're the great man, I suppose. Once on a time there wasn't such a difference between us."

"Perhaps not; and if you're hungry, you shall eat; and, if you're thirsty, you shall drink; but Newmarket's no place for you, Dan Morton. So take that sovereign, and be off."

"A sovereign!" said Morton, looking contemptuously at the money. "I rather think my information's worth more than that to you;" at the same time, however, slipping it into his waistcoat pocket after spinning it.

"I'm quite sure you can't have any information that I care for, so you may keep it as far as I'm concerned."

"P'raps it u'll pay better to give it to somebody else."

And with these words and a defiant air Dan Morton replaced his cap upon his head, and lounged towards the door, which was opened for him by Tom Jackson and scrupulously closed on his back.

"He seems pretty well to do," was the reflection of the one; and "I don't think he'll risk it for a hundred pounds or two."

"There's very little to get by paying off such a scoundrel as that; and I think I can stand my ground against Dan Morton. There are richer men to pay for that business before it comes to my turn, and Master Morton's not the man to put his own head in a noose for the sake of a hundred more or less—we'll wait a bit."

He resumed his cigar after this, but it was not so narcotic in its influence as before the visit.

"You never race, Carrington? Has it ever occurred to you to keep a horse or two?"

They were alone in the train a day or two after, on their way back to Spring Vale Manor.

"Never."

"Curious; so fond of sport, and so good a judge; and a family taste."

"I can understand my father, and my great-uncle. They lived in other days. They lost money, but they lost it to gentlemen. I've none to lose, and I should grudge it sadly to those ruffians."

"I've had a bad time of it lately."

"Can you be surprised at it? Every man's hand is against you. It's unfair; it's outrageous. Give it up."

"Could I only give the ring one good turn! I think I've a chance now with the Two Thousand and the Derby."

"*À quoi bon?* Your book is heavy enough for anything; but if you win how can you get paid? And is it worth the trouble and associations?"

"Probably not; but what to do now is the question."

"Do you ask me? Bring them to the hammer. Keep half-a-dozen for the credit of the turf, if you like; never go near the ring; run only for the stakes; and get rid of Tom Jackson."

"Jackson?" said Lord Mentmore, with some surprise.

"Is as great a rascal as I ever saw, if I am any judge of physiognomy. I'll tell you something more. When you went over to the rooms the night before last, I took my cigar to the end of the street, as the evening was warm and fine, and your room rather hot. Turning at Jackson's premises, I saw clearly enough a man coming from them whom I know. He's a Sommerton man. Whether he was with your trainer, or with some of your subordinates, and for what I can't tell; but there's no good doing where Dan Morton of Sommerton is to be found."

Soon after, the train stopped.

CHAPTER XI.

A WALK IN THE COUNTRY—SOMMERTON.

"Son bonheur même a l'air d'une calamité,
Tout dans ce pays, tout est odieux pour moi:
Tout, jusqu'à ses beautés, m'inspire de l'effroi."

THE absence of Stafford Carrington and Lord Mentmore may be presumed to have made Spring Vale Manor dull. At all events Evelyn Carrington was more at her aunt's than usual, and assisted at the preternaturally long walks of the old lady with increased activity. I have hardly had an opportunity of describing Philadelphia Carrington at home. I will endeavour to do so before she enters into a conversation with her grand-niece, which is explanatory of the position of parties at this time of my tale.

Aunt Philly at home was perfection; and remarkably eccentric as she undoubtedly was in many things, vigorous in action and language, she surrounded herself with every external attribute of a finished lady. Her rooms were small but light, and charmingly furnished. When you saw her at her eight o'clock breakfast, her dress was as perfect as if she had expected a visit from the bench of bishops—a body which she respected as much as their profound learning, single-mindedness, and disinterestedness have always merited. At six in the morning, the little old woman had a cold bath of spring-water every day of her life. It seemed to freshen and invigorate her intellect, as it evidently did the members of her body. She carried its freshness with her all day long. Her table was served with the most dazzling linen, the finest porcelain and glass, for which she had a mania, and rolls, butter, cream, and cookery which was rivalled seldom and never excelled. Her one man-servant was of the same pattern—aged, but neat and handy; and how many linen jackets Nurse put on during the week, it would be difficult to say. He was so respectful and respectable himself, that it was impossible not to put a Mister before his name. In the matter of linen your Low-church parson had no chance at all with this servitor

d'un meilleur âge. She had begun life as somewhat of a man hater, but Mr. Nurse had almost reconciled her to the uglier sex.

Amongst other peculiarities Aunt Philly prided herself upon never being without what was wanted or its equivalent; in other words, upon her readiness for every emergency, and upon her endurance. This latter quality she exhibited in walks of unheard of distances, at a pace which would have put the patience of Job to the test. Having made up her mind to walk four miles to breakfast, whether it occupied two hours or four, she never stopped short of her intention; and though the carriage at the Manor was always at her service, she seldom availed herself of it. This independence of character had been her strong point through life; and if it had made her some enemies, it had gained her numberless admirers. There was not a soul in the county who knew Miss Carrington that did not honour her. Her charities were as numerous as they were judicious; and when she imagined herself imposed upon, she had quite courage enough to resist.

She was bent on one of these excursions when Evelyn Carrington presented herself in all the freshness of a morning toilette, a charming hat, and Balmoral boots. She exhibited a striped petticoat of a warm colour, as is the correct thing to do.

"My dear child," said the old lady, passively submitting to a salute, "you're early?"

"Rather, aunt; the hunting gets us out of bed in good time; and now they're away, papa and mamma are seldom down before half-past nine—it's only just half-past eight."

"Then you've had no breakfast?" rejoined the old lady, dropping her glasses, and putting down the county paper.

"And you have already finished?"

"That's nothing; we'll have in Nurse, and see what he's got for us. Now, Nurse, make some good tea for your young mistress, and put the *pâté* on table again—in fact we want another breakfast;" and Nurse disappeared. "You know, my dear, I always call you the young mistress, because you'll have all I've got when it pleases God to take me."

"Oh, aunt, don't——"

"We shall all go to heaven some day or other, that's certain; so it's no use to make a mystery of the matter."

I think the old lady concurred in the late Chancellor's verdict, who "deprived the orthodox of the pleasures of everlasting damnation" by a legal decision.

"You came here to tell me something, my dear?"

"No, aunt, indeed I did not." Evelyn coloured slightly.

"I am sorry to see that it was to tell me a falsehood, my child."

"Oh, aunt dear, how——?"

"Well, never mind, finish your breakfast. I am going to walk to a cottage beyond Sommerton, and we shall have plenty of time to talk."

"And how do you intend to get over the stiles?" said Evelyn, laughing.

"Never you mind that, either. I shall do without Stafford; and as to Walter, he's better helping the old women in his parish than out of it."

Ellen Bradfield, the squire's daughter, was just as charitably disposed on this very morning as Miss Carrington herself; but she set out at half-past ten on the same mission as the other at half-past nine. Strange to say, they were both bent on the same errand to the same house—to look after a poor fellow who had hurt himself by a fall from a scaffold in Mr. Bradfield's employment. He had formerly been a workman on the Spring Vale Estate — hence a natural wish on the part of Miss Carrington to offer him some assistance; and the old lady was well disposed to add her own personal inquiries to the dole. Giles might have felt flattered had he known that Mr. Scarsdale was equally solicitous for his recovery; and that the squire himself had given orders that it should be accelerated by all possible means.

"As soon as ever he can be moved, let him be moved," said Mr. Bradfield.

"The doctor says that he can't be moved without great danger, Sir," replied Mr. Jennyngs, the bailiff.

"I don't want to kill him outright, but I want his cottage," said the other; and with that Mr. Jennyngs departed.

At eighty years of age the wind is never so good as it has been, be the condition what it may; and though the stiles

offered some hindrance to progress they aided respiration and conversation as resting-places.

"I dare say you find the house lonely, my dear," said the old lady, sitting down on the first stile she came to, "now that Lord Mentmore is gone."

"On the contrary, aunt, it's a relief."

"Then you don't like him, Miss Evelyn?"

"Indeed, I do; I do not know anyone I like better."

"Then you think you like him too much. Evelyn, I admire you."

"And why, Aunt Philly?" said she with an open brow, full of smiles, and evidently tickled with this unsuspected declaration of love.

"Because, my dear, if you know your weakness and are not ashamed of telling it to your best friend, you'll soon conquer it."

She shook her head.

"That's not it? Then what's the matter? Has Lord Mentmore made you an offer?" again demanded the old lady.

"No, aunt, certainly not."

"Should you accept him, if he did?"

"No, aunt: I really—but you know he hasn't asked me—well, well if he did, I think not," and Evelyn blushed and laughed.

"Then, my dear, you'd be a greater fool than any of the young——; here, John Briggs, John Briggs," shouted the old lady, shaking her crutched stick at a man who was crossing the field, "come and help my niece to push me over this style into the next field."

As the labourers in the neighbourhood were accustomed to this mode of progression, it scarcely raised the ghost of a smile on the stolid face of John Briggs, who felt both the "esse" and "posse" of many a shilling. In the next field there was a broad footpath, and at the end of it neither stile nor labourer; farther on there was stile and no labourer, and sometimes a labourer and no stile; but the morning was getting on, and Evelyn Carrington had made her aunt understand how matters stood between her and Lord Mentmore. To a delicate mind, such as Evelyn's, it is not easy to vaunt an attachment such as Mentmore's, unless it be reciprocal. The admission, still more the avowal, appears

to place the narrator upon a pedestal so far above most of her fellows.

"Now, my dear, I must rest here; and then you shall help me over this stile; for I don't see my old friend Will Hodge at work here to-day. There are only three more before we get to Sommerton. Both the ladies were well wrapped up, and though near Christmas the weather was open and genial, or the walk would have been a cold one.

"And where are we going to, aunt?"

"We're going to see old Giles. They tell me that that very excellent landlord, Mr. Abel Bradfield, has threatened him with condign punishment for daring to injure himself, whilst engaged in his service. Having broken his ribs, he's going to turn him out of his cottage; you know you and I keep favourite bits of china in our service, when they are broken. I think he's a very bad man, my dear."

"They speak well of Mrs. Bradfield, aunt, and of Miss Bradfield."

"Yes, so I've heard; but I doubt they're none of 'em good for much; I see by the paper this morning his son's likely to be returned for some borough in the North, without opposition."

"We have never known much of the Bradfields; it seems odd to live so near, and never to have even exchanged a visit."

"The lion would be as likely to lie down with the lamb," said the old lady, "though there's more of the wolf than the lamb in him. Ah! here comes my old friend Davy Lightfoot to help us over this terrible obstacle. That's it, Davy, my man, not too fast," and Aunt Philly placed her hand on the stalwart smock-frocked arm of Davy, and surmounted the difficulty. Evelyn disdained the assistance of a rough, but honest hand. Towards the end of their walk they met Job Fletcher, who was also an acquaintance of Miss Carrington, and who addressed a few words to him, chiefly as to the health of his wife and his children.

"Nanny's pretty hearty, Mum, thank 'e, and the children, Mum," and Job Fletcher opened the gate into the village for the two ladies. "Thank 'e, Mum," again said Job as he touched his hat, this time for a piece of silver which he conveyed to his pocket.

"And how's Giles to-day, Job? I suppose you've been to see him?"

"The missus have been up and says he's a trifle better; but he's a bit put out about havin' to go to the union. Says he ain't used to it like."

"Well! few honest men are; but what's he going to the union for?"

"Squire wants un's cottage; goin' to make it one o' the park gates for the keepers," and Job touched his hat again and was gone.

"Look at this," and the old lady stood on a rising ground and surveyed the now ugly but compactly-built village, and the surrounding fields, and said, "there's a property, my dear. It was once yours; and now it's his, and worth five times the money with his iron, and coal, and tramways, and furnaces, and all the means of doing good, and he's made it a hell upon earth by his evil passions."

"You ought to know this man well, aunt; surely his family are not all like him. I knew the young man a little, and he seems a—a—a—clever——"

"Clever enough, I'll be bound to say — the Bradfields never wanted brains; only honesty. But you shall hear all about it—it's a long story—as we go back. At present, that's the cottage, and the sooner we're there the better."

"I hope you're not tired, my dear aunt."

"Tired, Ma'am, not in the least," retorted the old lady, rather testily, though she was almost fainting. As they knocked at Giles's door, it opened, and Ellen Bradfield met them face to face.

Two of those three persons were remarkable for presence of mind. Miss Carrington never flinched from man, woman, or child in her life; so with a very shrewd guess as to who the lady was, though she had not seen her since childhood, the old lady darted a sharp look at her from her black sloe-like eyes, and then made her a silent bow. Miss Bradfield returned it with interest, and then seeing Evelyn, whom she knew and recognised at once, she exchanged a more cordial greeting, assuring her in answer to her inquiry, that no further harm had resulted from her drive, than the sacrifice of one of the two ponies to her father's fears or prejudices. She then presented Ellen Bradfield formally to her aunt, who said, briefly,

"We scarcely calculated, Ma'am, on finding one of your family here."

"I hardly know anyone so likely to have been found here, except Mr. Scarsdale."

Miss Bradfield could not but understand the tone of the old woman; and Evelyn, perceiving it, ventured to begin an interpository,

"Aunt!" but aunt was not to be pacified in the presence of the enemy.

"Very little could be said by one of my name to Miss Bradfield, that could need explanation;" and Aunt Philly passed into the cottage, while the plume of her steeple-crowned beaver hat, which she insisted on wearing, nodded with indignation. Evelyn stayed behind a moment, to say something apologetic if possible; but there seemed very little to be said. Ellen Bradfield looked at the good, truthful, pretty face of the young aristocrat, and only smiled. She said a few words on the length of the walk from Spring Vale, and assured Evelyn that she would find her patient better in every respect. The girls shook hands for the first time in their lives, and parted. "How like her brother!" thought Evelyn; what Miss Bradfield thought we don't know.

It was not so strange that the junior members of these two families did not feel that antipathy which it was manifestly their duty to have felt. Their minds probably were, at birth, as capable as others of receiving impressions from external objects; but it was clear that they were not so susceptible of envy, hatred, and malice, as they ought to have been. No one pretends to account for this. It was clearly their duty to have been natural enemies, to have imbibed evil prejudices, to have drunk in bitterness and gall with their mother's milk, and to have felt a sentiment of unaccountable repulsion, as strong as that of the Federals and Confederates, the Capulets and Montagues, Politics and Honesty, Schoolboys and Soap-and-water, or any other two things between which there is a natural and unconquerable aversion. But there was very little of this really. Sir Michael, it has been seen, said not a word about his own affront, or we do not know what might have been his daughter's indignation. Abel Bradfield had been equally silent on the subject of his rebuff; and though it rankled

deeply in his heart, he had given vent to no determinate invectives, beyond the ordinary expletives in which he indulged. Pride had kept them both quiet on that point. At Spring Vale the Bradfields were almost ignored; a quiet contempt for the whole mass rather pervaded the elders of the family. So that of personal abuse, or reasons for personal affront, the junior members, as children, heard nothing. At Sommerton, the invective was personal enough, violent enough, and frequent enough; but it probably defeated its own object. It was regarded as the exaggerated outpouring of an embittered spirit, and produced but little effect upon his hearers. Whom did not Abel Bradfield envy? Whom would he not have cursed? So between the two these young people were not such good haters as good children should have been.

It is impossible to say what Evelyn might have felt had she heard of the impertinence of Mr. Bradfield's proposal; or how far Laurence Bradfield would have acquiesced in his father's unauthorised transmission of himself to the enemy.

The visit to the cottage proved so far satisfactory, that it was clear that Giles himself was better, and that Mrs. Giles had been made happy by the certainty of retaining her cottage for the present. Immediate prospect of the union was taken away. "Mr. Jennyngs told you that you would have to go, did he, Mrs. Giles? then if he comes here again with any message or information about the cottage, desire him to come to me; and on no account quit your house, whoever tells you. My father must do without a lodge gate, and Mr. McShotten can stay where he is till your husband is at work again." Mrs. Giles was loud in her praise of the young missus, and the New Parliament man, as she called her young master, and hoped the latter might "do well in his new situation, God bless him." It was impossible to hear these praises without being convinced of their sincerity; and the prejudices of Miss Carrington, and of Evelyn too, perhaps, began to give way before the satisfaction of seeing that those who could not chain Cerberus, sopped him; and that Abel Bradfield's greatest enemies were those of his own household. The old lady had a little temper of her own, and if she desired to gratify it she might have done so with a very solid reflection; that domestic opposition is continuous, and leaves no time for

reparation of damages. No war like a civil war for intensity.

As Aunt Philly turned from the cottage door, after her visit of charity, she walked some way, leaning heavily on her stick on the one side, and making use of Evelyn's arm on the other. Conversation never flagged long with her; and by the time she reached the village again, and had crossed the road to enter the fields on her way homo, she found it convenient to stop and look round her. No one who had once known Sommerton, and now looked at it, wanted a topic of conversation. The change was remarkable enough.

"Our friend seems exclusive," said Aunt Philly, eyeing the stone cottages and the park wall with about as much satisfaction as a burglar looks at Newgate. "No wonder the last curate, who was too modest to knock at the doors and ask, spent his first morning in looking for the church, and returned to Saxonby without having found it."

"Was that Mr. Scarsdale, Lord Mentmore's friend, aunt?"

"I believe it was, my dear. A painstaking young man," added the old lady, with a certain amount of patronage. She made a point of becoming acquainted with the neighbouring clergy, by name and character, at all events. Evelyn said nothing, but thought it was not the praise that Mr. Scarsdale would have desired.

"I should scarcely suppose Silvermere a larger place than this."

"I've no idea of the size of it, aunt. I hear the gardens are the finest in England, and the situation must be far more beautiful."

"A fine place to be mistress of, Evelyn."

"That would depend upon who was the master, aunt."

"My dear, the mistress may always be the master; and you certainly ought to marry."

"Why so?"

"Mild, good young women, who are dependent upon others, and of a gentle nature, are meant for marriage. You'll never take care of yourself. It wouldn't have agreed with me, my dear; and I think that Miss Bradfield looks as if she could do without it."

"That's jumping to a conclusion very rashly, I think. I

dare say we might both manage to put up with it, if we could have the husband we liked."

"All life is habit, so that that has less to do with the business than appears at first sight. But my breath is better, and if you'll give me your arm we'll proceed, my dear, and then I'll tell you something about the Bradfields."

CHAPTER XII.

AUNT PHILLY'S STORY, NOT TO BE SKIPPED.

"Ecce anus, in mediis residens annosa puellis
Sacra facit Tacitæ, non tamen ipsa tacet."—OVID.

THE explanation which I am about to give of certain interesting particulars connected with the two families, in the language of Aunt Philly, took place with numerous interruptions, from shortness of breath on the old lady's part; for these walks of hers were wonderful things for condition, much more valuable too as a means of communication than of progression to most people. I knew Aunt Philly myself, well, and have enjoyed many a cross-country gossip with her; her remarks, trite and caustic, received additional effect from her shortness of breath, which seemed to make them more trenchant than ever; and she occasionally sat on a stile, or pulled up on a ridge, which she preferred to the furrow from its dryness, long enough to indulge in a little story, less remarkable for its delicacy than its wit; but Aunt Philly was a lady of another generation than our own, and not the less a lady on that account.

"Your father's uncle, my dear—my eldest brother," said she, upon this occasion pulling up in the middle of a thirty-acre grazing field, "was a gentleman—a gentleman every inch of him. I don't mean to say that your father and Stafford are not so; but your great-uncle was so pre-eminently above all men of his day; and the word then had a very peculiar signification. You know he was alive at the Declaration of American Independence; and had seen and

heard the great Lord Chatham. He was a young man of fashion at the time of the French Revolution; in Parliament with Pitt, and one of his stanchest supporters. He was an opponent of Charles James Fox in the House, at the card-table, and at Newmarket. He was one of the great English shopkeepers, as Napoleon chose to call us, who was in Paris during the peace of Amiens. He and Mr. Addington were kicked out together—the one out of office, and the other out of Paris; neither the one nor the other ever forgave Buonaparte. He had a very excellent property, my dear Evelyn; and if you look round you will see the greatest part of it, as I told you. This parish and Spring Vale belonged to him. When he retired to live upon it, he was in an unfortunate position. He was too honest and independent to make a London courtier, and too refined and extravagant for a country gentleman." Here she sighed.

"My poor brother had no more idea of expense, my dear, than you have."

"Than I, aunt? I am sure I'm not extravagant."

"Very good, my dear child, then you're the first of the family; and as you'll have little enough, it's a fortunate circumstance. However, to be a gentleman in those days, a man must have had money or credit; and I rather think the credit gave him the better title of the two. My brother had both, and got on very well for a certain time. He was quite the great man at Newmarket and at the clubs; gave the best dinners in London; was an intimate friend of the Prince, though his opponent in politics, and his rival in Sèvres china. He had a very handsome wife, to whom he was scrupulously polite in society, and by whom he was terribly bored at home. In the county he was everybody and everything. He had a quantity of racehorses, nasty things, which ate up all his money; and the county fox-hounds, which did the same with his time. He stood three contested elections, and success cost him fifty thousand pounds; the beaten candidate, Lord Ballotbox, never lived in England afterwards. Everybody said he was the most honourable man alive. I suppose he was. I never heard the opinion of his tradespeople; but he never examined an account, and never paid one until he was obliged. He was an excellent shot, I have heard, and swordsman; for you

know, my dear, it was considered quite right in those days to make a god of your ill-temper, and sacrifice human victims to him. I don't think he ever officiated as high-priest; at least, I never knew of it, if he did. Do you know what a mortgage is, Evelyn?" said the old lady, suddenly moving from the ridge on which she had been standing, and starting at a very fair pace again for eighty; "do you know the meaning of a mortgage?"

"Yes, aunt; I believe I do."

"I'm very glad to hear it, as it will save me the trouble of explaining. Perhaps, too, you know what a release is?"

"I think I can guess, if it has reference to the mortgage," said Evelyn.

"Well, then, after what Sir Reginald Carrington called a very bad season at Newmarket, and the loss of about twenty thousand pounds at piquet, he was obliged to raise a mortgage on his property; and to clear the rest, it was found desirable to do so upon this very estate of Sommerton."

Evelyn began to feel considerable interest in her aunt's narrative, which hitherto had dealt somewhat in generalities.

"In fact, aunt, Sir Reginald borrowed enough money on this property here to pay off everything he owed elsewhere."

"Exactly so; and to do him justice, I believe he fully intended to do so."

"But you mean that he never did, or how came it in the hands of the Bradfields?"

"I'm coming to that in a minute or two. You young people are always impatient. As I said, I dare say your uncle had the best of intentions, but unfortunately he did not put them at that time into execution. The mortgage too (I don't understand much about such things), as I was told, was of a peculiar character. At all events, Sir Reginald, by paying the debt upon it, was to be allowed to redeem the property within a given time, or the Sommerton Estate was to be forfeited to the mortgagee. I hope you understand that, my dear?

"It so happened that about this time there appeared in the neighbourhood a man whom nobody knew, and men, like my brother, didn't care to know. He was neither a courtier, nor a sportsman, nor a gambler, nor a gentleman,

but he was rich; and by some means the property got into his hands by the death of the original mortgagee, I believe, who was an acquaintance of my brother. This man's name was Bradfield. He was said to be a mill-owner, and a grasping, clever man, who had made his way from the lowest round of his own ladder to the top of it, by great exertions and care. In the course of time he began to innovate; he built up cottages here and there; he built part of the present house; he laid out grounds; above all things he discovered iron and set up furnaces; and all the world who was not in the secret, congratulated Sir Reginald on the improvement of his property, and the valuable accession to his income. I think, my dear, they mistook the first Mr. Bradfield for a bailiff or steward to your uncle, who held his tongue about the real state of affairs.

"Then came more troubles and difficulties; and at last a notice or advice from Bradfield's lawyer, to remind Sir Reginald that it was time to pay off the debt, or that he should claim his bond."

"You mean that he should take possession of the estate?" said Evelyn.

"I do, my dear."

"And that's how the Bradfields became squires, is it, aunt?"

"It's not an uncommon mode nowadays. If that was all, I don't know that we could blame them."

"It sounds hard," said Evelyn, thinking of the misconduct of the parvenu.

"It is hard; but then the children are to suffer for the sins of their father," said Miss Carrington, thinking of somebody else. "However, in the present case, it was fully believed that your uncle had paid the money, interest and principal, into the hands of this very Bradfield or his lawyer; that he had or ought to have had, a release, and that the estate had lapsed unjustly. In fact, my dear, that this property is no more the property of the family who hold it than of Job Fletcher or Mr. Nurse."

"But were is the release, aunt?" said the young lady with much acuteness and appreciation of the merits of the case.

"Well, this is the difficulty; and you must listen a little longer."

"Go on, aunt; oh! pray go on; I've never heard the true account of this business before."

The old lady sat down on another stile, and recommenced :—

"It so happened, about this time, that Sir Reginald won a very large sum of money, and he confided to his friends, and to me, his intention and capability of satisfying the demands upon him, and resuming his powers in Sommerton Lordship. It was a good many thousand pounds; but gentlemen played and betted high; and I think everbody rejoiced in our good fortune.

"On a particular day, considerably within the time (for your uncle was dead before the expiration of the mortgage, or whatever the lawyers call this sort of bond), the old gentleman, for he was no longer a young man, though still a gay one, started for Patcham. It was supposed that he was to pay up the money due, and to receive whatever papers were necessary to constitute his release."

"And didn't he do so, aunt? If he had the money his pride, as well as his interest, would have made him do so. It must have broken his heart to have seen his property in the hands of this miserable tradesman."

"It's a more wholesome pride that prevents it from getting there. There does not seem to have been much doubt that he started with the money, and for that purpose."

"And did not he fulfil it? Oh! surely, surely, aunt, he must have done so."

"My good girl, I, for one, firmly believe that he did. But you've heard the story of my poor brother's death, Evelyn, hundreds of times;" and here the old lady's voice faltered, and her dim eyes filled with tears. It was on that night that he was seized with paralysis, and never spoke afterwards. His wife had been dead some years before."

"And the servants? Was there no one to say anything?" Evelyn asked with much anxiety.

"None, my dear. The servants gave their account, but could tell nothing of any papers or moneys received or paid. There was a trial, in which your father's guardian, and the executors of the will, endeavoured to show that the money had been paid; but they failed for want of evidence."

"And what was the evidence, Aunt Philly? These

people can't know of such things; or could they retain it so unjustly?"

"I have no great opinion of Abel Bradfield, my dear, and I know nothing of his children; but the circumstances were suspicious.

"Gentlemen posted everywhere in those days. Your uncle was an exception on most occasions. He usually rode on horseback, even to town, with relays of horses all the way. This day he ordered his carriage, and with one servant and a pair of posters he started. He reached Patcham, the carriage was put up, and he went out on foot into the town. On his return to the hotel he ordered out his carriage. He was always late, and he did not start till it was already dark, intending, we concluded, only to reach home for dinner. On the road, which was then a bad cross-country road, and but little frequented, the carriage was stopped by three men; the post-boy was lifted off his horse at once, with a blow; the servant was threatened with instant death, and ordered to stand by the horses, while a man, masked, stood with a cocked pistol over him. My poor brother had time to fire one pistol, which did not take effect, when he was knocked down by a bludgeon, and himself and the carriage rifled of all its contents. The linings were cut, and the recovered post-boy, who was suspected of knowing something about it, was replaced upon his horse. The servant, half dead with alarm, who gave us this account, placed my poor brother inside, in a state of insensibility, and so they returned to the Manor House. Your uncle lived many months, but he never recovered his senses, and died imbecile. The shock and the blow together produced a species of paralysis, from which he never rallied."

"And was nothing done, aunt; nothing? Poor papa and Stafford!"

"There was a trial and an appeal, but the result was the same in both courts; it gave us no courage to proceed."

"And no means were left for my father or Stafford ever again to get the property!"

"None, my dear. Your father was almost as extravagant in his young days as his uncle, from whom he inherited the property and the baronetcy; besides which he never had the chance. Sir Reginald had raised about twenty thousand

pounds on it, and five times that sum would not have bought it back again from old Bradfield."

"And this will all belong to that young Mr. Bradfield, Lord Mentmore's friend, whom I met last year at Lady Sarah's?" demanded Evelyn, sorrowfully enough.

"It happens that it will not, for it is all settled on the daughter, that young woman we met going into Mrs. Giles's. It's a fine property, and a very valuable one; too much so for a girl." Here Aunt Philly sat down on a convenient stile.

"Why so, aunt?"

"They never get married for themselves, my dear; or if such a thing was likely, it would be impossible to persuade them of it."

"I think that Ellen Bradfield looks as if she never meant to be married for anything else. Do you know, aunt, I'll tell you something."

"Well, my child," said the old lady, affectionately, and flourishing her stick for a last attempt. "Well, my child?"

"There's something very attractive about Miss Bradfield."

"Humph!" said Aunt Philly, evidently disappointed, and jumping up again.

"There is indeed, aunt; and she's so ladylike-looking, as well as so pretty. Stafford or papa would say she shows a great deal of quality."

"Then she's the only one of that school that ever did. Proserpine was a beauty, indeed, although from below stairs; but then she was the daughter of Jupiter and Ceres, both persons of condition, and chose to marry beneath her. She became the mother of the Furies, a proper punishment for a *mésalliance*."

At this moment the gate turning into the field from the road, and which led directly from the village of Spring Vale to that of Sommerton, opened, and a fine-looking young man, on a good-looking horse, rode into it. He must pass within a few feet of the ladies to get to a bridle gate, by which he would reach the horseway to Sommerton.

"This looks like a gentleman, at all events; who's this?" inquired the aunt.

Her niece did not answer immediately, but continued to

look at the advancing figure, with rather a heightened colour.

"Is it anyone I know, my dear?" continued Aunt Philly, mistrusting her own eyes, very properly.

"I rather think not, aunt—it looks like young Mr. Bradfield."

"Speak out, my dear—Mr. who?"

Aunt Philly was suddenly deaf again; but Evelyn, seeing that the gentleman had recognised her, and that he was too near for her to reply excepting *sotto voce*, made no other reply to her aunt than that of bowing in a good-humoured way to the stranger, who reined up his horse, and, after raising his hat not ungracefully, began making inquiries of Miss Carrington, as to her stay in the country—her length of visit in town—Lady Sarah, her children, her ponies—the absence of frost, and the fineness of the day. Violence was done to the old lady's feelings at last by a necessary introduction, and after a few more good-natured commonplace remarks, Mr. Laurence Bradfield took his leave.

"And that's young Bradfield, is it?"

"Yes; that's Mr. Abel Bradfield's only son."

"And he's just been returned for Plumpton?"

All this was rather a soliloquy of Miss Carrington's than expecting any answer.

"You said so, aunt, yourself this morning—you saw it in 'The Times.'"

"Well, I shouldn't be very much surprised if he did his duty—he looks as if he would. And he looks like a gentleman. The first of the lot, my dear—the first of the lot; but it's better than being the last, perhaps. The Bradfields must go up when the Carringtons come down."

To say that Miss Carrington for a moment contemplated any such metamorphosis would be an untruth. She had a fashion of speaking in that manner, and some vague notions that property did change hands after the lapse of centuries; but she regarded it in their own case as a very remote contingency. Family extinction was argued by her upon the same grounds as physical dissolution by other people—a case for everybody else but her own self; but she liked to talk in that way. She did not know how near the truth she might have been! she would have indulged in the contemplation of no such possibilities with indifference!

On the coutrary, she was a very likely woman to have set to work to mend the fractures in the family garment, or prop the fortunes of a falling house with her own sixty thousand. She would perhaps not have given it to her nephew, but Stafford would undoubtedly have benefited by it, at the expense of Evelyn. In truth, the old lady had a great liking for Stafford Carrington, although she was not demonstrative of it.

"My dear, I admire your brother immeusely."

"I am glad to hear it, aunt; he'd be very much flattered."

"I don't think he would, for he's a monstrous opinion of himself. Still, he's not nearly such a fool as he pretends to be."

"He reads, you know, aunt—and he might have been in parliament; but he couldn't afford it out of his allowance, and he didn't wish to put papa to any further expense."

"I know all that—and that he's not such a fool as he might be takeu for; but brains are not the fashion, my good girl; aud your brother has not strength of mind enough to be a declared opponent. So he compromises. He cultivates the crop, but takes care to nip it before it has time to benefit himself or his neighbours."

Here they reached the gate of her own cottage, aud Evelyn was about to take leave of her aunt.

"No, no, don't go—come in, and I'll send nurse for your maid; you can dine here, and we'll have your things brought down to the cottage. When do those two men come back from Newmarket?"

"Next week they're expected. There's the Saxonby ball, to which we must go. Stafford's a steward, aud papa makes a point of our going from political motives."

"Yes, my dear — Whigs and Tories are all like flies; there's a honey-pot that will catch anybody, if you only know the right mixture, and where to hang it."

"Stafford ought to succeed papa in the county. I don't know whether he will—he's scarcely so popular, I think."

"It's much to be hoped that he won't unless he can better afford it. The first thing for Stafford to do is to marry an heiress—he's much more cut out for that than for shakiug hands with ten-pouud freeholders."

"Stafford's shy," said Evelyn, in an apologetic tone.

"Out of his own class, he is. Your father, on the con-

trary, has managed the county so long, that they think there is nothing so pleasant as being overridden, and no one so capable of doing it as my nephew."

Mr. Nurse was a capital judge of small dinners for two ladies, and his genius did not fail him upon this occasion. There was an excellent potage, a small piece of salmon, salmis de perdreaux, and a pudding au citron; some admirable light claret for the young mistress, and a couple of glasses of the very best port wine for the elderly lady—port that had lost all its sweetness and retained all its colour; such as we sometimes hear of as being in existence, but which is as rare to meet with as American modesty, and as highly valued when found.

The conversation took just that light and playful turn which might have been expected. Evelyn talked of her world—her horse, her birds, her flowers, her schoolchildren, and her past and coming season in town; Miss Carrington enlightened her on the news of the county, and the pleasures of a by-gone age; and Evelyn enjoyed the society of her aunt above all people—her severity was always tempered with judgment, and her personal indulgence to the young lady herself was all the more flattering from her general expectation of feminine weakness in others.

"And now," added the honest old woman, "your maid is waiting for you, my dear; and, if you stop too late, they'll not let you come again. They'll say your old mad aunt has corrupted you, perhaps; but when you marry, mind you are able to promise honestly 'to love, honour, and to obey your husband,' and then God will help you to do so. A bed of roses can only be bought at a great price, but it's worth the money."

And hard, caustic Aunt Philly kissed her niece, and let fall a natural tear or two from a source that never quite dries up but with life—human sympathy. She might have been thinking of something a long time ago: who can tell?

CHAPTER XIII.

ABEL BRADFIELD AT HOME.

"Thus always teasing others, always teased,
His only pleasure is—to be displeased."—COWPER.

ABEL BRADFIELD was sitting in his room about the time of this fine open Christmas weather. It was a very cheerful room, indeed the best furnished, and most coveted in the house. That's why he kept it to himself. It was full of the choicest cabinet pictures,—copies, it is to be admitted; but excellent copies, and the frames were chosen with infinite taste and care. It does not happen to such as he, with all his wealth, to fall upon originals of great masters. A man should be born to a great master, just as much as to family plate, or a name. The few great exceptions prove nothing but an accidental judgment, and the rule. Not that Bradfield cared so long as his friends believed in their originality; and most of them did; for they believed it to be a hobby, and they knew him to be lavish on his own.

Men are unable to multiply rare editions, valuable manuscripts, illuminated missals,—the midnight labours of the monastery and the cell. So this department was great of its class. There were few more expensive collections in England than that of Abel Bradfield. Money, toil, even personal research had been expended upon books of great value. It had served a purpose. It had given their owner a character, and a position; and he was occasionally sought by men of learning and talent, who were content to take the signs of it for its reality.

In the room in which he now sat, his treasures of art were collected about him—a mediæval taste reigned supreme. Only in the luxury of his chairs and sofas had he mixed modern ease with grandeur and severity of style. It was morning, and the sun shone unrestricted on the new publications, papers, pamphlets, and handsome writing materials with which the tables were covered. It streamed in brightly, warmly for the time of year, almost upon the fire, through

the long Gothic windows, revealing the treasures of a conservatory into which the room opened on the southern side.

Abel Bradfield sat opposite to the fire. He had a book and a paper-knife in his hand. It was habitual with him; and having none of the tastes of a country gentleman, he adopted literature,—an excellent substitute, but a rather laborious pretence.

He had a few vexations—most men have; and he was endeavouring, as he swung his glasses to and fro over his waistcoat, to balance the account. His son did not please him. There was nothing very remarkable about that. Laurence Bradfield always seemed to be making light of the heaviest business.

"Il se moquait de tout le monde." He inherited from the old original manufacturer imperturbable independence of character, and from his mother an equally imperturbable sweetness of temper. He felt within himself two great powers of mind, which had been successful in his early tests, the one great practical value of university distinction. His father could make nothing of him. "He wouldn't go in for this county when he might have opposed those cursed Carringtons with every chance of success; where itself money would have kept him, and where his position might have been improved; and he would stand for Plumpton, where there's nothing in the world to be got by it, and where he has no local interest whatever."

His son was enough to drive anyone mad.

His wife was more easily managed, and he had quite settled the question of the season in town. "What the d——l could she want in town for three months. Six weeks was quite enough, and as to lessons in singing, there was noise enough, and expense enough, without paying Signor Gioeo a guinea an hour for increasing it;" and then Ellen had said nothing about it, so that that might be put to the other side of the account.

Searsdale was a thorn in his side. Some how or other the curate was unapproachable, a regular hedgehog, "locked up in the steel" of his regularity, industry, and honesty of purpose. "What business had he with such acquaintances as Lord Mentmore? why the d——l didn't he know his position better in the social scale, than to call a man of that

sort 'Mentmore?' Mentmore, indeed!" and Abel Bradfield felt inclined to resent the familiarity as an insult to the whole of the aristocracy, of which he was most anxious to be considered a member.

Then came a real grievance. "That scoundrel Lushington, who had only about fifteen hundred a year, had actually gained his cause, and he would have to pull down one hundred yards of park wall, because that stupid old fool the Chief Baron ruled that it was an encroachment on public rights. Whose rights? I should like to know. Those d——d gipsies, I suppose."

We can forgive a man for a small portion of irritability under such circumstances. Bradfield had no more idea of doing a mischief, or of invading public rights than I have; he only considered (what was true), that it would make his park wall level and straight, instead of the reverse, if he took in a portion of the common land on the road side, and as it could do no harm to anyone but a set of dirty unprotected paupers, who most of them worked for him, what could it signify? "Let them sell their donkeys if they couldn't afford to buy oats." So he did it, and the result and expense was prodigious.

But that wasn't all, now he recollected. Only last Sunday Lushington and his wife and children were in *his* church, and in *his* curate's pew. "D—— the fellow's impudence. Who gave him leave to come to his church? Why Scarsdale, to be sure." And at this point, seeing nothing to contradict or abuse but his books and his pictures, he got up and rang the bell.

"How came Colonel Lushington in my church last Sunday?"

"Don't know, Sir," said Thomas, rather timidly.

"You never do know anything. Who gave him leave to sit in Mr. Scarsdale's seat—the vicarage seat?" He was accustomed to call it the vicarage seat by a sort of euphemy; for he had many times declared that he wanted no vicars in his parish, and as the land and houses were all his, he had taken care there never should be one.

"Don't know, Sir," said the man, conscious of his inability, and of the turpitude of his ignorance.

"Is he in the habit of sitting there?"

"I believe he is, Sir; leastways, I've seen him most

Sundays last summer and autumn, while the family was away, Sir."

"Do you ever touch your hat to him?"

Thomas was a good servant, but a discriminating man; so he always did touch his hat, very respectfully, to Colonel Lushington, and at once answered, "No, Sir."

"And I desire you never do, Sir; neither you nor any servant of mine. He has done all in his power to insult me; you can go; and desire Mr. Wilson, the churchwarden, to come down to me."

"Yes, Sir;" and Thomas departed on his errand.

Mr. Wilson was not at home, but Mrs. Wilson was, and was not long in getting out of Thomas the business on which Mr. Wilson was wanted by the squire.

At that moment Mr. Wilson, the churchwarden, who had been carting manure in his yard, entered the house. He was quite as great as a churchwarden as Abel Bradfield as a squire, and had a great idea of the church's privileges and his own powers. He'd have been great in an excommunication case.

"Bless my soul," said Mr. Wilson, "what's to be done now? This 'ull never do. We can't allow the church to suffer 'cos o' these here hanimosities. I always says, the squire, says I, he's a deal o' responsibility; but the officers o' the church! Thomas, bless me, that's another thing. In course I'll go down, but we can't take cognizance of these private quarrels, no how; and so I must just put the squire right on that point. There ain't no property in pews neither."

"My dear," said Mrs. Wilson, "you'll do nothing o' the sort. You'll just recollect you're a tenant o' the squire's; and though you do pay your rent, the less you have to do with him the better. It's no business of yours."

"But, my dear——"

"There, you just go and finish your business; it's nice open weather for it, and you can talk church matters over when it's a frost. I'll manage the squire."

Mr. Wilson was too good a judge of its value to waste time.

"Now, Thomas," said Mrs. Wilson, pouring him out a second glass of home-brewed beer, "you run down to Stephen Downing, the clerk, and send him to the Hall.

Mr. Wilson's always at Saxonby Market on a Wednesday, and he's gone a bit earlier than usual; Stephen's a pig-headed one, and will stand a deal o' drivin';" and with that she dismissed Thomas.

"Please, Sir," said Stephen about half-an-hour afterwards, well-primed with a glass of strong ale, with his black coat, which was soon put on, and a second day's white neckcloth fresh from last Sunday, as he blundered into the presence, "I be come down as I heard as you'n gotten somethin' to say."

"Can you tell me why Colonel Lushington comes into my church on Sunday?"

"Belike to say his prayers, Sir."

"You're just as great a fool as the rest of 'em." Stephen Downing stroked his head with imperturbable gravity. "I mean what brings him there?"

"Mostly it's the jaunty car, but last Sunday it was the pony chay."

"You great dolt, I mean why doesn't he go to his own church?"

"Cos he's so uncommon fond o' Muster Scarsdale, I expect. Yes, Sir, uncommon nice gentleman he be, to be sure —we ain't had such 'en a curate——"

"Who the d——l sent for you to tell me what sort of a person Mr. Scarsdalo is? I want to know why he lets Colonel Lushington into my church."

"Well, Sir, I doan't rightly know, but he be up at the school now; this is his day. He come every other day—never neglects nobody, he doan't."

"Now you can go; and don't show your face here again till you're sent for."

"Thank ye, Sir," said Stephen Downing, the parish clerk, and out he went.

It so happened that old Morton, or Giles, or whatever he called himself, was taken worse than usual in the Saxonby Union. It was not very extraordinary that at his time of life he should be ailing, in body or in mind; but he chose to consider it so. It is said that at fifty, a man's disposition is but the reflection of his former life; at eighty reflection must have become a photograph. The old man was no less a rascal, than he had been as a young one; and he could no more have died comfortably without taking some-

body in, than he could once have lived without it. He sent for his son. The meeting was not a touching one, though there were no witnesses to it. It was one of mutual recrimination; and the mind we have seen so feeble, partly real, partly assumed, recovered plenty of its brightness and vivacity when the steel was present, which drew the spark from the flint. Dan Morton himself was not a man to mince matters from delicacy of feeling; and when they got upon the question of Abel Bradfield, whose name had clung pretty tenaciously to the old man since Mr. Scarsdale's first visit, his son went at once to the points of their mutual career, which were personally most interesting to him.

The old man had no idea that he should ever live to profit or suffer by anything connected with his past experiences. Immunity makes a man very communicative even on his own affairs. It was not, however, without some difficulty that Dan Morton drew from his father, at length, that there was a paper of so much importance to them both, and to others besides, concealed in Sommerton Hall, that if it were only got hold of by the right persons, it might make or mar the fortunes and jeopardise the safety of more than one individual. The old man asserted, besides, that the existence of this paper was not known to Abel Bradfield, but that the circumstances connected with its concealment were; for that his father had died without having had the opportunity he sought of placing the papers in the hands of the son. The next visitor whom he received was Mr. Scarsdale, who in the course of his duties was helping the Vicar of Saxonby by going down to the union workhouse. Their conversation was of no material importance to the reader; it concerned, as far as Scarsdale was interested in it, the welfare of old Giles Morton's soul; as far as he himself was interested, the well-being of his body. He couldn't eat the soup, and the meat was all fat. The beer was not fit for a Christian to drink, of which body he regarded himself as a most important member. The port wine, ordered for him by the union-doctor, "hadn't got no strength in it no how." The master was always a "routlin' of him about," and the matron was always a "peggin' into him about one thing or t'other, just when he wanted to go to sleep." In fact there "wasn't no peace on this side of

the grave," to which Mr. Scarsdale, with a view to his argument, very justly assented.

"Yes, Sir; yes, I knows it—it's a awful thing to die, it is; but a awfuller to live wi' such a lot o' folks as these."

"But, Morton, it's our duty to bear it in this world, or how shall we manage in the next?"

"The next? Oh! thank God, we sha'nt have none on 'em there." Then he referred to the tattered paper he had made Mr. Scarsdale read at their last meeting; and now the only thing that would make him die happy was a promise that Mr. Scarsdale would see that paper into the hands of Abel Bradfield. "He ought to have it, and then he's got it all on his own shoulders. And now, Sir, if you'd like to read a bit, why I always was a friend to the Church; never went to meetin', and as to them Methodys, they're a bad lot, I fear." So Scarsdale took the paper; and read the Bible to old Morton, and went his way; much perplexed with his mission, or rather the meaning of it.

The next morning, as was his wont, he found himself at the Sommerton school. It was a primitive establishment for the advance of education. Charming building, capital stove, excellent desks, admirable ventilation, a first-rate clock, and a very bad master; cheap, but dear at any price. Mr. Bradfield had no sympathy with the movement party in this direction. Notwithstanding the poor people would get on in spite of their master; thanks, as they said, to their curate, and the squire's daughter. I wonder whether Scarsdale ever felt for Ellen Bradfield a tenderer sentiment than sincere esteem. At all events he kept it to himself; and they worked together the better for it. They were there on this identical Wednesday, and the door suddenly opened, and the squire himself suddenly appeared among them.

When things were going all right, Abel Bradfield felt, like a wholesome frost, very desirous of checking them. All this prosperity and comfort in his village was decidedly wrong. The most irritating thing in the world, was the having nothing to complain of. Thank Heaven, he had now a real grievance, so that he was almost cheerful by the time he reached the school house. And when he got there, there wasn't even a dirty pinafore. Even little Billy Smudge had his hair brushed, and Madge Wilfred was not

in disgrace. He got answers to most of his questions : an there was only one naughty little boy, who could not spel Constantinople.

"I'm afraid these children are very troublesome, Mr Scarsdale ?"

"Not at all," said the curate, cheerfully.

"Ellen, your mother desired me to send you to the Hall.

"Did she really, papa ? then I'll go directly." An collecting her books and handkerchief, and taking leave c Mr. Scarsdale, she left the school.

"I don't think much beyond reading and writing i desirable, Mr. Scarsdale, for these children."

"They're not likely to get it here," replied the curat with an eye to the besotted schoolmaster.

"I hope not. Schools appear to me to be only a part c a clergyman's duty. Have you seen Giles lately ?"

"Not this morning—he's going on very well."

"So much the better. I want his cottage. He's a car tankerous, ill-conditioned fellow."

"Really ! I'm mistaken then," said the curate.

"How so ?" said the squire.

"I should have thought him one of the very best men i the parish."

"I'm curious to know your ideas of one of the best me in the parish."

"Honest, industrious, a good husband and father, an regular in his attendance at church."

"You attach great importance to the latter article c faith."

"Undoubtedly," said Scarsdale, with some surprise.

"Is that the reason that Colonel Lushington has you permission to sit in the vicarage pew ?"

"In his case, I hardly gave it a thought."

"Doesn't it occur to you that his parish church is th proper place for him and his family ?"

"I can hardly presume to dictate to him, any more tha to yourself. Perhaps you will do me the favour to walk little way with me; at least, if you wish to discuss tha question."

This was quite a new phase in the character of a curate but as Scarsdale walked towards the door and held it oper it was not easy to refuse the request. Besides, Scarsdal

was not a man, nor in the humour, to be regarded lightly. Mr. Bradfield felt that he had his match.

"Mr. Bradfield," said the young man, with a raised colour, and a certain amount of temper even in his voice, "I have been here some time, and I never yet took a liberty with you. The first at all events has been to prevent your taking one with me."

Abel Bradfield's face turned purple, and then to an ashy paleness; violent passion, tempered with a sort of reverence, literally deprived him of speech. The curate continued, "I have thought it undesirable that the squire and the clergyman of the parish should condescend to recriminations before their parishioners. If you have anything to say to me, you can say it here." Still Abel Bradfield held his peace; until conquering the choking sensation which prevented utterance, he said in a low but distinct tone of voice, "You allowed Colonel Lushington to sit in the vicarage pew in my church."

"I did; but let us understand each other, Mr. Bradfield. This is not your church; you have surrounded it with a wall, built it out from the parishioners and occupiers, and built it into your own property—but the church is not yours."

"Then, Sir, to whom, may I ask, does it belong?" This was said with a feeble attempt at sarcasm; which, however, like a laced shroud, only concealed badly the corpse beneath.

"It belongs to the vicar, to whom your father sold the living for so much money, and whose representative I am, by the bishop's appointment; and every labourer in the parish has an equal interest in it with yourself." This speech, albeit delivered without violence, was not calculated to quiet Abel Bradfield; nor did it.

They stood without the wall in question.

"D—— you," said he, raising his stick and shaking it—"scoundrel;" but there was nothing in Scarsdale's face that made a personal attack desirable. "Scoundrel. Choose then, d—— you, between your friend Colonel Lushington, a broken-down spendthrift upon a few hundreds a year; and me, the master of your parish, who am able to crush, aye, and who will crush you, by G—, before you're a day older."

"I have already chosen between a gentleman, and one who thus outrages every sense of decency. For my own sake I shall see you no more, while I remain to perform the duties of my office here, unless I can reasonably put down your present conduct to the ravings of insanity. Before we part, however, let me discharge a commission I have received from one Morton Giles, or Giles Morton, of Claygate, whom I saw yesterday in the Saxonby Union." Saying which, Mr. Scarsdale put his hand into his pocket and began to search for the memorandum which he had received from the old man. He was too intent upon his search to observe the terrible change which passed over the face of Abel Bradfield. Hitherto the trembling lips and pale cheek had been the effects of temper, now it had changed to the χλωρὸν δέος of abject fear. Scarsdale continued to search, but without effect, while the squire held out his trembling hand to receive the missive.

"I regret to say that I must have mislaid it; but it seemed to be of little or no consequence——"

"Give it me, Sir, directly. You have no right, Sir, to detain it."

"Detain it, Mr. Bradfield! of course not. It was a mere open paper, very old and utterly valueless, I should imagine. Its contents did not interest me, but appeared to be a proposed meeting between the late Sir Reginald Carrington and Mr. Bradfield, for the settlement of a debt. It was in the form of a note."

"And you pretend to have lost it, Sir? Sir, it's a lie, a lie; if the whole is not a forgery between you and that cursed felon."

Scarsdale looked at Abel Bradfield, and as he looked he saw the light fade from his eyes, and he sank fainting, before he could be assisted, into a helpless inert mass.

Scarsdale crossed the road, knocked at the nearest cottage, and said, "Mr. Bradfield is taken ill; get some water and go over to him with some of the neighbours. Send down to the Hall immediately. I'm going on Mr. Wilson's pony to Saxonby, and will send over Dr. Probewell directly." And he did so.

The first person that passed along the village after the curate, on that eventful morning, was Job Fletcher. As he was thinking of nothing, it gave him time to observe

external objects, and the first thing of peculiar interest tha caught his eye, was a clean euvelope without any address and unsealed. I do not think that Job's conscience woul have been at all nice, had the reverse been the case; but in the present circumstances he was only acting the part of a prudent person, in looking to see to whom it belonged. Jol was not a man of much learning, and with difficulty mad out the two proper names, with which he was most familiar Carrington and Bradfield. Then came the question as t which of the two the paper itself appertained, or whether t either of them.

While he was thus debating within himself what to d with his newly-found incumbrance, and whether he migh not as well let it lie where it was, old Master Robson hap pened to pass by on his way to the blacksmith, to whom Jol at once referred. No man likes to admit that he can neithe read nor write; so Master Robson went through th ceremony of looking it well over upside down, and ther returned it to the finder; remarking that, "folks worn't mucl in the way o' these new fangled writings in his days; fo his part he didn't see no good in it." But if he gav nothing else, he parted with some sound advice, when h heard from you the mighty parties whom it concerned "Bradfield, Carrington; ah! Job, them's great folk any how; I'd take it home to the missus, if I was you, sh knows a bit about 'em, more nor you and me, Job."

And so it came that the paper fell into the hands anc workbox of Mrs. Job Fletcher.

If there were no other advantage to be met with in seek ing counsel in difficulty from the wife of your bosom, there is one at least,—one undeniable chance of efficient help She is quite certain to take a different view of any matte from yourself, if she be a true woman; and you thus ge two sides of the question critically reviewed. Indeed, tc argue backwards, this may be one sound reason why sh is imbued with this spirit of determined contradictior upon subjects of but ordinary interest. Married lif truly in this respect appears to be not unlike the in fluence of the sun and moon upon the tides. When dis tinctly opposed to one another, the wife has the best of it but when they unite their forces for great objects, as th sun and moon at the change and fall of the latter, ther

they are irresistible, like the spring tides, and carry everything before them. This passage had better be forgotten by unmarried men.

CHAPTER XIV.

BROTHER AND SISTER.

"Though from an humble stock, undoubtedly
Was fashioned to much honour."
SHAKESPEARE, *Henry VIII.*

THE sudden illness of a great man usually causes considerable emotion. As the Bradfields were far the richest people in that neighbourhood, and as Abel Bradfield took care to keep up a sort of mystery in connection with his enormous wealth, no sooner was it known that he had been taken suddenly ill, and that old Dr. Probewell had been sent for, than every sort of conjecture was afloat in Saxonby. Some prognosticated paralysis, some apoplexy, some an overdose of truffles, and the least charitable incipient mania. As he scrupulously avoided, for himself and his family, all association with his neighbours, not much reliance could be placed upon any of these suggestions; but on one subject they were unanimous—that whenever he was taken, he would not be missed, and there seemed very little doubt which way he would go. Scarsdale was not an accessible person to gossip; and though a cheerful, good-humoured fellow, and fond enough of society, he managed, with great dexterity (forgive the pun), to keep Saxonby at arm's length. In this he was aided by his independence of it; and excepting by occasional assistance to the vicar and his curate, more especially at the union workhouse, he kept well aloof from any parochial business which might bring him officially into closer intimacy.

They were a scandal-loving set, those members of the Saxonby coteries. I speak advisedly, as rising members, who are about to give flight to vivid imagination, are apt to

say, on the subject of coteries. Never was a respectable town of four or five thousand inhabitants so full of them. Politics, of course, divided them, but into two parties only. Religious zeal took a wider range. There were the high, the low, and the grand old orthodox, headed by Parrott, the bookseller, who never saw much good in a parson who didn't play his rubber every night, and cherish a reputation for carving. There was Mrs. Tailby, the widow of an East Indian colonel, who associated with nobody; she had seven tolerably good-looking daughters and four sons, who had never been seen since fifteen. They were all somewhere in the Himalayas, a *terra incognita* to the people of Saxonby. Once a year she took a fly and paid a round of country visits; once a year she dined at the Manor House, was welcomed at any balls or mixed parties in the neighbourhood, had been in company with Miss Bradfield somewhere, which she took care should be known, and considered herself, for these reasons, one of the county. This was quite a sufficient reason for not knowing the town. The two lawyers were, of course, not on friendly terms. One was, as we know, the confidant of great men; he kept their secrets, distributed their patronage, and received their rents. The other was a pettifogger, great at county courts, and among insolvent farmers and tradesmen; much given to brandy and water, and affecting the taps and commercial rooms of the public-houses on market day. The former, Mr. Darville, condescended to Mrs. Tailby, and gave her an occasional dinner at his house at Spring Vale. The latter led a desperate and forlorn hope of apothecaries, office clerks, bank managers, and stray sheep of every description. There was also a coterie of swell haberdashers, saddlers, booksellers, and others, who really enjoyed themselves, and were the only people who did so. They had heavy whist parties, oyster suppers, supported race meetings, and stuck to business when it did not interfere with pleasure. Such was the town of Saxonby, and the sudden illness of Mr. Bradfield fell like a big stone into a small pond, whose circular ripples extended to its very edges.

There was nothing to be got out of Mr. Scarsdale. Even Dr. Probewell only arrived at the fact that, in the course of conversation with the curate, he had suddenly become pale, and subsequently faint. As to the exciting cause, that

worthy practitioner was as much in the dark as his fellow townsmen.

"Well, Brand," said Mr. Parrott, popping into the bookseller's back parlour, just to look at the paper, "so Mr Bradfield's pretty well again; it wasn't much, after all; he'd been looking up at some trees, that were marked to come down, on an empty stomach, and got a bit giddy."

"Looking up at some trees?" rejoined Brand. "Yes; so I should think,—his family tree, you mean. Bless your heart, man, the old failing:" and here the old librarian tapped his own head, with a view to test its soundness, perhaps. "No, no; of course old Probewell don't say anything about it; but my wife's cousin was a governess with their most intimate friends, the MacAdamses, of Liverpool. They don't talk about such things, but you may depend upon it, it comes out sooner or later."

It would hardly be thought that the women could have been personally affected by this question. They were; and its connection with the Saxonby ball was the immediate link between cause and effect.

The ladies of the family had never been exclusive nor mysterious. Mrs. Bradfield was too good-natured and simple-minded; Ellen Bradfield had too much good sense. By her behaviour, she might have been mistaken for the purest aristocrat, so unpretending, so unostentatious was she in all things. Evelyn Carrington was not more easily served, or more popular amongst her employés of every sort. If things were not quite good enough for her taste, she never hurt people's feelings by saying so; and, though fond of her own way, could never have been accused of being "fine."

"Oh! dear; gracious goodness! what would have become of us if the old Tartar had died? And they say he's had a fit, don't they, Miss Timmins?" said Miss Sarsnett, the milliner.

"Yes, Ma'am; something of that sort," replied the poor little workwoman.

"So very unlucky, just before the ball! But I believe they always have three attacks of that sort of thing, don't they, my dear, before death?"

"Yes, Ma'am, I believe they do," said Timmins, whose love was divided pretty equally between Evelyn and Ellen,

and her good-natured employer, Miss Sarsnett, and who was terribly cut up at the prospect held out to her.

"Did you hear what it was?" asked the mistress.

"They did say something about poison—accidental, of course, I mean."

"Poison? Nonsense, my dear; who could have told you such a thing? People never recover after poison, you know; and I heard he was better. Mrs. Rigby, who goes there charing, says he's nearly well, only in a worse temper than ever. So I hope it's all right; for whatever shall I do with these expensive flowers, if Miss Bradfield don't take half? And I believe she'd buy that violet moire if she saw it; it's such a lovely colour."

Miss Sarsnett's mind was set at rest for the present, by the arrival of the handsome carriage that very afternoon. The ladies declared Mr. Bradfield to be quite well again; and Miss Bradfield took away heaps of artificial flowers, a pair of Limerick lace ruffles, and a collar; and ordered the violet moire antique to be made up by poor Timmins. It was the first time she had ever been honoured by such an order, and both the good souls, mistress and maid, vowed to do their best for their patroness.

I do not know whether my readers are anxious about a ball and its results—and it had some—or it would not be described in these pages; but, before we come to it, although near at hand, we have still something to delay us on the road.

How very little Londoners, and men condemned to toil in large cities, know of the real uses of a Sunday morning in the country. The bright cheerful look of the morning—for statistically Sunday is a fine day—invites the good to that house in which, if he or she must show his or her best clothes and new bonnet, they desire to offer their thanks and praises for past, and to pray for fresh, bounties. But as all are not of the good, there are plenty who like to lie in bed, while the missus prepares the little ones for Sunday-school, and the bit of meat and the pudding for the bakehouse. The careless and the idle, not the indolent, are drawn forth into the balmy morning, to have a little outing, now that there are no wages to be got, and the beer-house is shut up. These are the gentlemen with whom philanthropists sympathise.

There are plenty of these in every country village: and Sommerton was no exception to the rule. Amongst these innocents might be numbered an old acquaintance—Dan Morton. Having worked all the week, as he chose to suppose, in a furnace, he liked "a bit o' natur'" on Sunday. If he had only taken to "a bit o' natur'" on that day I don't know that it would have damaged him nor anybody else. Example! say you. Well: just examine the question. There is no doubt about the field-work being bad, if it leads others, with less fixed principles, as he would have said, to follow in his wake. But if he had gone to church on the other hand, I for one believe that his example would have been even worse than by staying away. Indeed, when a man is thoroughly bad, it's difficult to say where he will not do mischief. But Dan Morton cared nothing about "natur'"

It was a fine Sunday morning, just after Christmas; Lord Mentmore had been down to Silvermere distributing beef and blankets, and was just come back again; for this eventful ball had not yet come off in consequence of some great national *contre-temps*, such as the death of the Mayor of Saxonby. Dan Morton had watched several of his acquaintance go by his window, manifestly to church. There was no mistaking the neat bonnets, the smooth hair, the red cloaks, the white smock-frocks and the tidy prayer-books in the hands of the women wrapped round with a white, but rather strong-looking pocket-handkerchief, as if to guard it from harm. Mr. Scarsdale had long gone on his way: and pretty little Mrs. Job Fletcher came smiling by with a child in each hand, to pick up the eldest at the school at the corner. Then the bell began to toll; then it stopped. The gay little street was quiet; it was duller than ever with its well-built cottages and mortared walls; and by way of enlivening it, Mr. Daniel Morton sallied forth.

Oh! ye who sally forth on Sunday morning in all the panoply of glossy hats, cleanly gloves, and highly-polished philanthropy, do not expend your sympathies upon the wrong people. The good, and honest, and painstaking, the people whom a holiday would not hurt, rather like to say their prayers. But the dissolute, and dishonest, and frivolous, adopt your sentiments on the subject of rest, and pro-

claim their "Sabbath" by a tenfold exercise of the devil's work. Impressed then with a very strong opinion that there were "sermons in stones and good in everything," but not expressing it quite in that language, he sought young Job Fletcher, who had not gone to church with Nanny, and declared his conviction that "Parsons and they chaps was meant for the women, as didn't work on other days, but that there was more rest in a pipe o' shag than in the longest sermon as ever wor' preached." Job was indeed much of his way of thinking, but had not yet arrived at a sufficient pitch of courage to say so. He slipped himself into his old shooting-jacket over his Sunday shirt, and, having made himself look as commonplace and dirty as he well could at so short a notice, he prepared to accompany his comrade.

They were not long before they were sitting on a gate, or lounging over it, smoking away, and spitting, as if their lives depended upon it, for it was not the time of year for lying down in a hedgerow and smoking leisurely. The celebrated pointer, which did duty for a sheep-dog, by the curtailment of his stern, was their companion. He had already had a surreptitious turn-up with a rabbit in a hedgerow, which had just escaped death by a sudden disappearance in a hole; and he was now stealthily drawing upon birds in the ditch, unsuspected, as he thought, even by his master. That gentleman, however, had one eye on his pipe and the other on his dog; and no sooner did he perceive that he was about to run through the fence, to the manifest probability of being caught by Mr. Wilson's shepherd, than he put forth a remonstrance in a sound, quite impossible to be conveyed on paper; and accompanying his objurgations and imprecations to "come in, and be d—d," it was not long before the buccaneering Ponto, under the name of "Faith," came to heel, and looked up at his master, as if there was not a handsomer young man, nor a quieter dog under the sun.

"Well, Job, you know your wife's a good deal to say there, and I think you might sarve a friend. I tell ye, I wants nothin', but I got a fancy to see the house, and I think we might do it together, if the missus 'ull help us."

"There ain't much to see in the house; and I should think there worn't much difficulty about it."

"There be, though," said Morton, rather surlily.

"Be there?" replied Job Fletcher, laconically. The truth is Job misdoubted his friend's motives. "Squire says his'n shan't be made a show-house on; and since then old Mother Barber be main particular."

"And you don't think as you can see it except when the family be away?"

"I don't see as I can. You've seen every room in it, Dan, before now?"

"Yes: may be, when I was a boy, not since; and this one has got a mart o' pictures, and books, and fine things; they do tell me as there ain't such a place in the country."

"But the family ain't a goin' out as I knows on," combated Job.

"Yes they be—next Wednesday night. They're a goin' to a ball or something at Saxonby."

"Come, Morton, there's something up, I know. I don't mind for myself, and you've been a good friend to me when times was a bit hard; but I'm danged if I'll have the missus dragged into it. She shan't have nothin' to do with it."

"And I suppose you'll go and tell Nanny all about it."

"Well! there wouldn't be much to tell 'cording to your account, if you're only wanting to see the house; but I shan't tell her anything about it; she's a great friend of Miss Ellen, and I don't want her to have anything to do with it. I'll do it somehow, if you like to trust me; if not, why I can't help ye; so we'd better go and look arter those birds, or we shall have the folks out o' church before we get to the turnips."

So these two little innocents, who heard "sermons in stones," and "saw good in everything," went off to mature plans for a poaching expedition, and to talk over the other subjects under discussion. They had not unfrequently, with three or four more equally well-disposed youths, who took the same liberal view of the great Sabbath question, done a little cock-fighting between breakfast and church-time (there was a little scarcity of fighting-cocks now in consequence of the Saxonby supper on Wednesday night), had drawn a badger while the peaceable villagers were repeating the Litany, and coursed a hare which did not belong to them during the service at the communion table; with an

extended spirit of liberality, on one occasion they had settled a private Saturday-evening difference during the sermon, which lasted forty minutes (twenty too long, certainly), and by the time the public was again open, were quite ready for their beer. The benighted people, who listened to that tedious but orthodox discourse, suggest to me the idea that there is a great difference between a holy-day and a holiday, without venturing to decide which the Christian Sabbath ought to be.

Sommerton Hall was a magnificent house when you got at it. It was admirably built in the Gothic style, but all the rooms were large and light, and adorned with every modern convenience. Of these, the two that had been set apart for the heiress of the property, as we may regard her, were by no means the worst. They were on the first floor, at the end of a long gallery, from which diverged on either side rooms of various sizes: but all, with one or two exceptions, handsome rooms—some *en suite*, some single, for the convenience of the family which did not exist, or of guests who were never invited. At the farther end of this gallery were the rooms in question at present occupied by Ellen Bradfield. I have already said that the house was magnificently furnished. The noble staircase, which led from the centre of the inner hall, was hung round with finely-framed pictures and statuary which was intrinsically valuable. Soft velvet-piled carpets precluded the possibility of sound to awaken an irritation even in Abel Bradfield himself; and when you turned from the gallery to the rooms tenanted by his daughter you found yourself in a perfect Paradise of luxuries.

The windows looked over the park on to a fine piece of artificial water, where the fowl of various rare breeds floated, or smoothed their feathers on the bank; the terraced garden, with its choice parterres of marble edging, was below; while from another window, at the end of the further room, the distant hills which bounded the rich and well-wooded landscape of a midland county were discernible. It is true that, at the season of the year in which we are engaged with our tale, external beauties were at their lowest—not even the crystal pendants of a winter's landscape excited the eye with their myriads of forms, as they hang in pure and motionless icicles from the leafless

branches. There was the constant green of a grazing country, with its rich pasturage, the sombre masses of the now-unclothed hedgerow timber, and an occasional dark rich loam or clay of a fallow field. The prospect without gladdened the heart of many a sportsman : let us look within.

There she sat in the afternoon shadows of a winter's day not yet quite gone. The sun threw but a sickly gleam along the wall; while the fire, which had been allowed to get low, flickered and flared with a fitful light upon the rich brown dress of the occupant of an arm-chair almost in front of it. The beautiful chintz curtains, which excluded the god of day, reflected the beams of the bright logs of wood which helped out the coal, and gave a mysterious, elf-like *tout-ensemble* to the room. Without being large, it was of handsome proportions; and the prevalent idea on first seeing it would have been magnificent comfort.

Ellen Bradfield looked into the fire, and a bright jet played on her hair, which hung in masses of gold on each side of her neck. It had escaped from its folds when she threw down her riding-hat. Her handsome dark eyes shone lustrously, in a dreamy thoughtfulness, as she traced now this form, now that, either of which reminded her of young companions or pleasant days. She had as yet nothing more troublesome to think of. Her beautiful white skin, with its transparent texture, through which the pale-blue veins coursed along her temples, was flushed with the exercise she had just taken, and the loose *robe-de-chambre* of pale-blue cashmere exposed a throat of the most dazzling whiteness. Her hands, well formed and white as her throat, hung listlessly over either arm of her chair : they were round and smooth enough, but over the back and along the upper joint of the thumb and fingers were perceptible the delicate marks of the internal structure. It was a hand thoroughly characteristic, which, with a strong sense of refinement, could have acted what the heart prompted without much hesitation. Her well-shaped feet, from which the robe had slipped aside to permit a full enjoyment of the fire's warmth, were resting uncovered on a footstool, slippered in silk and fur.

A step was hurrying along the passage, but it was unheard in the carpet on which it moved. It stopped at her door and entered without knocking.

"Nelly, are you there?" said the familiar voice of Laurence Bradfield.

"I am, Laurence; come in, and sit down. I was in a brown study."

"Where have you been to-day?"

"For a long ride, with papa."

"Imprudent—considering the heavy work cut out for you to-night."

"The Saxonby ball? Oh! that's not so formidable as you make out."

"Not for you, dear, perhaps. Everybody pays court to you; but I have to pay court to everybody."

"And what a quantity of pleasure you give, Laurence. Just consider the Miss Tailbys—four are out; you must dance with two of them at least. Then there's Dr Probewell's wife—she dances still, and will be quite enchanted when you ask her; and there's the Colonel's daughter from Buntington, the girl who always talks about Lady Sarah, whom we've been to see to-day. She's staying at Lord Sellborough's."

"Is she going to the ball, Nelly?" said Laurenee, with more than usual animation.

"Oh no, I should think not! Lord Sellborough regards this neighbourhood as such a hotbed of Toryism, that he considers it absolute waste of energy."

"I thought she might be going with the Carringtons. How's my father?"

"He seems to have quite shaken off his illness."

"I wonder what it arose from. Do you know, Nelly?"

"No, I can't conceive—he never had such an attack before; and, by the way, Mr. Scarsdale has not been here since, or I might have heard from him. How old are you, Laurence?"

"Twenty-seven—seven years older than you, Nelly."

"You ought to marry, Laurence."

"Thank you; I find quite enough to do to take care of you. Besides, whom would you have me marry?"

"Lady Sarah herself—she's the right age; and I'm sure papa would like it."

"Women marry to please their papas—I shall consult my mother."

"Then she'll counsel Mary Brandling."

"Why so?"

"Because she thinks you ought to be mated with something enthusiastic."

"Ah! I'm an enthusiast, but not in love. What's the matter with my father and Scarsdale?" And he looked as closely at his sister as firelight would permit.

"Matter? Surely nothing, Laurence. He never can have——"

"No, Ellen dear, I don't think he can have; but I've sometimes thought that Harry Scarsdale——"

"Then don't think so any more, dear. I respect Mr. Scarsdale above all men, almost all men, that I ever knew; but I hope, for his own sake, he has not made a confidant of you, or—or—anyone else."

"No, Ellen; it was a simple guess. I cannot understand anyone knowing you, and not loving you. I met Miss Carrington to-day in one of her walks; I helped her over a stile, and we had some conversation. What a charming old woman it is!"

"Don't say so to papa."

"Why not?"

"Because it makes him irritable. He used to talk of them himself, and seemed rather inclined to meet them halfway—at least, he was disposed to resent their coolness, which is the next thing to it. I can't endure Mr. Carrington, but his sister is charming; and as to the baronet, I could fall in love with him myself. I suppose we shall see them at the ball."

"Yes; and Mentmore. They've a party staying there for it. When are you going to dress, before or after dinner?"

"After. Mrs. Nelson is ill; so I have sent for Mrs. Fletcher to help me. My toilette will be simply accomplished."

"You're wrong, Nelly. The Saxonby people would like to see you in all your bravery."

"I should think not," said Ellen Bradfield.

"I beg your pardon—they are susceptible of slights. Besides, I should like you to look as well as possible."

"For whom, dear—Lord Mentmore, or Mr. Carrington? I don't like Mr. Carrington at all."

"Then let it be for Lord Mentmore—he's a capital fellow. But you underrate Carrington."

"He does not underrate himself."

"He's shy, but singularly amusing; and has a great club reputation."

"He's more likely to be appreciated there than elsewhere."

"He's a very honourable, straightforward fellow."

"And almost insolent in his patronage."

"He has a courage which is almost chivalrous."

"Idle and presumptuous; selfish, they say, and bitter."

"No man makes less show of what he has in him; and though he is scarcely of my way of thinking, there is no man fitter to represent this county than he."

"A thorough malignant."

"One of the best sons in the country, and——"

"Brother to Evelyn Carrington. There, Laurence, say no more—I've summed up his virtues."

"You may know him better some day."

"And like him less."

"It seems impossible."

The room was getting quite dark. So Laurence rose, rang the bell, and asked for a flat candlestick, which was brought him.

"I'm going to my room, and here comes your maid."

In lieu of the maid, Miss Bradfield submitted herself to the hands of a tidy-looking housemaid, who under her own instructions put together the material part of her evening costume.

"You can go now, Jane; and see that they send for Mrs. Fletcher by nine o'clock. Her husband won't be home, I dare say; and she can stay here to-night if she likes. Let her bring down her littlo girl, and have a bed made up in the room on tho opposite side of the gallery.

Personal vanity, or self-admiration, or love of applause, or whatever else it may be called, is an ingredient without which many great excellences would cease to exist. A man who cares nothing for himself cares very little for other people. It is surprising that a new coat, good boots, neat gloves, or a fine dress should have anything to do with an amiable weakness for pleasing others; but it is so.

Ellen Bradfield too was just as weak, or just as amiable, as her fellow-creatures, and thought better of her brother's advice.

When a man has the greatest number of pictures, or of books, or of horses, or of acres, he may easily become remarkable; and when a man is once remarkable for anything, even a vice, he commands a certain amount of attention. A great collection of butterflies, provided there be none in the neighbourhood greater, has before now given an immense reputation. But when a man has everything, pictures, books, horses, acres, and butterflies, beyond everybody else, then he commands an attention more than ordinary. What wonder then that when Ellen Bradfield was persuaded to do honour to the Saxonby ball, Lord Mentmore should have been thrown into the consideration, as a make-weight. Her brother's view of the question was quite right. She ought to look as well as she could. She reached the same result by a different route. She was more of a woman than a girl; more so than she ought to have been for her age. She had been made so by circumstances. In controlling the irritability of her father, she had insensibly controlled her own. It was not true to say that she had no temper; it was true to say that she had quick and passionate feelings, impressionable in the highest degree, but that she kept them under perfect control.

She was not a woman to wear white muslin and sashes of gorgeous colours. She rejected artfully placed flowers and tricky jewelry. Everything was handsome, solid, becoming, and womanly. Blue was most becoming to her, so she wore it; the very best and richest satin she could find; the flounces were of the most expensive lace; the jewels few, but massive: a diamond cross, a chain cable of gold, a bracelet of Italian workmanship, which set off the dazzling whiteness of the arm it encircled. She left these latter adornments till after dinner; but when the dinner bell summoned her, and she entered the drawing-room, her father was moved by her beauty and forgot his habitual displeasure, and the cause of her display. Her mother was vulgar enough to be delighted, and Laurence smiled his approbation triumphantly, at his own success.

When they sat down to dinner, Abel Bradfield seemed to have left all his cares with Lord Sellborough, or to have scattered them on the road broadcast. And good living, good servants, cheerful firelight, and a happy circle is a great preservative of equanimity. "Mais avant tout un

bon dîner." Then what in the name of fortune wrought a change? Oh! conversation as usual. It went wrong. The subject was not right, and the turn it took decidedly disagreeable.

"I was sure you would be so proud of me to-night, papa; and you see I have put on my diamond cross, and the lace you gave me."

Mr. Bradfield was silent.

"Your papa is not going to the ball, Ellen," said Mrs. Bradfield.

"Papa not going to the ball? Nonsense, papa must go to the ball."

"Indeed, my dear, I shall not go to the ball; what should I do at a Saxonby ball? Stand there to be stared at by the old women,—old idiots who ought to be in bed."

"Don't you think it might be advantageous, Sir, to look after the interests of the party on this side of the county?" inquired Laurence.

"I don't see that it can be done more effectually by me than by you."

"The people like to hear the real lion roar."

"Then they can come to London to do so: for I shall go to town by the nine o'clock train. Say that I shall want the brougham at half-past eight o'clock. The coachman need not go, as he will be wanted later; send William with me."

"Papa, what a pity! you'll miss all the celebrities. Lord Mentmore, and the party from Spring Vale, and the Marquis of Chesterton."

"And who may he be, Miss Ellen?"

"Mr. Scarsdale's pupil, a cousin of Lord Mentmore's, who is come to read with him for the army—he's going into the Guards."

"And wants to learn to spell. It's about what Scarsdale is fit for," said Abel Bradfield.

"I think you are hard on the curate, Sir," said Laurence; "he's a clever man, and a man of the world: remarkably so for a parson."

"Estimates differ on these points, Laurence; and yours is not a high one."

It was useless to continue this subject, so they allowed

Mr. Bradfield to choose one for himself. He was not long without doing so.

"I can't understand why you keep your present cook, Mrs. Bradfield; I have to complain every day. I suppose I pay as good wages as other people."

It was true that he did; but a good cook likes a little dinner company, and real talent was sadly thrown away upon Abel Bradfield. He had no instinctive knowledge of what a good dinner was. Ate anything that was put before him when out of temper, which was very occasional; and abused the highest effort of culinary art when he wished to quarrel with his wife, and saw no easier means to such an end.

On the whole it was a relief when the brougham came to the door, and Abel Bradfield had said adieu to his family for a day or two.

"Where are the hounds, Laurence? are they near here to-morrow?"

"Not to-morrow; but on Saturday they meet within half-a-dozen miles? Why? do you want to exhibit your skill, Ellen?"

"Very much, if you can take me. But you've no horses here."

"I beg your pardon; I sent two the day before yesterday from Anderson's; it's a duty I owe to my constituents to become a country gentleman."

"And that's one way to adapt yourself to the character."

"It's the shortest."

"You'll never be re-elected for Plumpton, if you do. They never combine liberality of opinion with the wanton destruction of wheat; and ironmasters are bound to support wirefencing."

"We'll try, at all events; besides, you know my father is bent upon my representing ——shire some day; so I am going to ride myself into notoriety."

"When do you mean to begin, my dear Laurence?"

"To-morrow, mother; and by Saturday my seat will be secured."

"I think I had better finish dressing, mamma; and you too, unless you wish us to be very late at Saxonby."

CHAPTER XV.

A BALL, AND ITS VARIOUS RESULTS.

'Rampant with joy, their joy all joy exceeds,
Yet what but high strung health this dancing pleasure breeds?"
THOMPSON.

THE character of the quiet town of Saxonby on Wednesday, the twentieth of January, 18—, seemed totally changed. From early morning there was a removal of furniture, especially of chairs, forms, and tables, to the Bear inn, highly characteristic of an activity for which that town had never yet been remarkable. Very dirty men in a high state of perspiration, destined hereafter to rival the county curate in solemnity, and the rector in magnificence of attire, ran hither and thither about the neighbourhood of the hotel. Cut flowers from the neighbouring conservatories, wreaths of evergreens strung by the Tailbys, the Probewells, and the really handsome daughters of Mrs. Buxom, the landlady, were being carted by barrow-loads into the one long well-glazed and painted assembly room. The sconces were being fitted to the walls; small distilleries of grease for the especial behoof of the wall-flowers. The negus, the salads, the tea, were already in the process of making. The fowls were being tied up after dissection, with the delicate attention due to a tough, but now departed, pullet, with bows of white. The barrels of oysters were expected, but not yet come. The waiters were busy, but not yet drunk; the chambermaids were making the tickets for cloaks and hats; and the one old ostler was engaged in drilling a squad of dirty little boys, who were to assist in the festivities of the stable-yard for the time being.

In the centre of the town things were no less severe. Every colour and description of cheap opera cloak, of cap, flower, wreath, every attraction which could be offered to lady or gentleman in connection with the intended dissipation, was there. Smart, the tailor, had a show of thunder-and-lightning waistcoats at about fifteen six a-piece, warranted

to carry an heiress by *coup de main*. Miss Sarsnett was too great to show, but it was understood by the young ladies that there was a dress, yet unsold, of which the world contained but two. One was in Saxonby, and the other was the court costume of the Empress of the French. Clipwell, the perruquier, was in great request; and the Misses Tailby and Probewell vied with each other in orders for crimping, curling, fluffing, and snoods, in a manner that boded no good to the cavalry dépôt in the neighbourhood. The town was full of carriages all the afternoon. One wanted gloves, another some bandoline, a third a hoop, and a fourth some tickets, without which it was popularly supposed none could enter. Bless their dear old souls, if Satan himself had only come with money enough, he might have had his pick of partners for the evening's entertainment.

By half-past nine P.M., the last wreath of evergreens was hung up, and the last wax-light was lighted. The reflectors threw a brilliant halo round the walls, the mirrors multiplied a hundred times the flowers and drapery, and the fiddlers were taking their places in the gallery, having already taken their first and natural supper previous to the commencement of their arduous duties. They were sure to be arduous, for Saxonby was not altogether *the* county ball; where a dozen families assemble to drink negus at 1*l*. 1*s*. per person from midnight to 2 A.M., in the faded dresses of the last London season; where set meets set with a polished frigidity of marble, or the impenetrable stare of brazen effrontery; when it is impossible to dance with Captain Jenkins, because he is not known in the county, though quartered within two miles of the place, and where young Trumps of the Guards, who would give his ears to do so, cannot ask that beautiful girl in maize tulle to waltz, because she lives in the town. Trumps is a swell and a good fellow; but having arrived under the patronage of a dowager-marchioness, who has four long-necked swans of her own, he is tied down for once by the bands of propriety. Saxonby was not at all like this. The Saxonby ball was, on the contrary, a place peculiarly intended for the enjoyment of its ostensible purpose, dancing. The room was good; there was an ample supper of tough cocks and hens, tongues, hams, salads, a boar's head (imitation by a prize pig), cakes, jellies, blancmanges, open tarts, and fiery

sherry *à discrétion, champagne à la carte.* It began nominally at 9, positively at 10 P.M., and was kept up vigorously until early the following morning, when most of the men took their leave to get ready for the meet, and the ladies to dream of the delicious mazes of the dance, and the intelligent remarks of the cornets and lieutenants of the neighbouring barracks. The families who attended were those of the immediate neighbourhood, who made a point of filling their houses for the occasion; the most important of whom by far was Sir Michael Carrington. The enormous wealth of the Bradfields gave them the second place in the consideration of the country round Saxonby; and the squirearchy and ecclesiastical element with their friends and families made up a complement of about a hundred and thirty or forty people. The few families of the town, who participated in the evening's amusement, were made to feel no distinction, and the swells and the guardsmen, and the cornets and ensigns were equally welcomed by all.

By ten o'clock the room was like a powder puff of various colours; a floating cloud of white tulle, interspersed with the less atmospheric matter of satin and moire antique. Jewels glistened brightly on white necks that owed none of their beauty to the adornment, and still brighter diamonds served to conceal, sometimes to enhance, the absence of charms, with which the destroyer Time had made too free. Groups of three or four,—"My eldest son, Sir Michael; and Arabella, dear Lady Carrington; how kind of you! Georgina so disappointed! the most wretched cold and swollen face; so very unlucky!"—stood in divers parts of the now animated scene, while the rest were wandering up and down, descanting on the beauty of Miss Carrington, who had just arrived in a second carriage with her mamma, and Colonel Polehampton, the handsomest man in the British army, and Colonel of the—Guards.

Near the doorway stood Stafford Carrington, leaning against the mantelpiece, and surveying the increasing crowd with apparent indifference, until a rustle on the landing-place and a more attentive notice than usual announced Mrs. and Miss Bradfield. The former, a good-tempered, mild-looking woman of middle age; the latter, in all the loveliness of youth, and in a toilette which might have sufficed for the most crowded assembly in London.

Her large, dark eyes were quite remarkable by the contrast with her golden hair and lovely skin; and the stateliness of her beauty, which looked even more extraordinary when she smiled her thanks for the flattering bows she was returning, gained by comparison with the timid courtesy of her mother.

"It's a long time since we met, Bradfield," said Lord Mentmore, coming forward at once and shaking hands with the young manufacturer.

"Indeed it is—at Tours; I have not forgotten the essential service you rendered me with the French journalists."

"Then repay it now, and do me the favour to introduce me to your family."

"My father is away, but my mother and sister will be delighted."

Having done his duty in that way, he next turned his attention to his own particular business. He found Miss Carrington, and renewed his acquaintance of the season before. She was engaged at present to Captain Trumps and Colonel Polehampton, after that she was at Mr. Bradfield's service.

Sir Michael and Lady Carrington went about doing good, that is making people happy.

"Happy to see you out, Squaretown,"—a perfect old gentleman of seventy-five, a general of artillery, of small fortune, but who delighted in recognition by great people—"happy to see you. It's a duty you owe to the Saxonby people."

"It's a duty I owe to myself, my dear Sir Michael. Saxonby is my little world, and I keep myself bright by rubbing against it whenever I can."

"Ah! Probewell: some pleasure to meet you here."

"Yes! more than at Spring Vale; cheaper, Sir Michael." Doctors' jokes are not always the neatest in the world.

"Not at all, my dear doctor, only now we know you are out of mischief;—and how's Mrs. Probewell and your charming daughters?"

"All well, thank you, Sir Michael; there she is, you see, at the other end of the room, in yellow satin and ostrich feathers; there's your god-daughter talking to her. It wouldn't pay to have them ill, you know."

"So it is, so it is: I must go and talk to her," and Sir Michael glided nimbly away. The baronet had the best of the last thrust.

Mrs. Tailby sat with an amplitude of skirt, handsome and stiff, twisting her golden eye-glass, and smiling and nodding graciously to her acquaintance. Every now and then some of her ecclesiastical friends—of whom she cultivated many, more, perhaps, for their curates than themselves (rectors are not unfrequently married, or always engaged to be so)—would stop and enjoy five minutes' gossip, of which they were as much masters as she.

"Do tell me, Mr. Scarsdale, who is that good-looking young man dancing with my second daughter, there, in a pink tarlatan."

"What's that, Mrs. Tailby? some sort of kilt?"

"Kilt—bless me, no, Mr. Scarsdale, that's the lady's dress. I mean the young man with the camellia in his coat."

"Oh! that young man dancing with a lady in pink, I see. That's Captain Trumps."

"What, from the barracks?" asked the old lady, who was then about to go through the catechism of cavalry; infantry; eldest son; what county; any money; marrying man, &c., when Mr. Scarsdale relieved her.

"Barracks, oh dear no; he's in the Grenadier Guards; came with the Carringtons: capital fellow. Ah, Mrs. Tailby, it's a fine thing to have plenty of meat when you have your teeth in your head."

"What do you mean, Mr. Scarsdale? you say such funny things."

"I mean, Mrs. Tailby, that Captain Trumps has a very good fortune, just at the time of life he is best able to enjoy it."

"Dear me, Major Baldock! I couldn't think what it was that made the difference in you; I declare I hardly knew you when you first came into the room; you have cut off your moustache and beard," said the playful Jenny Tritton, who was an universal favourite with all the garrison, and who divided the attention of even the major and the senior captains with her father's claret.

"Yaas! Miss Tritton. It was a sacrifice, you know. I've had it ever since the Crimea, you know; but it has

become so very low, you know. Low-class clergy, and volunteers, and city men, and betting men, and steeple-chasing farmers, you know, and all sorts of tradesmen wear them, you know, so I cut mine off;" and the major held up a remarkably clean upper lip and chin, which matched much better the top of his head.

"But, you know, Major Baldock, that the low-class clergy, and the volunteers, and the city men, and all the rest of them, wear coats, and waistcoats, and trowsers just like yours, and it wouldn't do to leave them off, you know;" and Jenny Tritton took off the major to his face.

"Ah—yaas—yaas—that's true, Miss Tritton, but that's different, you know; besides, they're not like ours. Moses and Son has not come up to Poole yet, you know;" saying which the major exhibited a leg, certainly not a sixteen-shilling block.

"And who is that handsome man with Miss Carrington, major? You know everybody, you know, and I want you to tell me."

"Well, that's Lord Mentmore, you know."

"No, no, I didn't know, or else I should not have asked. What a handsome man; and what a very pretty girl she is, and so charming."

The major denied both premises—the first on his own account, the second to the account of Miss Tritton.

It was plain to see and to hear that Lieut. Martingale was the horseman of the regiment. He was as neat, and as small in a ball-room, as he was in a weighing-machine. He wore the tiniest collars, the pinkest fronts, and the tightest-fitting pantaloons of any man in the service. His valet was under a promise never to divulge the secret of how he got into them; and his tailor had vowed to keep him, under all circumstances, an inch-and-a-half within the smallest known measure of a full-sized man.

"One of our fellows has one that only weighs four pounds and a half; I offered him five pounds for him to send to my sister on her last birthday, but he wouldn't let me have him. However I got a better, and tried him with a tom-cat."

The lady with whom he was dancing, knowing Mr. Martingale well, evinced no astonishment at the turn the conversation had taken, and merely replied "really" in the right place.

"Yes: and if you get a good tom-cat in a beehive—an empty beehive, of course, Miss Prettywell—and pull his tail through the bunghole, it's my opinion that the dog that will go at that will go at anything; what do you think?"

"I think probably he would;" and being then a little tired of dogs, Miss Prettywell leaves it to the gentleman's capacity, and asks "whether they are to have any regimental races at the Saxonby Meeting in the spring of the year?"

Lord Mentmore in the meantime danced on and enjoyed himself exceedingly. He created an amazing flutter among the Saxonby dovecotes, for his manner was so universally kind and *empressé*, that not a few speculated upon the possibility of another King Cophetua.

"Glad you like hunting, Miss Tailby. I delight in it. You must come to the meet to-morrow; or no! it's not very good to-morrow—Saturday; at—where is it? and then you'll see your friend Mr. Carrington. He's almost as fond of it as I am, and rides much harder."

"Then you will admire Miss Bradfield. Have you ever seen her on horseback?"

"Never: is she so very good? She's exceedingly handsome."

"So she is, Lord Mentmore. We used to think Miss Carrington the belle, but since the Bradfields have made this their home, I think Miss Bradfield is far the most beautiful."

"Their style is so different, that it is difficult to compare them. I know so little of Miss Bradfield."

"So you ride, Miss Bradfield?" Lord Mentmore was standing by her side after a waltz.

"Yes: whenever I can find a cavalier. I care less about it with a servant."

"Your brother, or Mr. Bradfield?"

"My father seldom rides, except into Saxonby on business; and my brother Laurence is seldom at home; now that he is in parliament we shall see less of him than usual."

"Can any of our party be of service in assisting you? I see you and Miss Carrington are already acquainted; and Stafford Carrington and myself——"

"Thank you, my lord," said Ellen Bradfield, coldly and

proudly, "my acquaintance with Miss Carrington is slight. I have danced with her brother once to-night; and I do not know Sir Michael or Lady Carrington at all."

"Then I shall ask to be admitted at Sommerton as an old acquaintance of your brother's, Miss Bradfield;" and shortly afterwards they separated, as a young cornet came to claim the lady for a dance, and Lord Mentmore walked abstractedly into the supper-room, wondering what was the chasm that evidently yawned between the Carringtons and Bradfields, forbidding anything like cordiality. In the supper-room, attacking the *débris* of a late fighting bantam, he found Scarsdale. "The very man," thought he, "to give me the desired information."

"Scarsdale, what's the matter?" began his lordship, boldly enough.

"Hunger; ravenous hunger; and nothing but a muscle on which to satisfy it. The women have eaten everything."

"Combustion goes on more rapidly with them than with us; they talk more."

"Ah! there's some spiced beef—that's better. Waiter, some beer. And when the two young men were alone again, Lord Mentmore had lost his courage, and determined only upon cultivating a more intimate acquaintance with Scarsdale.

"I suppose you go a great deal to Sommerton?"

"Nearly every day."

"To the Hall?"

"Never; that is, not latterly. My visits are only those of positive business."

"Are they so very exclusive?"

"No; I think not; but Bradfield's influence in the parish is not useful to me, and the only person who does anything is his daughter."

"What a handsome girl she is!"

Scarsdale assented.

"Beautiful. Pleasant duty with such a coadjutor."

"And yet I shall ask you to repeat your offer to me, unless my good relative will kill himself with the York and Ainstey."

At this moment the room began to fill with men and women, who were anticipating breakfast by a second supper.

"Stafford, my dear, you must go and dance," said Lady Carrington, urging her son, who seemed to have had enough of it. "What a night's exertion Sir Michael has had with the old women! I hope it won't bring on a fit of the gout. Have you asked Miss Probewell, and Mrs. Digby, and the Tailbys—all three, and Mrs. Reynard, and Miss Bradfield? you ought to ask her once, you know, it smoothes matters down, and——"

"Well, really, my dear mother, one forgets so; I can ask her before we go."

"And have you talked to the men? There's old Gilchrist and Ballott, and the General, and young De Coursfield. You know he'll have all that property some day, if he outlives his cousin."

"Yes, I've been talking to him; but I don't think he seemed to care much about it."

"Why, what did you say to him?"

"Well, mother, I hardly know. He bored me exceedingly; something about the Schleswig-Holstein question, which he did not understand, and for which ignorance he might have been forgiven. And then he got to donkeys; he told me they were very cheap indeed—that he got one for fifteen shillings."

"Well, there was nothing remarkable in that. What did you say?"

"Oh! I said most likely they were cheap enough about him, because there were so many of them; and he seemed rather annoyed—at least, he walked away very quickly, without saying anything; but it was impossible to help it."

"Then, my dear boy, I think you had better not try the men any more. You'll do better with Miss Bradfield. She's very handsome; but don't be too attentive. Enemies may sometimes become friends, and friends enemies."

A woman of the world was Lady Carrington.

Pleasurable as this ball evidently was, it came to an end at last. Stafford had his *two* dances with Miss Bradfield, to gratify his mother, without a risk of mistake. His memory was treacherous, so he made sure. He had also done what was right by all the young ladies and most of the old ones. Lord Mentmore, and all the Spring Vale party, including several men besides Trumps and Polehampton, had behaved exceedingly well, and established the baronet's popularity

for another year at least. The aristocracy enjoyed immense favour at Saxonby, chiefly through these meetings; and all the ladies, when asked if they knew the Earl of———, or Sir ——— ———, or Colonel ———, or Captain ———, of the Guards, were able to say, and say with truth, that they had danced with him. Any girl can say so, but it is something to have gone through the ceremony.

And so it happened that the Saxonby ball came to an end. Sir Michael Carrington, after having a turn with the Reverend the Canon of——, on the laxity of the Privy Council, with Covington on the Poor Law Board, with Poundfield on the county hounds, and with Duston on the state of the roads, retired quietly at one o'clock with his friend Bibury, and talked racing all the way home; the carriage came back at two for the ladies. About the same time the Bradfields went away, all three together. They had no party staying in the house. The brougham carried away four more guests of the Carringtons, and Trumps smoked a cigar on the box. Then the dignitaries of the church began to retire with their wives and daughters. The Dean of——, and the Rector of Pewslett, General Squaretown, Mr. and Mrs. Bogtrotter, and several more, who lived a little distance away, called for their carriages. Still the young Hussars, and the ladies who were close at home, continued to keep it up with much vigour; and, as the ball-room got less crowded, the opportunity for display became much greater; and so, about four o'clock in the morning, all the ladies having retired to cloak and shawl, Major Baldock summoned his junior cornet from a frantic attempt to squeeze out another glass of sherry, and in five minutes more the last drunken postilion drove out of the Bear.

If a ball in the country, which happens once a year, gives rise to nothing else, and few are so unprolific, it gives rise at least to remarks. It was remarked then that never were the bigwigs of society so affable; that old Bradfield was, as usual, absent; that his daughter had received marked attention from Lord Mentmore; that Stafford Carrington, who was supposed not to know her, had danced twice with her: that Evelyn Carrington had never appeared so charming, so natural, and so good-tempered; that there could be nothing between her and

Lord Mentmore, as they seemed to set criticism at defiance by the ease of their manner when together; that Lady Carrington had addressed a few civil speeches to Mrs. Bradfield, for the first time in her life; and that, though the baronet had not relaxed a muscle of his face or his dignity, there had been an appearance of cordiality between the families more general than usual.

The remarks were correct. Whether it was that Lord Mentmore would not see, or did not see, the coolness that existed, he managed to excite some sort of interest mutually between the young ones of both families. He was not a man to take a liberty, so he left the old gentleman to himself; but he had the satisfaction of seeing, before the end of the evening, Evelyn Carrington and Ellen Bradfield talking cheerfully to one another, and had extorted from Stafford that that fellow Bradfield was intelligent and agreeable; and, though epigrammatic, not to say severe, an extremely amusing person.

Let us hope the intimacy may improve; Mentmore himself being the bond of union. The remoter contingencies of a ball-room were not wanting: a marriage, half-a-dozen engagements without a marriage, several headaches (fiery sherry, trifle, and blancmange), one real heartache, a quarrel which lasted a week, and a disappointment which lasted a lifetime.

"Where did you first see him, Helen?"

"At the ——— ball, mother."

"Often afterwards?"

"At all the balls in town—everywhere."

"And he paid you great——?" Helen hides her head in her mother's bosom.

"You should have told me, my love." The sobs are nearly audible. "And when did you see him last, Helen?"

"At the ——— ball, mother; I danced with him *once*."

"He said nothing then?"

"Nothing."

"And he is engaged to Margaret Ravenshaw? God forgive him, my darling; I cannot."

The immediate results of the Saxonby ball were practical in some respects, which I shall proceed to notice.

Other men besides Captain Trumps like smoking at night. So Laurence Bradfield, after seeing his mother and sister

into the carriage, where their ample skirts took up the vacant seats, mounted the box and lit his cigar. The moon, whose convenience has to be consulted in these country matters, was shining brightly at intervals ; a sharp scud carried heavy clouds across the sky, and chequered the light, so as to render objects indistinct ; but it was soft and mild, the wind blowing from the south and west, and promising a continuance of open weather. Colonel Polehampton and his friends, and two-thirds of the men who were not asleep, were doubtless thinking of the pleasures of Cream Gorse or Ashby Pastures. It was just the night to unearth such a thought, and to hunt it to death, unless the only thing in life that exceeds it in intensity—the love of women—shall have laid its impress on the hearts of some of these revellers. But Bradfield was no sportsman in this sense, and would have preferred to speculate on the result of the educational committee's labours, the delicate sophistries of international law, the possible transfer of property at something under a tenth of its value, the modification of the income tax, colonial transportation, and Irish grievances, as being subjects more congenial and easier of solution, than the intricacies and interests of the laws of the chase. As he rolled towards Sommerton, however, he thought of none of these things. He thought only of Evelyn Carrington, and he congratulated himself, with a sobriety for which he was remarkable, on an apparent approach to cordiality between them. A man may have a very warm heart and a very clear head, and as Laurence Bradfield seldom allowed others to deceive him, he never deceived himself.

On this occasion he had condescended to a brown study, and was roused from it by the opening of the lodge-gates. In a minute more the carriage drew up, the footman let down the steps, and the ladies were received by a sleepy footman, who had found a "Treatise on the Rearing of Calves" heavier reading than he expected from the title, with an array of bed-candlesticks, and a notification that there was a tray and a fire in the dining-room. The carriage drove round to the stables.

Laurence Bradfield was standing on the terrace-steps in his pea-jacket, finishing the remains of his cigar, when he saw something like a man's figure of no ordinary size cross the lawn at the further end of the terrace, and enter a narrow

strip of shrubbery which bounded the flower-garden. A low parapet or wall separated it from the park.

He was no more deficient in physical courage than in moral, and he started at once in pursuit. As he rounded the shrubbery and jumped the wall, the moon once more shone out, and thirty yards before him was the unmistakable figure of a man, who, at a rapid pace, was keeping the shrubberies between himself and the windows of the house.

The trespasser had one great advantage over his pursuer —he was better clad for active exercise; still, for the first hundred yards or two, as he quickened his pace from a trot to a run, there seemed but little advantage either way. Laurence Bradfield was encumbered by his overcoat; and, as the distance and pace increased, he was evidently losing ground. Seeing this to be the case, he proceeded as he ran to disencumber himself of his impediment; and, thanks to the modern ease of gentlemen's clothing, he was not long before he found himself in a dress coat and waistcoat, black trowsers, and thin patent leather boots, squelching through the rich, wet pasturage of his father's park, more fitted for fattening bullocks than for expediting a stern chase. The avoidance of weight, however, began to tell perceptibly. Laurence was gaining, and, unless the fugitive knew the only open door through the park-wall, his capture was a certainty. It seemed as if he did know it, for he was running straight in that direction.

Condition is a great thing in a race of this kind; and, though Laurence Bradfield was evidently the more active man of the two, it is natural to suppose that outdoor habits of active exercise would give anyone a great advantage. Onward they went, and the pursuer was now within about thirty yards of the runaway. His manifest object was escape, and most men would have already relinquished the chase. In the language of the sporting world, Laurence was getting "blown." It is a painful feeling that, when the breath comes shorter and shorter at every stride, and the heart begins to beat with a force as if it were about to break bounds, the limbs to grow weary, and the frame to totter or reel. And when he gets up with him, what is to be done? To lie still, and be knocked on the head? Oh, no! to get a sight of the marauder, and thus take the first step in the ladder of retribution. And what then? suppose I don't

know him? And so little of his time had been passed among the neighbours, that recognition was rather uncertain—the odds, indeed, against it, even if he were a Sommerton man. So! he's beat too, thought the M.P. for Plumpton, as he saw himself another ten yards nearer in another minute. It gave him fresh courage, though not more wind.

The park at Sommerton had been planted with circular spinneys. This was for the convenience of the hares: perhaps I should rather say of Abel Bradfield, who tried to shoot them. This was his notion of a pretty country-gentleman's recreation. Knowing nothing in the world about shooting of any kind—having a faint appreciation of dogs and a turnip-field, with an utter incapacity for hitting partridges, and being by temperament averse to the association with his fellow-men which is implied in a modern *battue*, as in all other kinds of slaughter, he had devised a means of practice in gunnery which cost him no labour, and which enabled him to enjoy his diversion with no witnesses to his ill-success but the keeper, who handed him his guns. As the hares ran in the autumnal evenings from one round spinney to another, occasionally stopping to wash their faces or regale themselves on a blade of grass, Abel Bradfield fancied himself a country gentleman, and—frightened them back again.

They approached one of these little domestic preserves, surrounded with iron hurdles. The moon was beneath a cloud, but already the warm breath of Laurence was on the other. The breathing of each was equally loud, when the poacher, or housebreaker, or trespasser, put his hand on the iron hurdles, and scrambled rather than vaulted over them into the darkness of the spinney. Laurence was after him in a second, and, as he seized him by the collar, they both fell exhausted among the brushwood.

"Caught, at all events," said Laurence Bradfield, as they both endeavoured to regain their feet, but only partially succeeded: "who are you, and what do you here?"

His opponent held his peace; but as he struggled upon one knee, he drew from his side, where he had hitherto carried it, a short but formidable weapon. It was a thick stick, which might serve for knocking on the head hares, rabbits, or those whose duty it was to take care of them. The blow that descended towards Laurence's head convinced

him of the necessity of a very active opposition—that the struggle was for life, on his part. His strength and length of arm enabled him to save himself from the full effects of the blow, which knocked a hole in his hat—thanks to the much abused chimney pot!—and fell with broken force upon his shoulder. Laurence immediately seized the stick—with desperate energy they both stood upright. The gentleman was the taller; the robber the broader and more powerful. He strove to free himself from the grasp, against which few men could have contended successfully. Laurence tried hard to get the weapon from his adversary, and dragged him in his efforts towards the open field, where the moonlight, now waning, still gave hopes of recognition. But all his strength was unavailing to move the greater weight. Making, then, a final effort, he seized the stick, and twisted it so suddenly, that he scarcely felt the hands which held it relax, and his foot catching at the same moment in the briers which held him, he fell backward. Without waiting to make any further attack upon his prostrate pursuer, the man took advantage of the opportunity he had so long desired, and vaulting the iron hurdles at once, he was out of sight almost as soon as Laurence Bradfield was on his legs again.

There had been very little enthusiasm in this stern chase; but a good honest purpose to catch the offender, and find out who he was. He saw that chance was gone; so he simply looked at his prize in the moonlight, climbed slowly over the hurdles, wiped the thick clay from his saturated boots on a tuft of grass, and proceeded to walk leisurely back the mile he had run in pursuit. Two deductions he made as he went along from the circumstances of the case. The man was not a common housebreaker, nor of a gang of housebreakers—he was from the neighbourhood. He might be a poacher: but what was there to take at that time of the year? Abel Bradfield never had game enough to tempt the most inveterate of the purveyors of poultry for the London market. Or a lover—of course he might be keeping company with the cook, or one of the housemaids, or Ellen's maid: he couldn't say much for their taste. The thick stick did not look so peaceful as the last suggestion would imply. As to the housebreaking he should soon find out, for here he was at the house, and he walked straight to

the dining-room, with the sleepy-looking footman behind him.

"Who went round the house to-night when you locked up, William?"

"Mr. Timmins and me, Sir," said William, who woke up at once.

"Everything right?"

"Everythink, Sir. We put the bells on the shutters, and made all safe, Sir."

"When was that?"

"Twelve o'clock, Sir, or thereabouts—it was when Job Fletcher went away."

"Who is Job Fletcher?"

"His wife is attending on Miss Bradfield, Sir; the maid is ill."

"Oh yes, I remember. And you went round yourself?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Then bring the candle, and come round again."

They walked into all the rooms on the ground floor. There was not a symptom or *soupçon* of anything wrong.

"What room is this?" said young Bradfield, putting his hand on the lock of the door of a room quite at the end of the passage.

"We call it the squire's room, Sir. It isn't used for anythink particular; but Mr. Bradfield goes there sometimes to sort some papers and such things."

"Open it."

It will be recollected that Laurence Bradfield, not having lived much at Sommerton for some years, although perfectly acquainted with the house and all the rooms in it, did not know their separate uses.

"Is it locked on the inside?"

"No, Sir; I'll fetch the key. Mr. Timmins locks it at night, and takes it away with him. Master desired that the key should not be left in it."

When William reappeared with the key, the result seemed scarcely worth the trouble. It was the last room in the house that a burglar would have selected for his mal-practices. There seemed to be nothing in the world that he could take, unless his "plant" was likely to set up an upholsterer's shop, and wanted some handsome window curtains. There was a meagre piece of carpet in the centre

of the room, a common writing-table, three or four plain leather-covered chairs; some boxes, probably containing old papers, and a fireproof safe. The room was lofty, of the same pitch as the rest of the floor, and it looked more contracted on that account than it really was. One thing was sufficiently striking to fix a moment's attention. It contained one of the handsomest chimney-pieces in the house. It was of dark oak, carved in grotesque figures of the time of James the First, or perhaps Elizabeth, and had evidently been transported to its present occupancy. It had some roughly-carved representations of a boar hunt, and the wounded Adonis surrounded by his dogs and attendants. But we need not stop now to give any elaborate description of its beauties. It had none in the eyes of its proprietor beyond that of having cost a mint of money.

Laurence turned on his heel at once, postponing his inspection to some future time, and fully satisfied with the apparent security of the shutters and fastenings. Had he waited for daylight, he might have seen something more.

Having ascertained by further search that there was nothing missing, and that his fugitive was certainly not a burglar, he let it trouble him no more; and, but for the appearance of the short stick which he had left on the table in his bed-room, he might possibly have never thought of the subject again.

"How do you feel, Trumps, after your exertions last night?" inquired Lord Mentmore, as they sat at breakfast the next morning No ladies were yet down, and none but the hunting men were likely to show so early.

"Never better; fresh as paint. The colonel went in for the whole regiment; I wonder which is the favourite—here he comes; and the door opened and Colonel Pole-hampton walked into the room, stroking his moustache, and with that peculiar air which seems to announce perfect satisfaction with one's get-up.

"Colonel, we want your opinion on the beauty of the evening."

"Mentmore's quite capable of deciding; as to Trumps, the opinion of little boys isn't worth much."

"I know why you're jealous. You didn't dance with the Bradfield."

"Did you?" inquired the colonel.

"Twice," said Trumps.

"Then I presume there'll soon be a vacancy in the—Guards."

"Do you propose to everybody you dance with twice, colonel?"

Mentmore laughed, and Polehampton said something about smart youngsters and the service.

"Where's Carrington? he's going to the stone pits?"

"Yes; but he's late; he's going straight to the cover; and we are to tell his servants to take his horses there, if he does not overtake us."

"He struck me as being very attentive to Miss Bradfield last night. I never saw him exert himself so much before."

"What do you call exerting yourself, colonel?"

"Well! nobody expects Carrington to emulate a young gentleman on his preferment; but he danced several times. Twice with Miss Bradfield."

"That was politic. I'm glad to hear it. Sir Michael and Bradfield have never hit it; and the perpetuation of prejudices, however honourable, is a mistake. Laurence Bradfield is moreover a capital fellow, and his sister a beautiful girl, but Stafford Carrington will not fall in love with her. So you are not going to the gorse this morning, Sir Michael?" said Lord Mentmore, as the baronet entered the room.

"No, I think not. Sit still, Trumps, I've had my breakfast; you young fellows are so late. I must go to Saxonby, they've a notorious poacher, who was caught early this morning coming off the Sommerton property; and his friend, Job Fletcher, was taken earlier on the same night. That fellow Bradfield is away; but the people feel some anxiety about Fletcher; he married a woman who is somehow connected with our people, and I'm going over to see what can be done."

"Much poaching about here, Sir Michael?" asked Colonel Polehampton, tying the string of his leathers, and pressing it down so as to make a proper arrangement with his boot-top.

"There's a bad fellow called Morton—Dan Morton—that gives us a great deal of trouble. We want the late chief justice down here; he had sixteen up before him once. It was a doubtful case, and only wanted an hour to a very fine

dinner at Castleholme. The assault was pretty plain, but the poaching could not be proved. So the chief justice compromised matters, and got them all convicted of the assault. 'Now,' said he, 'I intend to break up this gang,' and he sentenced every one of them to two years' imprisonment and hard labour; and then ate an excellent dinner at Castleholme."

"Did anyone comment on his severity?"

"Yes; and he told Lord Holmfield that country gentlemen didn't know when they were well rid of a nuisance."

"I thought you were leniently disposed towards poaching?" said Colonel Polehampton, who had confused notions of baronets, sport, poaching, country gentlemen, and magistrates, having a sort of relationship to one another.

"My dear Polehampton," said Sir Michael, who knew something of such matters, "I do not think I should be very hard upon what people who live in London call a poacher, a man who stole a few of my pheasants and partridges: but poaching as we understand it in the country, is the root of almost every vice, is always accompanied by violence, drunkenness, and immorality, and does more to demoralise the people than any single crime I know of."

"Bless my soul, Carrington, you don't say so," said the colonel, rather alarmed, who was an excellent guardsman and very bad reasoner, quicker over a country than over an argument. "Mentmore, hadn't we better ring for our hacks? it's time to be off. I hope you've a fiddle you can play on, Trumps, to-day; for by the look of the sky we are likely to have a run."

"I've two, colonel; and I dare say I shall be able to produce some sort of music; though I can't exactly tell, as they don't belong to me. One is our major's steeplechase mare, Mistress Malone, and the other is a young 'un of B. J.'s, doubtless a very excellent instrument; I shall open the concert on the young one."

"I hope for your sake the heiress will be there; now we'll be off."

Another sort of scene was enacting elsewhere; in the ante-room of the Town Hall.

"Hallo! Job; where did they get hold of you?"

"Why! last night, as I was going out o' the squire's park over the wall, two on 'em, Bill Sharrett and another.

'Let's have them things,' says he. 'Shan't,' says I. 'Darn'd if we don't,' says he; and so he took the pegs as was in my pocket, while the other one nearly strangled me. 'Implements,' says they; so here I be this morning."

"It ain't everybody as carries his bread-and-cheese knife as commits a murder. They think they've got a case agin me; but I don't think Master Bradfield 'ull be very hard with me," rejoined Morton (for it was he), with a hideous leer, which betokened great confidence in his own powers of fascination.

"Ah! but it's Sir Michael—not Squire Bradfield," said Fletcher.

"Oh! Sir Michael, is it? He's a bit hard on us poor fellows, sometimes," and so he was on the day in question; for when dismissing the culprits, as having no tangible cases against them sufficiently strong for committal, he took the opportunity of assuring Dan Morton that his escape was more a matter of good luck than of good right; and that he should take care the next time he came before that bench, that he should have no mercy shown him.

"Whereabouts are we now, Stafford?" said Lord Mentmore, on the same afternoon, as they rode home after a moderate day's sport.

"That's Sommerton, straight before us; there's the Manor House to the left—we can save half-a-mile by going through these fields; but the road is not so good as through Sommerton. There's a great deal of ridge and furrow this way, and a very dirty lane."

"I'm for the road till we pass the village—I know that way."

"This way, Trumps," who was plunging into the softnesses of a dirty bridle gate on the abridgment principle; "we're going through Sommerton."

"But it's half-a-mile round," rejoined the youngster.

"Well! just as you and Mentmore like—but this is the best way," and as he did not pull up his horse in accordance with his implied intention, Lieutenant and Captain Trumps was obliged to give way and follow the others. "I never go round myself if I can help it, for I know it to be the worst as well as the longest way; but I presume there was something attractive in the prospect."

They were rewarded by meeting Abel Bradfield, wh turned into his own gate as the horsemen walked into th village. He had come in a fly from the railway station and as usual excited considerable commotion in Saxonby.

"Who's that?" said Jones, the printer of the "Saxonby Gazette," and whose duty it was to know everybody, to Tomes, the manager of the Saxonby Branch Bank.

"That, Sir, is a most extraordinary man, Sir," began Tomes.

"He looks d—d sulky," said Jones; and he was right nothing could be more gloomy than his appearance through the fly window, as he leant back out of sight—neither see ing nor seen.

"That, Sir, is a most extraordinary man, Sir. That man should be put under a glass case and be looked at, Jones."

"A very tiring amusement. What is he?"

"He's got sixty thousand a year; every shilling of which was made by himself or his father. That's Abel Bradfield."

"Sixty thousand a year; that's a large sum of money, Mr Tomes."

"Indeed it is; and nobody knows that better than we do Jones. But look at that man, Sir, as long as you can; for he's a very extraordinary man, Sir; he has coined his whole heart and feelings and paid it into the Consolidated Fund. He has turned an iron age into a golden one, and by his appearance of cheerfulness is reaping the fruits of his exertions. Good-morning, Mr. Jones."

CHAPTER XVI.

MORE ON MARRIAGE THAN LOVE.

"Then it is my intended husband! Odd enough, if my father's choice should happen to be my own!"—*Old Play.*

THERE were one or two things on which Abel Bradfield had set his heart; that is, what might have been called his heart, by a figure of speech. One of these was the attainment of rank for himself, by the marriage of his son or his daughter, or both. No men know the value of a place in the peerage so well as those who have but little chance of getting into it. The wealthy manufacturer did not despair of wealth doing for him what he had always been instructed it could do. But if he should be compelled to descend into the grave as the richest commoner in England, he still believed that he might find a page in that book which he valued beyond all others—"Married, the daughter of Abel Bradfield, Esq., of Sommerton Park, in the county of ——, by whom he has issue Abel Plantagenet, Lord Petticote, his heir," &c., &c. To be sure, it was but a left-handed compliment to himself—still it was one step in the right direction; and he was willing to barter such a trifle as his daughter's happiness, or his son's prosperity, with the more substantial balance of gold, for any such prospect.

Among the oldest acquaintances he had made, since the death of his father had put him in possession of a certain position, was a needy Irish peer. Lord Holocaust traded upon his patent of nobility, as you or I might on our brains or labour, only with this difference—that whereas we might hesitate to write, even for money, what we believed to be untrue, or knew to be immoral, his lordship would have regarded neither the falsehood nor the vice as an obstacle to his advancement. His present object was to portion off his third son, who had failed as yet to follow the excellent example set him by his two elder brothers, one of whom had married the only daughter of a certain civic dignitary,

more remarkable for his money than the means by which he acquired it, and the other of whom had run away with the half-witted daughter of a retired purveyor of wax-candles to Windsor Castle, and who had fortunately died before he had time to alter his will.

Abel Bradfield has conceived the hope of receiving Lord Holocaust and his son, Lord Frederick Derrynane, at Sommerton. He had not failed to perceive that the beauty of his daughter had attracted the attention of the young Irish nobleman; and, as they met frequently in London, he trusted that Ellen Bradfield would reciprocate the growing attachment. That young lady was fully sensible of the honour done to her fortune, and acted with a reserve fully equal to the circumstances of the case. While Bradfield was turning over in his mind the feasibility of a proposal that his friends should make Sommerton their quarters for a time during the hunting season, he was agreeably surprised by a letter from his lordship, hinting at the hopes which were entertained by his son, and begging for a few hours' conversation should Abel Bradfield find himself in town during the next month. Hence the sudden journey to London, which had apparently so disconcerted his family on the night of the Saxonby ball.

About twelve o'clock one fine winter's morning, then, the single servant in which Lord Holocaust indulged, and who was a natural ally, born on the Derrynane Estate, announced Mr. Abel Bradfield, and discreetly shut the door upon the visitor as soon as he had seen the *empressement* with which he was received.

"Bradfield, my dear fellow, be seated," said the peer, with considerablo grace; for though his money was gone, and his principles had followed it, he retained the manners of a gentleman, and the elegance of an Hibernian aristocrat. As a man of the world, perhaps the highest praise to be accorded.

"Thank you, thank you, my lord. You see I obey your letter in person."

"It's good of you; your kindness nearly overpowers me; but the happiness of my dear Fred is at stake; and, with a man of your practical sense, and knowledge of the world, I have ventured to take a step somewhat unusual."

The practical sense was called obstinate ill-temper by his

friends, who wanted nothing of him,—but he felt flattered to a degree.

"The subject you mentioned to me in your letter is one which is most flattering to me, as a father. My daughter is everything to me; and though I feel I am placing her in a position for which her beauty and talents qualify her, still I am sensible of your kindness, my dear Lord Holocaust, in selecting me for such an especial mark of favour."

"And have ye consulted Miss Bradfield, me good fellow?"

"I can hardly have done that yet; nor indeed do I see the great necessity for it. She must be as sensible of your condescension as I am."

"We don't manage matters quite so glibly in my country, Bradfield, but you know best. It saves trouble, at all events."

"What I should propose is this—that you and your son should give us the pleasure of your company when convenient; and I can scarcely believe in any impediment to a happy termination of your proposal. Lord Frederick is not at home?"

The peer rose to ring the bell, and Abel Bradfield nearly demolished the fire-irons in endeavouring to assist him.

"Me lord is gone to the club; and he bid me say he'd be happy to ride your lordship's brown cob for ye, till he'd see how he goes;" and the man left the room.

"Then, my good Bradfield, we can say no more about it, but that we'll avail ourselves of your kind invitation, to make the more intimate acquaintance of the ladies, in the course of a fortnight. Or if ye'll return to dinner, at half-past seven, I'll keep the boy" (he was only two-and-thirty) "for ye to talk to 'um."

"The first arrangement will suit me best, Lord Holocaust, and we'll expect you both in about a fortnight's time."

No man can tell what time may bring forth, and Abel Bradfield went on his way rejoicing.

But few opportunities had occurred for the further intimacy of the Carringtons and Bradfields. Sir Michael himself seldom mentioned them. He had occasionally said a word or two complimentary to Ellen Bradfield's personal beauty; but, if compelled to utter the name of the father, it

was usually coupled with some derogatory epithet. That fellow Bradfield was the baronet's usual mode of expression. Still, whenever they did meet, there was a show of courtesy on the part of Stafford Carrington and his sister, which was met by Ellen Bradfield and her brother with a corresponding good-humour. They had both been out with the hounds when the ladies had advanced to nearer intimacy than usual, and the gentlemen had been compelled to take upon themselves the "petits soins," which women must exact, so long as they will go out hunting. Happily, with the two girls in question, this only extended to the opening of gates, and did not last beyond an attendance at the cover side. When the fox went away, they, too, went away; and it is recorded of them, as remarkable in these days, that they did not ask for even "one little jump." Their servants were left in attendance, and as long as anything was to be seen by feminine ways they took them; when that was over they turned their heads and went home.

"Hallo, Mentmore; what! are you down in this country still?" roared that excellent fellow and intolerable bore, Tom Rattlebone (Toms are frequently great bores). "I thought you'd finished with us, and were gone back to your own miserable country."

"That's it; it is comparatively a miserable country. I have been back" (he had been for a week, and got tired of it), "but I left half my stud here, as I thought I should like a day or two more before the frost comes."

"Frost? There'll be no frost now! Here we are, well on in February; ground nice and soft, and lots of rain in the sky. Never was such a country as this for scent, in a wet season. Where are your quarters? Cropperfield—Saxonby? The last the most central, to my mind."

"I'm at Spring Vale."

"Ah! that's very good, too. I didn't know there was a house to let there big enough for you. The stabling at the White Horse is good, for it was built for old Carrington, when he had the hounds. Most particular man alive, I believe. There's never been such a stud in the county since. The Prince of Wales and Sheridan used to come down; but the old fellow was the only sportsman among them." And as if to save Lord Mentmore the trouble of answering the original question, old Tom Rattlebone blundered on into

some of the racy memoirs of those days, with which his mind was stored.

The natural conclusion in the neighbourhood, as well as amongst the great gossips of the day, everywhere, was that Lord Mentmore was either engaged, or about to engage himself, to Evelyn Carrington. He had begun by paying her great attention—some women would have called it marked attention—she thought so herself; but the chivalrous and romantic was a strong point in Mentmore's character, and an intelligent girl was not long in discerning the difference between a natural sweetness of manner and those indescribable nothings which pass muster under the form of courtship, or not, according to the temperament of those concerned.

One remarkable effect it had;—the dowager ladies, who had been angling with their minnows for the salmon of the season, threw up their rods and lines in despair, and, for the present, none but the desperate cast time or flies upon the water in the direction of Lord Mentmore. They were not slack in their innuendoes against Lady Carrington and her daughter; while the fast men grudged Stafford Carrington the opportunity of which he did not avail himself, of making an early book upon the information to be got out of the crack Newmarket stable.

A five o'clock meal is a very unnecessary addition to domestic economy; nor can I well understand the pleasures of society being enhanced by a cup of tea at any time but the usual one after dinner. It is not always possible to eat when one is hungry, but it is manifestly so to avoid eating or drinking when one does not require either. Doubtless some Lady May, or Dowager Marchioness, who really loved a mild stimulant after her shopping and before her dinner, introduced the fashion. "Now, dear, that's so good of you to come now—sit and talk to me while I drink my tea;" and then the dears themselves thought they should like to do the same. The consequence of this is, that there's hardly a parson's wife who lives out of her nursery, who does not think it necessary to have her "cabaret," or tea equipage, just as regularly as old Spades the gardener requires his beer.

"Send me a cup of tea up stairs, Timmins," said Miss Bradfield, as she entered the house about four o'clock, in

a very well-splashed habit and hat—the former of which she held up sufficiently to liberate a neat pair of Wellingtons from incumbrance in going up stairs.

"Certainly, Miss;" and in a few minutes the tea was served.

Presently there came a heavy foot along the gallery, as it had done many a time before. We have heard it ourselves, reader, already in these pages, at least as much of it as we could for the pile of the carpet without. It stopped as then, at the door of the room occupied by Ellen Bradfield, and knocked a bold and confident knock, which scarcely waited for an answer, but said in plain language, "That's a complimentary knock, and now in I'm coming."

In another second her brother stood before her.

I am no great admirer of a habit. There are some women who look remarkably well in them; they show the cleanliness of the figure to perfection, and have but few adventitious aids on which the eye desires to rest. You see the woman; and not Madame Maradan Carson or Madame Elize. I am not sure that I admire horse-exercise in woman. It may be that it smacks of the manly; indeed I feel that it is so. I know there are some rare exceptions. I have met with half-a-dozen; but the constant feeling of independence, which horsemanship must give, detracts at least from the first attribute of beauty, reliance on a stronger and ruder sex. While the gentler sex is seen to exercise control over a violent horse, be it by management or punishment, man has a lively sense of his own incapacity to kick against the influence. One thing too he doubts, whether, after having been thoroughly subdued, he will meet with those tender caresses which invariably follow a hard-fought battle with a refractory steed.

Be this as it may, Ellen Bradfield looked well in anything; and, as we have once before seen her in her armchair, with her golden hair hanging negligently over her neck and shoulders, she was sufficiently beautiful to command even a brother's admiration.

"Where have you got such a colour, Ellen?"

"M'amie has taken to pulling; she gets excited with hounds, and does not forget it till she gets home. I've had a charming ride. I wish you would go out more."

"Who were there?"

"Your friend, Mrs. Augustus Reynard, looked charming, in her peculiar style."

"The commandant of the cavalry dépôt. Did she allow the major-general to ride, or was he obliged to come in a postchaise? "

"He was there on one of her horses; but he was under orders for home at two o'clock, she told me, as she only wanted a ticket for that horse to qualify for the steeplechase."

"Anyone else?"

"One or two—Colonel Thistledown, Mr. Scarsdale and his pupil, the new marquis, came to the meet, and rode back with me. Old Tufton was there, with his swallow-tailed coat and cords, talking about Bedfont Castle, and the pineries, and the great people. He presented Miss Tufton to me, so we rode some time together."

"He's an ass. Who else? Anyone I know?"

"Oh! yes: let me see, there were the Carringtons, father and son——"

"A thorough malignant."

"Laurence!"

"Idle and presumptuous, selfish and bitter."

"Why, I thought you admired him," said the lady with some surprise.

"Almost insolent in his patronage."

"Ah! now I know you're not in earnest, Laurence. I do think I was unjust when I said so."

"And what has changed your opinion, my dear Nelly?"

"That I cannot tell. I hardly knew him when I spoke so severely; of course I cannot be a very good judge of him now. I take your word for his perfections."

"There's an instinct about woman that exceeds man's penetration; most likely your first view was the correct one;" and he put his hand affectionately on his sister's head.

"Did you see Mentmore?"

"No! he was not out."

"Then he is away: I wonder we have not seen him here."

"Living at the Carringtons', he would not be likely to come here."

"If he is sometimes governed by prejudices of his own, I

never knew him to be so by those of other people. Do you like Lord Mentmore?"

"Exceedingly, what I have seen of him. He is the most natural person I ever saw."

"And the most generous. She'll be a happy woman who gets him;" and Laurence looked more affectionately into his sister's eyes than usual, as if he thought she might have some chance. The eyes laughed in return at the apparent improbability, and then she said—

"Laurence, I'm bespoke, as they call it."

At first he laughed too; but when she put her hand out to him, and he saw a real tear glistening in her eye, and ready to fall from the lid, he repressed his inclination for badinage, and waited.

"What do you mean, Nelly dear? Who is it? Can't I guess?"

"Not in a thousand years. You scarcely know him more than I do."

"Scarcely know him! that's curious; and whose choice is your suitor in the absence of the true Ulysses?"

"Our father's, Laurence; and who shall gainsay a father's will?"

"Abel Bradfield's," said Laurence Bradfield to himself, as though he had some distinct existence, unparental, unallied, "Ho! that will not I in all just things;" then that habitual half-mocking smile, which sat so lightly on his handsome face, disappeared altogether; "but there are personal rights the invasion of which is a great wrong; perhaps this is one of them. Who is it, Nelly?"

"Lord Charles Derrynane, the son of papa's friend, Lord Holocaust."

"Lord Charles Derrynane? Can a man gather figs of thistles? I don't like the tree, and much misgive me the fruit cannot be good. When did you hear this?"

"When papa returned from London. The old lord and his son are expected here next week, or the week after."

"And have you held out hope?"

"No, Laurence; but you know papa; and although I have the credit of managing him upon most occasions, I fear this is but a drawn battle."

"If you are determined upon the point, it ought to be, and it must be, decisive."

"Ah! my dear brother, I see what you think. I have no fears of our father's violence; all my difficulty has been with his disappointment. I never heard him plead for anything before. I like fighting, you know, Laurence; but I cannot despatch my opponent when I have him down."

"Miserable weakness, dear; but it's the case through life. We all fight or cry for a something, and when we have it reject it as worthless."

"That's not true," said Ellen, getting her spirits again.

"How do you know?" asked her brother, amused with her speculative contradiction.

"I don't know, but I feel. Yes, I do know. Yours is what you great people at Oxford call a fallacy. We fight from a bad principle of contention, and we give way from a noble generosity, which is much commoner with us than with you."

"Oh, philosopher in a riding-habit, we contend only upon principle, and to throw away a victory so hardly gained is to be false to those principles. Now kiss me, Nelly, and we'll see what can be done for you. It's a pretty joke indeed when my sister and the heiress to Sommerton cannot marry whom she likes."

"So you mean going, Mentmore?" said Stafford Carrington, as they sat in the library, after hunting, before a glorious fire.

"Positively, next week."

"And without seeing the heiress again?"

A close observer might have detected the very slightest change of colour in the speaker's face. The question was a feeler.

"Probably without seeing her again. She seldom goes to the meet, and I can't ride the lanes about Sommerton, or walk the fields in the winter on the speculation."

"Hardly to be expected."

"I don't suppose we shall meet till the London season; and I generally do as little of that as I can."

"Perhaps you may feel inclined this year to do more?

"My movements always depend upon my horses. Whether Mr. Jackson means me to pull off any of the great events, I can't tell."

"If you behave yourself extremely well, he may allow you

to be first or second for the guineas; but I should hardly think you are yet entitled to Derby or Leger honours."

"In which case I shall indulge in the cultivation of exotics in retirement at Silvermere. All great men have done that after disappointment, including Cincinnatus, Sir Robert Walpole, and Garibaldi. You must come and see me, Stafford; I don't think you know Silvermere."

"I shall be delighted."

"And we must persuade Sir Michael and Lady Carrington, and your sister——"

"Sir Michael is hard to move; but I am sure my mother will be charmed."

"Agreed then; I shall go to Silvermere and finish the season. Lady Elizabeth Derwentwater, my aunt, always gives me a fortnight after Lent; and we take that opportunity of airing the old house."

The door opened, and Evelyn Carrington entered the room.

"Here's Evelyn; she can answer for herself."

She looked first at one and then at the other, so Lord Mentmore repeated his invitation.

"Oh, certainly, Lord Mentmore; by all means, Stafford, let us go. Mamma will be delighted."

It will be seen that she had quite recovered her courage, and felt sufficiently assured in his lordship's company It was an admirable sign for both of them.

Evelyn Carrington had taken off her riding-habit and hat, and replaced them by a garden hat; she had a parasol in her hand, though there was no sun, which betokened an intention to walk.

"Which way are you going, Evelyn?" said Stafford Carrington, looking at her charming face and *tout ensemble* with undisguised admiration.

"Only as far as Aunt Philly's."

"Miss Carrington's? pray accept my escort, Miss Evelyn. I feel that I have been unmindful of my devoirs; and as I shall leave on Monday, and mean to hunt to-morrow, I shall have no better opportunity of saying good-bye."

"She will be very glad to see you. You'll get no tea, however, for Aunt Philly has not yet given way to that innovation. You had better call to-day, for do you know she does not admit Sunday visitors? We're rather primitive

here, and she does not like to break through a time-honoured custom."

"I respect and almost share her prejudices, Miss Carrington. I suppose she will admit me as I am, or must I ask you to wait till I dress?"

"Certainly not; as you are." Stafford was already deep in Froude's last volume, deeper in an arm-chair, and was likely to be soon in a deep sleep.

They sauntered in the soft atmosphere of a close February day along the short but handsome avenue, towards the gates of the Manor House, which opened upon the village. Both of these persons liked and esteemed each other; and Mentmore could have loved the sister of his friend. But he was just one of those men who require encouragement. He was by nature shy. Constant friction with the world had converted it, to all outward seeming, to a high polish. But there was the germ remaining of certain diffidence, which all his wealth, and all his spoiling, only modified. Before he had been seven days in Evelyn Carrington's company, he saw, or fancied, that her heart was not for him. From that moment they were happy as companions; and the friendship of the families was cemented by a feeling, which a slight change of circumstances might have estranged.

Thoughts pass very rapidly through the mind. That notion could not have been new when Homer enunciated it twenty-seven hundred years ago. The bird of Jove must have been swift of flight, indeed; for in that short walk these very things, and in a hundred forms, had occurred to the two, as they paced pensively down towards the old lady's cottage. And all the tributaries in a moment of time formed themselves, so to speak, into the reservoir of their minds. And there came athwart them images, which helped, in either case, to account for what the whole world called unaccountable, that two persons made for each other should yet have failed to see it. Those images were Laurence and Ellen Bradfield. I do not know that Lord Mentmore cared for Ellen Bradfield, but I think he would not have borne his disappointment so philosophically but for her.

They walked up the neatly-kept carriage-drive from the gate, bordered on each side by the trim lawn. The gardener was beginning his early rolling, and a sharp wire-haired terrier kept watch in front of the house. They walked in,

however, unmolested; the dog shut up, and the door flew open. "Come along, Lord Mentmore," said Evelyn, confident in her own rights, and crossing the hall diagonally, they opened the drawing-room door, and encountered the hooked nose, hooked stick, and crooked back of Aunt Philly, doing the honours of her house to Laurence Bradfield and his sister.

"Well, my dear," said the old lady, "this is delightful; and Lord Mentmore, too; now let me introduce you to my new friends. Oh! you know one another. I'm sadly disappointed, for I intended to be the good fairy in the pantomime, and to have brought you all together myself."

"My dear aunt, you live to do good."

"Then, my dear, that's why it does me good to live, I suppose; but I'm beginning to grow old, my lord, I am. I don't go about alone as I could, Sir. I got as far as old Giles's to-day, and you'll be glad to hear he's quite well again; but I could not get back, my dear; and if I hadn't met my kind friends here, I think I should have slept in the fields, Evelyn. There was nobody near me, and no means of getting a carriage to me, and not much more of getting Mahomet to the mountain." The old lady seemed to have recovered her spirits, and added, "And now, Miss, you may thank that gentleman that you have an Aunt Philly still alive."

"Miss Carrington makes the worst of it," said Laurence Bradfield. "She wanted assistance, however, and I am glad I was at hand to give it."

"I don't think he was very busy, my dear, or I should not have taxed his kindness so far as to bring me home."

"I was really doing nothing; strolling with my sister to look at some new fencing, and to smoke a cigar——"

"Miss Carrington will not forgive smoking, Bradfield; you've ruined yourself with her."

"No, my lord, pardon me. I can easily find an excuse for him, but none for you and my nephew Stafford."

"That seems hard, Miss Carrington."

"Not at all; Mr. Bradfield may have no narcotic at home. I don't know Mr. Scarsdale, but you and Stafford may enjoy one every Sunday from Walter, which ought to ast you the week."

"I hope the worthy rector has not heard your opinion, Miss Carrington."

"He's not heard mine, my lord; but he must have heard old Farmer Turfman's, who takes care to make it audible enough every Sunday afternoon."

"You never allow anyone but yourself to abuse Walter, aunt."

"No, my dear, that's true; it's as bad as allowing another man to spend your small change. Nobody values it much; but when kept in the family it is found to be very useful."

Lord Mentmore talked to Miss Bradfield; and when Laurence thought he had sat long enough not to make his departure remarkable, he rose and took leave of his aged hostess, who hoped she might frequently have the pleasure of seeing him. Evelyn took up "The Times" and looked down the Parliamentary column; seeing nothing apparently to interest her she soon put it down again.

"What a funny thing, aunt, to have seen the Bradfields here. I suppose it is the first time they ever were in this house."

"The first time that anyone of the name was inside of the gates. I hope it may not be the last. I'm a horrible old woman, my dear, I know; and your father will be in a terrible taking when he hears of it; but I couldn't let myself die in the fields for political punctilio, so I was obliged to take his arm."

"But he seems to have got your heart too, Madam."

"I confess to a tender sentiment in his favour, my lord; and as to his sister, she's a Puritan, a dreadful freethinking Independent, but it is of a better sort than usual. My lord, that young woman will make a figure in the world if she marries the right man."

"And what is your view of the right man, Miss Carrington?"

"I think you might do for her, my lord, very well, but my nephew Stafford still better."

There was a curious look passed over Lord Mentmore's face—a pleased smile, which, however, subsided quickly. He got up at once to say good-bye to Miss Carrington, with unusual gravity. As he took the old lady's hand with his accustomed courtesy, he said, "Thank you, Miss Carrington,

your last speech has raised a question of considerable interest. I shall always be willing to profit by your profound experience of human nature. I suppose it is impossible to tempt you to make one of my Easter circle at Silvermere?"

"Old trees don't bear transplanting even for a time, my lord."

"Aunt is affected with Radical notions; you observe, Lord Mentmore, how evil communications corrupt good manners."

CHAPTER XVII.

OUR TRUSTWORTHY DOMESTICS.

> "Honour's train
> Is longer than his foreskirt."
> *Henry VIII.*—SHAKESPEARE.

THE reader does not now require to be told that a greater rascal than Dan Morton was not to be found; nor that he was the gentleman who was so instrumental on the night of the ball in spoiling Laurence Bradfield's dress boots. The latter was as little as anybody susceptible of such inconveniences; and would at any time have sacrificed boots, shoes, hats, coats, the whole of his personal wardrobe, for the attainment of an object however valueless in the main.

Perhaps for the first time in his life, this vagabond found himself encumbered by the possession of stolen property. He had never been placed in such a difficulty before. He frequently held watches, purses, pocket-books, and game, to which he had no sort of right; the possession of them, when once safely acquired, had always caused him inexpressible satisfaction. They were not four and twenty hours in his hands before they became available property. I don't know that he had been engaged in a regular professional burglary; but I am quite sure that he would have laid hands upon the

very largest piece of silver in the collection, without any compunction whatever, and with a certainty of its immediate conversion into specie. A body would have been a light and easy burden compared to the strip of parchment he carried about with him, for he could have returned it at once to the earth (whence he had not unfrequently taken it), if the dissecting room at Guy's or St. Thomas's could not have been considered an eligible investment for it. In Australia, where science was struggling with difficulties, he was said to have been not always quite particular enough as to their absolute dissolution before delivery; and upon one occasion insisted upon a remuneration for his trouble, with the parody upon some resurrectionist *bel esprit*, that he was worth more, as he could be killed when he was wanted.

The spectre that haunted him now, it appeared, could not be killed when wanted, nor be got rid of at all. It was a paper of such material consequence, that, though he had been sighing for its possession for years, and had no idea that it was still in existence, now that he had it, he felt it to be an intolerable weight. He was never a hard-working man; the mysterious doles which he seemed to receive from time to time, precluded the necessity for the continuous labour which is the lot of most poor men. He was a grand frequenter of fairs, especially horse fairs, statutes, mops, hunt-meetings, and public-houses; he was essentially a lounger, but he had his horses and his dogs on which he made a show of work. Now he was restless. He was in and out of his own house, and of other people's; he always had his hand in his pocket, clutching or fingering something which was carefully rolled up in a moderately dirty handkerchief, popularly said to be the "fogle," which was sported for him, when he was knocked out of time by the "rooster." He talked, too, mysteriously about an indefinite absence, as intended on his part. It was understood to be a delicate mode of announcing an *alibi* during the perpetration of some deed of darkness; and it was commonly remarked that whenever he was away from Sommerton for four or five days together, the foxes were more daring in their visits to the poultry yards. He talked now of a lengthened absence; indeed, painful as it might be to his friends, he didn't know whether, when the old gent in Saxonby Union was gone, he shouldn't leave these parts altogether. Nobody, who knew him, believed a

word that he said; but they were compelled to admit to themselves that it looked more like truth than usual.

I said that Dan Morton had got hold of a paper of some consequence; and so he had. And now we shall see how he got it.

When Mr. Abel Bradfield was gone to town, on his very lucrative business with Lord Holocaust, by which he was virtually to sell a daughter for a place in the peerage; and when the rest of the family were gone to the Saxonby ball, Dan Morton went to Job Fletcher's. He there learnt that Mrs. Fletcher was to act as Miss Bradfield's maid for the evening; and as she was not yet gone, he determined to accompany her and her husband as far as the Hall, and trust to the chapter of accidents. He was pretty good friends with Mr. Timmins, the butler, and Mrs. Barber was afraid of him. Timmins admired his capacity for strong ale, which was seldom drunk from its potency; and as he had brewed it, and was remarkably proud of the performance, it proved a bond of union between them, the strength of which might be said to be in the ale itself.

"Now, Job," said Mrs. Fletcher, "are you nearly ready?"

"All right, my wench; what be Dan Morton agoin' with us?" replied Mr. Fletcher, who emerged from the back kitchen, having brushed his head with a water-brush, and combed out the fluid.

Dan Morton answered for himself, that he thought he should run down and smoke a pipe with Mr. Timmins, as the squire was away.

On the way down, it not being a dark night, as I have before observed, Mrs. Fletcher walked on one side of the road, and the two men on the other, which is the invariable custom of the English peasantry, excepting during that period in which they are said to be keeping company, when they make up for their usual estrangement by a proximity ludicrously uxorious.

"I shan't be in a hurry to go away; she be agoin' to sleep there; and I means to look at them wires in the spinney near the wall, afore I goes to bed."

Mr. Morton signified his intention of doing anything agreeable. "But I want to see the house."

"I don't know anything about that, you'd better scrape

your feet, or Mrs. Barber will be about you." Morton obeyed implicitly the injunction. Indeed, he looked as civilised as it was in his nature to look.

Job and his wife were great favourites with the Hall people; and it was not to be wondered at. Job was a remarkably fine looking fellow; and, although he was a poacher, there was a daring look of courage about him which disarmed suspicion.

Mrs. Fletcher could be nobody's enemy; and old Mrs. Barber was indebted to her for many a good turn in the way of dress-making and altering. She was the only sempstress who never hurt the feelings of the buxom housekeeper by the increased size of her measure.

As soon as the squire was gone, and the carriage had driven away for the Saxonby ball, Mr. Timmins sat down to enjoy himself. He was enjoying a bottle of very choice madeira, which he allowed his master on company nights, and not then unless the company was good. He had invited Mrs. Barber to the Steward's room, a comfortable sort of place, remote from the family rooms, for the convenience of his pipe; the remaining footman, and the head groom, made up the party: one housemaid was in the village visiting, and her colleagues were putting straight the bed-rooms. A nice little dish of walnuts, some roasted chestnuts, and some oranges, transferred to the household crockery from Mr. Bradfield's Sèvres, by the forethought of Mrs. Barber, graced the board. There was half-a-bottle of claret, some sherry, and some excellent dry port, which Mrs. Barber preferred by a miraculous effort of discrimination to the fruity drink, so much more in favour among the ladies. She had done her duty, by the remnant which had come down; and was indulging in a doze, while the gentlemen, that is, Timmins and the groom, for William feared detection, enjoyed each a pipe.

The former of these was in profound meditation, only dropping an occasional monosyllable as pearls before swine, on the admirable letters which were daily appearing in "The Times" newspaper, on the hardships to which the domestic servant is daily subject, when there was a ring at the servants' entrance.

William went to the door, while Mr. Timmins enshrouded in the graceful mystery of a table-cover the *débris* of his

repast. William returned ushering in Mr. and Mrs. Job Fletcher, and the gigantic Dan Morton.

They were not quite the company to which Mr. Timmins was accustomed during the London season; but they were the best the village afforded excepting the village schoolmaster, who was not so fond of coming to the Hall, since he had been caught by Mr. Bradfield.

"My dear," said Mrs. Barber, waking up, "so you're come at last. Dear me, ten o'clock and past. Bless me, Mr. Timmins, I must have been taking forty winks: your room's all ready, but you'll sit down and warm yourself a bit first. You'll find all the things ready for you when you go up, and a good fire in Miss Ellen's room."

Mr. Timmins paid a like compliment to the males of the party; and it was not long before Job Fletcher and Dan Morton were occupied with a hot jorum of gin-and-water; Mr. Timmins, Williams, and the groom, did the same; the former merely observing that he thought "just one glass of spirits and water would not do him harm," but utterly ignoring his participation in the good things which stood on one side under the table-cover; I don't think his friends were the least cajoled into a belief in his abstemiousness.

"We were just a talking of them excellent letters, Job, which we read about the engaging of servants. There's somebody who calls himself West End, I don't suppose as that's his right name, who says how wrong it is to deprive a poor man of his bread by not giving him a character."

"Certainly," said Job, who was not yet quite clear what turn the conversation was taking, and not desirous of committing himself.

"He very naturally observes," continued Mr. Timmins with an easy dignity, "that if a man is a good butler, or a good footman, or a good keeper, there ought to be no questions asked about his takin' his liquor freely, or pocketing the spoons."

"In course not," said Dan Morton, who, though the language was a little above him, quite appreciated the sentiment.

"Nor on the other hand — Lord bless us, Mrs. Fletcher, you've drownded the miller!—that if a man is honest, and sober, and what they call respectable, his late master didn't ought to say as he couldn't wait at table, and know'd

nothing of his business; not if it was likely to interfere with a honest man getting a comfortable situation."

"Well, that is a hard case rather," said Mrs. Fletcher, who, however, did not see her way so clearly through the first proposition.

"Yes, I think Mr. Jacob Homnium, or whatever his name is, has got his match."

"Ah! my dear," rejoined Mrs. Barber, addressing Nanny Fletcher, "it's a difficult thing to suit yourself nowadays; folks is become so particular. The salary is good, and the living is tolerable, but there's no perquisites and allowances, and I believe the ladies sells their dresses; and they thinks as much of one follower nowadays, as they did of twenty, when I was younger." This was the nearest approach to an acknowledgment of age that Mrs. Barber was ever known to make.

"Yes!" said Timmins, mixing himself another glass of the squire's best Hodges', "there are not many good places now. Board-wages and find yourself, that won't do for me. Though to be sure it's as broad as it's long. What are you drinking, Morton?"

"Thank ye, I'll just do the same again. And how's the little dawg, Mr. Timmins, as come from Cremorne show?"

"Well, he looks lively enough; but it was a goodish bit o' money for an untried one."

"Never you mind; he'll do a good thing one o' these days. Do you know how I did try him, afore I sent him to you?"

"Can't say I do, Dan Morton."

"Well, I'll tell you. I drew one o' your foxes here with him; when all the rest o' the litter had been taken, and when the squire wanted a fox to turn down 'cos the hounds was coming, I sold him his own for half-a-guinea. He run better than any bagman as I ever see; I suppose he know'd the country pretty well."

"Well! You're a pretty rascal, you are, Master Morton," but as Mr. Timmins laughed, and they all sipped their gin-and-water together, they rather enjoyed the rascality than resented it.

"Well, Mrs. Fletcher, and when are we to have a wedding?"

"Lor! love ye, Mrs. Barber, how should I know?" at

the same time Mrs. Fletcher smiled as if she did know something if she liked to speak.

"I have heard something—as there's a young lord a coming a courting here in a little time. Master got a letter, and he's gone up to town in an uncommon hurry; and Lucy did hear something outside o' Miss Ellen's door."

"And what's he like, Mrs. Barber?" said Nanny Fletcher, wide awake to anything like matrimonial gossip—what's he like?"

"Oh! bless you; we none on us knows. Nobody's seen him except master."

"Master's a nice judge o' beauty," said Job. "I should like him to choose a wife for me if I wanted one."

"It isn't Lord Mentmore, is it, Mrs. Barber?" said Nanny, returning to the charge.

"No, it isn't Lord Mentmore. Though our young lady is quite deserving of any earl in the British ealendar." It is supposed that Mrs. Barber meant peerage.

"No ways to compare to Miss Carrington," said Job Fletcher, "she's so gentle and so soft like. There's a bit o' the father in Miss Ellen."

"It's but a small bit indeed then, Mr. Fletcher—I can tell ye. There isn't a young lady in these parts that does as much good as our young mistress."

"Nor the old gentleman himself as does so much harm as our old master."

This was received as a joke, with considerable applause; and the conversation then turned upon family affairs in general; the marriage of the young people in particular. They canvassed old Bradfield's temper, the young lady's beauty, the young squire's talents. The stud groom thought he was "the strongest man on a horse he ever see, a little too long in the leg to ride well:" that's always their notion. They knew all Miss Bradfield's partners at Saxonby; almost what they said to her. They discussed the value of the Sommerton Estate, the Lancashire property, the Spring Vale rent-roll, Sir Michael's pride, Miss Carrington's beauty, Stafford Carrington's extravagance. There was nothing they were not acquainted with which concerned their betters; they knew their debts and capability of discharging them their engagements and intentions of fulfilling them; they professed to be at home or behind the scenes in numberless

intrigues; to believe them, the happiness and reputation of a hundred families were in their hands; and it was by no means certain, upon a comparison of information, that (excepting Nancy, who sat horrified at these gin-and-water disclosures) the two poachers were not by far the honestest men in the room.

At length Mrs. Fletcher announced her intention of seeking her own room, and having lighted a candle for that purpose, proceeded to put it into execution.

"This must be a fine place, Mrs. Barber; how I should just like to peep into the rooms before I go," said Dan Morton.

"She knows the house just as well as I do," said Mrs. Barber, not by any means prepared for showing them at that time of night, and any visions of prudence of which she might be naturally possessed, being submerged in her under-nightcap, which she facetiously called her second glass. "Nancy, my dear, just take him into the drawing-rooms and library, and William can let him out. There, you go too, Job. I'm sure, Mr. Timmins, it's time we were in bed."

Dan Morton did not wait for another hint, but rising with greater alacrity than could be expected, he prepared to accompany Mrs. Fletcher and her husband. William, already half asleep, desired them to call at the top of the stairs when they were ready to be let out.

Mrs. Fletcher opened first one door, then another, and, by the light of the fire and her single candle, exhibited as much of the magnificence of the rooms as could be seen. Morton pretended to be overpowered by the deeply framed pictures, the magnificent clocks, the richly draped hangings, and the soft carpeting of the saloons. The noble dimensions of the dining-room, with its boar-hunt by Schnyders, and its turkey-cocks, flowers, fruit, and game by Weenix, seemed to have small charms for him. The library, whose furniture was worth that of the whole house put together, was not likely to have enchained the athletic pitman for any great length of time. He gaped, open-mouthed, at the mighty chandeliers, and grinned with a satyr-like gusto at the magnificent statuary that adorned the staircase and gallery. Then they looked into the θάλαμος of the Bradfields, and desecrated with their presence the boudoirs and dressing-rooms of the first floor. At length, satisfied with the survey, they escorted Nancy Fletcher to her temporary

mistress's suite of apartments, and prepared to descend on tiptoe.

"Now then, Job, I know the room. I've got all I want in my pocket; and when I'm once in there, if there's a way out you can leave me to find it."

With this injunction, they took their candle, and having got into the lower story once more they went quickly and noiselessly to the end of it, passing the rooms they had already inspected towards that door which has been already opened for the admission of Laurence Bradfield. That door was locked. Upon turning the key, however, which was outside, they walked quietly in and commenced a close inspection. Its nakedness was startling after the warmth and comfort they had everywhere encountered. They saw the handsome curtains, which were drawn, the meagre carpet, the writing-table, the plain leather chairs, the old boxes, the fireproof safe, and above all, the chimney-piece, which had no charms for Job Fletcher. Dan Morton scrutinised it closely. He then went to the window, which looked on to the terrace. It was closed with an ordinary shutter, and heavy iron bars.

"Come here, Job, and help us with these bars."

Job was rather alarmed, and wanted to know the "wherefore" of this proceeding.

"No harm, so help me —," said Morton. "Let's look out of window." Saying which they noiselessly took down the stanchions. The moon shone upon the room. "That will do, Job; now listen to me. Leave me alone here; give me the light," said he, closing the shutters again, "and lock me in—do you hear? Then go and open the front door, which you can do from inside, and call William. When he comes to lock you out, walk off at once; if he asks for me, which likely enough he won't, say I'm gone." With which he blew out the candle, and Job Fletcher found himself in the gallery, lighted by the hall lamps.

Job Fletcher had become exceedingly unprincipled by his idle and dissolute habits, to say nothing of his connection with Morton; but he did not contemplate the introduction of a burglar into the squire's house. He had received from Morton the strongest assurances that he contemplated nothing like robbery; to say nothing of which, the great difficulty, at the last moment, of divulging the whole affair,

and the little time allowed him for contemplation, were strong accessories to a mind so perverted from good as his had become. In a word, he was taken completely aback; and so being once outside the house safely (for things turned out pretty much as his companion prognosticated), he quieted his conscience by smoking his pipe, and keeping watch in the shrubbery, to see that nothing extraordinary did occur. When, at three o'clock in the morning, he saw, from his hiding-place, Dan Morton walk quietly out of the window, without any apparent alarm, he went off to his wires, and was taken up on suspicion by the keepers, as we have before related.

To return to Morton whom we left in the lumber-room. No sooner did he hear the key turn in the door, than he quietly ensconced himself in a corner behind the curtain, rightly judging that the room had been done up for the night, and was not likely again to be invaded. It was better to be on the safe side, however; and events proved the correctness of his judgment. A quarter of an hour had scarcely elapsed, when his senses, which, from his bushranging propensities, were tolerably acute, detected the fall of a foot on the carpet outside the door. The key again turned; William put in his head, as speedily withdrew it, and locked the door, taking the key away with him in his pocket. The rest of the doors were closed with a bang; the house was evidently shut up for the night, as far as that part of it was concerned. All had been done that a conscientious servant at such a time, and with a pipe and some hot grog awaiting him in the servants' hall, could be expected to do, and Dan Morton came forth from his concealment.

CHAPTER XVIII.

NOT TO BE DISPOSED OF.

"Nor in the morning may be seen
Where we the night before have been."
Reliques of Ballad Poetry.

THE first thing that he did was to draw from his pocket a lucifer match; science had befriended him, as it has millions, by the deposition of the fine old tinder-box. He relit his candle without much trouble. He had received from his half-witted old father vague directions as to the thing he sought, and the room in which to seek it. He looked first at the writing-table. There was no necessity for the use of any implements to master its contents. He found two drawers and the key in each. There were plenty of notes, and memoranda, bailiff's accounts; bits of books for sale; unused letter-paper; the weight of a remarkable pig fed at Sommerton; names of voters; rough drafts of the pictures; a dog collar, and several rusty keys. Before this table Mr. Daniel Morton sat down to read or to inspect what he had found; and he soon convinced himself that what he sought was not among them.

Sad reflections arise on the misuse of our noblest faculties and most needful capabilities. I cannot say much for the education of the Sommerton people, before Miss Bradfield and Mr. Scarsdale had taken them in hand. Many of them were guiltless of sufficient facility in writing or reading to make the cultivation of letters in any way desirable in after-life. Dan Morton was no better than the rest; his advantages had, however, been greater by the greater intercourse he had had with mankind; and the absolute necessity of some sedentary employment during the rainy season in foreign latitudes had forced itself upon him, and Dan Morton could read. He had studied the old "Bell's Life" newspapers with which he met; and thanks to the spread of knowledge and the purity of cheap literature in this country, Dan had become rather a bookworm in his way. He loved a fine old "Family Herald" sort of plot, with two murders,

a suicide in a coal-pit, or a whole village reduced to a cinder by a flash of lightning. He revelled in all this. He never omitted the graphic descriptions to be found in journals of the low school of a glorious set-to in the Midland Districts, of a dog fight, a ratting match, or pedestrianism against time. He did not master writing so readily, and the pot-hooks and hangers of lawyers and accountants presented greater difficulties than a horn-book, or Bell. Still he sat himself down to his work, and some previously-formed idea of what he was come for made him reject as valucless all but the keys.

How many men have reading and writing brought to an untimely end, in those glorious times when it was considered better to hang the wrong fellow than to hang no fellow at all! How many have to deplore their useless knowledge in perpetual banishment, who have merely mistaken somebody else's name for their own, and signed it unintentionally at the wrong end of a slip of paper! How many have done so of late years, and after having lived comfortably in a foreign country, or after being taken care of for a few years, are out again to perfect themselves by more practice in an art which they had too imperfectly performed.

Had Job Fletcher, or one-half of Sommerton been in Dan Morton's place, he would have either never commenced or now have abandoned the pursuit. Reading what he found with tolerable facility so tickled Dan's pride that it whetted his appetite for more. Like a schoolboy in a pastrycook's shop, he looked round with increased gusto on the boxes, and on the iron safe. The latter he regarded almost as an unattainable delicacy, the *bonne bouche* of the place.

Taking the keys one by one he applied them to the locks. He was not long before he found that they had been put to their proper purpose. He was not unprovided with a ready method of opening them had they proved invincible by fair means; but it was not necessary to try foul; from each he took a mass of papers. Then began his labour in real earnest; but as time rolled on nothing could be more certain than that there was nothing there which concerned him. Many of them had a lawyer-like look; and now and then he would pore down a page with more than ordinary attention, and with the perspiration standing on his forehead; but it was manifestly not what Dan Morton wanted.

Several had the nature of their contents engrossed on their backs; leases, copyholds, freeholds, covenants, over which Morton's time was too valuable to be wasted. As he completed the contents of each box, of which there were three, he got more and more anxious. He had that mixed hope of finding his paper among them, with a seeming certainty that it could be nowhere but in the iron-safe.

And how was the iron-safe to be opened? He knelt down, after replacing carefully the other papers, and relocking the boxes, with the lighted candle by his side, and began to examine the lock attentively. Dan had had considerable experience in locks, having for a short time worked in a whitesmith's house. He saw that it was an old-fashioned lock, which by good management might be made to yield to skill: and was satisfied that if he should fail with those he had with him, it would not be difficult to procure implements, by which on some future occasion he might obtain what he wanted. This redoubled his hopes and relieved the anxiety which his present failures had caused. He set to work with that good heart which is requisite for carrying out a deed of wickedness; and which has so much of that self-interest to support it which is supposed by some philosophers to be the basis of all morality.

But either virtue like Dan's was to be its own reward, or he failed in that faith which breaks into cash-boxes; for half-an-hour passed, and the iron-safe remained as much an iron-safe as ever. He rose from his knees, angry and disappointed, though he scarcely admitted to himself that he was so. He went towards the window; the moon was waning and the clouds flitted past, and the appearance of the sky betokened an early hour of the morning. Dan Morton turned round once more, closing the window, determined upon a final trial. Just then a key, larger rather than those he had tried, and much more rusty, attracted his attention. He might as well try the keys; although such a thing as the key of a fire-proof safe left in an open drawer appeared to his notions of security so improbable, that he almost scouted the idea. Even with the key in his hand, but for a resemblance to the lock which caught his eye, he would then have given it up. He took the key, however; as he looked at it more nearly he became more convinced than before; as it approached the lock its fitness was the more startling,

and upon application it entered with a difficulty only occasioned by the coat of rust which had settled on it Morton rose from his knees; contemplated his success for one minute, during which thousands of visions flitted through his mind, and then kneeling down again applied his strength, and turned it with comparative ease. In a second the heavy lid was up, and diving into the box with both hands, he grasped at its contents, "and brought up —nothing!" The iron-safe was empty.

No man, who has not set his existence upon the turn of a key, can well conceive the disappointment, the sickening dissolution of all hope, which succeeded to Morton's exertions. He had never dreamt of failure. He had received the most positive assurances from one who must know, and whose local information, up to this point, seemed to have been so correct, that he had never questioned the existence of the papers on which his whole fortune depended. He had doubted the possibility of getting at the inside of the safe, but, once having accomplished that feat, he felt it beyond all the powers of fortune to defeat his scheme. It was some minutes before he could convince himself of the truth of appearances. He rose and looked on the floor. Could the paper have dropped out at the moment? Impossible. If he had disregarded cold before, though in the middle of winter and without fire, now the perspiration rolled off his face in heavy drops, and the veins swelled with intensity of excitement in his brawny hands. For some minutes he knelt before his broken idol, still gazing into it; then he drew from his coat his handkerchief, and wiped his brow; after this he took one more look into the empty safe, and then closing the lid, proceeded to put things in the way they were before.

While occupied in this manner, and now only bent upon his escape, which he had planned by the window, he suddenly remembered that in the course of his father's conversation with him, he had continually alluded to the mantelpiece. As Dan Morton collected his thoughts this reminiscence became clearer every moment. Old Giles Morton had been a carpenter, of rather a superior class, and had been employed by the father of Abel Bradfield in many of the improvements about the house. The old man certainly had mentioned this identical mantelpiece

somehow in connection with the business on hand. No sooner had he got thus far in his retrospections than he acquired new alacrity. He took up the candle from the floor, abandoned his immediate intention of retreat, and walked straight to the fireplace.

It was remarkable even to uneducated eyes. He examined it closely, not with the curiosity of a connoisseur, but impatiently; and in his heart cursed the grotesqueness of the figures, which would arrest his attention in spite of himself; but one thing almost immediately attracted him, as, indeed, it had others before, who having no interest in pursuing the speculation further had let it drop. In the centre of the piece, and immediately below the principal figures, was one small panel, perfectly plain, and, as it now appeared to Morton, singularly out of place. It formed a square in the midst of a richly-carved border of fruit and flowers, and had no more business there than in the middle of the Adonis himself. This idea having once fixed itself in Morton's mind grew there rapidly. "That's a panel," said he to himself. "What does it want there? It's hollow, I know it is—darn'd if it ain't," added he, with considerable emphasis again to himself, and tapping it with his iron hand. "And how to get at it? If I can without being found out, so much the better; and if I can't, why it can't be helped. It won't make much difference."

Taking therefore a very sharp instrument from his pocket, he went to work on the panel; before long he had made an incision, by which he found that it had been glued in. He then removed the glue, and having done so, he found that the supposed panel was neither more nor less than a sliding door. He pushed slightly, and it began to glide back, exposing a long box in the wall. His suspicions thus far were correct. With eager haste he brought the candle to the fire-place, and there, resting in its hiding-place, was the paper on which so much depended. His heart beat audibly, and he hurried to the table, where five minutes' examination reassured his remaining doubts if he had any. So he folded up carefully his treasure, and placing it in an inside pocket of his coat, prepared to retire. It was not a very difficult achievement. He opened gently the shutters, having first replaced the panel, and blown out the candle.

He then pushed up the window, and stood on the sill, while he readjusted the curtains and shutters; then he stepped gently into the terrace, drawing down at the same time the open window, thus leaving to all appearance everything as it should be. He had hardly reached the ground when he heard the carriage stop at the door; and with the rest of that winter morning's amusement the reader is already acquainted.

It is, perhaps, nothing derogatory to the courage of Dan Morton that he should have preferred running away to stopping to fight, considering all things. It is the duty of the bearer of despatches to run no risk of losing them. I said he was horribly burthened by his newly-acquired property. His troubles seem to have commenced, like those of other great men, straightway with his acquisitions. No sooner had he got clear of the park than he was pounced upon (thanks to modern legislation), for an offence which, for about the first time in his life, he had not committed. Nothing but a rigid scrutiny of Dan's pockets could convince the rural policeman that he had not half-a-dozen pheasants somewhere upon his person; and it was a lucky accident that only a few pegs and wires were found upon him. Of course it was not an easy matter to get through the examination without some explanation of "them law papers;" but Dan Morton had no fancy for having them impounded. He preferred trusting to the security of his own pockets, rather than to the honesty of even the village policeman. That intelligent party, upon a promise that he would be forthcoming when wanted, allowed Dan to walk off with the only thing he particularly cared to retain.

The circumstances, however, which perplexed him, and had been a source of constant anxiety, now that he had what he had so long wanted, was to know what to do with it. It was to be turned into money; it was to be a source of profit to Dan Morton; and of such profit that, well managed, Dan was a made man, and everyone connected with him was to be benefited. Job Fletcher had purchased a right to some consideration; but all knowledge of it was to be kept from his wife, lest that over-scrupulous female should decline living upon the wages of rascality.

The question was, therefore, how to make the most of it? There were certainly two good bidders in the market, if not

a third. The first of these was the late owner—Abel Bradfield himself. Having acquired the thing, at some expense and trouble, he was obviously the most probable purchaser. Like the fox too, there was something flattering to Dan's ingenuity in offering him his own property at a very handsome premium; or, if Dan was not exorbitant, he might be able to buy it at less than its original value, and that would have been flattering to him. It would seem, at first sight, that the original proprietor would be the highest bidder. He knew the pleasure of possession, and might be able to appreciate the inconvenience of the loss. Yet it occurred to him that the losers of jewelry, watches, property in general, seldom offered the full value; and that, were the risk of detection not great, a new purchaser was the most profitable. Several ideas of this kind flitted across his brain, and lost themselves somehow in the necessity of doing something or other with his recent acquisition.

The person who held the second place in his estimation as a probable purchaser was Sir Michael Carrington. Abstractedly (not that Dan made use of that word even mentally) it was worth as much to him as to anybody, for if Abel Bradfield's appetite had been whetted by possession, Michael Carrington's had suffered no diminution from want. There was one thing against the probability of great liberality; what he had was Sir Michael's by right, and as soon as the baronet obtained that knowledge, it was more than likely that he would demand as a right what had been so long withheld from him by wrong. Still to save trouble, and to regain even a right of which he had been in ignorance, without the anxiety of fighting for it, was worth a considerable sum of money On these grounds Sir Michael Carrington held a high place in the estimation of Dan Morton as a probable customer.

There was also a third person who might feel sufficiently interested to bid for the manuscript. This was no other than Laurence Bradfield. In point of fact, had he known anything at all of the business, that is, had he been permitted to take the position of showman, and to pull the strings, as the novelist only can do, he would have given more than the other two put together. He had a sufficiently just sense of family reputation, manufacturer as he was, to wish it to be transmitted free from blemish to posterity, and he would

have considered any sacrifice comparatively small to attain that end. So far as he himself was concerned, had he been the descendant of a line of princes (I mean hereditary princes) his family escutcheon need have feared no blot.

Some vague apprehension of this kind possessed Morton. I do not mean that he pursued any logical method of reasoning upon either the father or the son, or that he disposed of, in order, the motives which were likely to actuate the minds of these persons in estimating his merchandise. But there is a sturdy natural logic in most men, which arrives at conclusions without analysing the premises, and yet judges accurately on the whole. Such a precious rascal as Dan Morton is not likely to be deficient in this characteristic acuteness, uneducated though he be, any more than the most accomplished swindler, who speculates on your property in the most approved fashion; only he would have found greater difficulty in explaining his views. Be that as it may, he was as much puzzled what to do with his acquisition as Aristotle himself with his *αὐτοάνθρωπος*, or any other philosophical mind with an interminable proposition. It was for sale to the best bidder, but he hardly saw a means of crying his wares.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE HUNT BREAKFAST—LAURENCE BRADFIELD CULTIVATES THE COUNTRY GENTLEMEN.

"Ille ruit: spargitque canes, ut quisque ruenti
Obstat."—OVID, *Met.* Lib. viii.

IT was a magnificent morning. A soaking rain on the previous night made the country heavy and wet, every blade of grass hung weeping in the rank hedgerows, and the print of the horses' feet by the road side formed stagnant pools of water. The leafless branches of the trees were laden with moisture, and dropped in showers, as the light breeze from the south-east sighed through them. The furrows in

the fields were like water-courses, and the rich loam on the sparse fallows lay in sodden flakes unconscious of labour. The light fleecy clouds were now high, and moved with a perceptible breeze, while the sun here and there edged the broken lines of vapour in the east with a soft yellow tint, proclaiming the advent of a warmth more like early spring than winter.

About nine o'clock from the gates of the stable yard at Spring Vale, there went forth two servants, each riding a magnificent horse. The older of the two was a man of forty, or even more : a steady, sedate person, who rode along, low, chestnut horse, of a colour almost mahogany, and with only one white hind leg. It was the model of an English hunter, and he came out of the stable fresh and playful, arching his neck, and setting up his back, but obedient to the light hand of his rider, a quality not often found in grooms. Peters was the best second-horseman in the country. The boy who followed him was the neatest type of English groom. He was dressed in well-made leathers, and white-topped boots, a neatly brushed hat, with a very thin cord of gold, and a small golden acorn in front. He wore a cockade, a well folded white neckerchief, and a closely-buttoned chocolate frock-coat. He rode a lighter class of horse, showing more daylight, with apparently a turn more of speed than the chestnut. He was quite thoroughbred, a bright bay, and his action gave him the appearance of carrying as much weight as the other. Nothing carries weight like a combination of action and blood.

The weight, however, which was to be put upon these two, was not very great. They belonged to Stafford Carrington ; and if he was deficient in substance, he made up for it by quality. He never spared a horse as long as hounds were running ; but he never took a liberty that could not be justified by the necessities of the case. Put him down in a field by the side of hounds racing, be the vale never so stiff, no man could beat him. Give him a bad start on a cold scenting day, the wrong side of a large woodland, and no man ever used his brains to more purpose, or his horses with greater economy. He was a capital judge of pace, had an excellent eye to country, and from instinct and education a first-class sportsman, but—idle.

Lord Mentmore, who was at that moment eating eggs and bacon, in preference to *grenouilles à la poulette*, or *pâte de foie gras*, because he liked it, was a persevering steady sportsman of the old school. Everything he did was a little formed on the model of half-an-age earlier; and the consequence was a manner, a toilette, a tone which was more appreciated and talked of than followed.

"What do you ride to-day, Mentmore?" said Carrington.

"Beneventum; he's by Pyrrhus the First, a grand horse through dirt."

Then keep him for your second horse. We shall draw Clayborough this afternoon. There's a good fox there, that has brought us into this county twice without results."

"The other is a very fine four-year old, which I have never ridden yet. I meant to keep him out a few hours, and then send him home. What! Miss Carrington? are you going with us? I thought it was too far?"

"Not at all, Lord Mentmore. I can return when I'm tired."

"Where's Sir Michael?" asked Mentmore, after a pause.

Stafford Carrington blushed a little, and said, "My father's gone on; he has ridden his first horse to cover himself, and left his hack for me." Carrington spoke slowly and hesitatingly, as if he felt the necessity of some apology.

"By Jove, Carrington, what a man it is. I feel ashamed of myself, when I hear of such a thing. Upon my word, I feel inclined to walk to the meet. When are we going?"

"Rather too far off for a walk. To Fox Warren. The place belongs to one of the best fellows living, a retired sugar-refiner, or something of that sort; and a Whig; and yet old Everton is an universal favourite in spite of it all. That reminds me we must go in, for if we killed ourselves without a glass of sherry or cherry-brandy at the warren, he would never be happy again. He gives a breakfast when the hounds meet, of the dimensions of a sheriff's dinner."

Whilst the scene I have described was passing at

Spring Vale, something of the same kind was enacting at Sommerton.

Mr. and Mrs. Bradfield were seated at breakfast, and Ellen Bradfield was making tea for them. The door opened, and Laurence Bradfield walked into the room. Considering the county in which he lived, nothing could be more consistent than his costume; and exceedingly handsome he looked in it. He wore an almost unsullied scarlet coat, broad and loose, which concealed the very trifling defects of a figure a little too angular, but characteristic of great manliness and bodily strength. His leathers were irreproachable; and he presented the appearance of a well-dressed, but not fastidious sportsman. His horse, for he used but one to-day, was of the same fashion, and had been carefully sent on about the same time that those of Lord Mentmore and Stafford Carrington had left their respective homes. All his notions of hunting were rough and unformed. His general appearance was the effect of an instinct, which did not extend to the use of a second horse, so long as one would do. He had plenty to learn; but unfortunately he did not care sufficiently about the work to give it much consideration. He had neither the horsemanship, nor innate perception of the right thing which belonged to Stafford Carrington, nor the true indomitable sportsmanship of Mentmore. But he would as soon have gone out hunting without an intention of being with the hounds, as he would have gone into Parliament without a determination to do his duty there.

In fact he reminded me of the enthusiastic Frenchman, who, in describing his love for the chase, said: "Quand je vais à la chasse, je ne vois que la bête que je poursuis: je crois que j'écraserais mon père sur la route: le Bon Dieu lui-même n'y serait pour rien."

"Are you hunting, Laurence?" Abel Bradfield spoke with some asperity. He suddenly remembered that he had not hunted at that age; and was moreover vexed that his son had so far enfranchised himself by getting into Parliament, as to be a little beyond the pale of personal vituperation. These are feelings common to many minds larger than his.

"It looks like it, Sir, at all events."

"I can't see any object, now, that you can have, in keep-

ing alive your interests in this county. You have already handed them over to Mr. Carrington."

"So you do not see, that a man might chance to hunt from some other motive than the desire of popularity?"

"At all events, it ought to supersede the ambition of following a pack of nasty dogs."

"Nasty dogs are very useful in other pursuits, besides that of the fox. No sugar, Ellen, thank you." Laurence retained the softest of smiles while he spoke.

"How long have you thought it consistent with your duties to become a sportsman, Laurence? Something new, I think?"

"Not entirely. However, be comforted, my dear Sir; I am making a personal sacrifice to the country gentlemen's party. *Ecce signum*, said he," pointing to the scarlet coat, which had attracted his father's attention, with about the same result as a red flag does a bull.

"It is a very dangerous amusement for inexperienced people." Mrs. Bradfield looked from her son to her husband with a little apprehension.

"But I am trying to remedy that possible deficiency."

"I trust you won't join the country party altogether."

"I trust not, Sir; but no man can tell what may happen to him, or—to the times he lives in. I confess to finding some virtues even in Stafford Carrington."

If anyone had looked up at the moment he might have seen on Ellen Bradfield's face a faint change of colour at this unlooked-for-announcement. As her father proceeded, he might have seen a flush of pride or triumph change to a set pallor, which she hid behind "The Times" newspaper and the urn.

"I desire," said his father, rising suddenly and demolishing a favourite cup and saucer, "I desire that that name is mentioned before me as seldom as possible. As you seem to be about to ring, you had better order the pony for me—I have business in Saxonby."

Shortly after, Laurence Bradfield's hack, a strong, active horse, that looked small under him, was brought to the door, and he departed for the warren.

Mr. and Mrs. Everton, of Fox Warren, were excellent people, of middle age and large property. He was a retired

sugar-refiner; she the daughter of a wealthy tanner in Bermondsey, who had bestowed upon his child every advantage but that of high birth and personal beauty. He began life as a sugar-refiner's boy, and industry and honesty made him a man of substance before the close of his eighth lustre.

When a man has made a very large fortune, he has usually some ambition connected with its expenditure. As Mr. Everton had been born in London, and never quitted it, it is but natural that he should have become enamoured of the country and everything connected with it. Of all things earthly, too, he loved a horse. This was an unfortunate taste for his wife, who had vast projects of parliamentary ambition, and desired to be the head of a select coterie of literary ladies, who should exercise the same influence over politics by their brains which some are said to have done by their charms.

The next best thing to creating a position as you like, is the turning those circumstances which exist to your own advantage. When, therefore, her husband determined upon buying a place in the country, she set to work to cultivate a talent for horse language and the science of the turf and the chase, which are not natural to many women, and which sit uneasily upon almost all. First he tried racing. He bought a string of horses which he seldom saw; he sent them to a trainer whom he did not know; and he ran them for stakes which they never won. He made a vast acquaintance amongst owners, which included the highest nobility, the professions, trades, and the very dregs of society, but few of the upper-class gentlemen, the squirearchy of England, at which he was exceedingly disappointed. It was to this class he aspired to belong. On the turf, he soon ascertained that he was too honest for his company. Having made what he had by his integrity, he was likely to lose it again by the same means. It was a curious illustration of the characteristics of the commercial and racing world, the professional and amateur gambler. In the former, he was told that he could win to a certainty by honourable speculation, and he did so; in the latter, that inevitablo grief awaited honest enterprise, and he found that it was so. As Everton could not condescend to bribe jockeys, to tout for information, to pull

horses, nor to associate with blacklegs, and as he verily believed the truth of the proverb, "Qui facit per alium, facit per se," although he did not understand it, he soon gave up racing. He sold his horses, who never could win a plate, and three weeks after their new owner had cleared twenty-seven hundred pounds in stakes alone.

The Bramble-and-Stubbs foxhounds were about to be given up. They have the vilest country in England, a great persecution of foxes by strychnine and arsenic, and a liberal unpaid subscription to contend with. Everton arrived in the country, and took a house. He was as generous about the hounds as he had been about his horses. The first year he paid all the covers, which meant the whole of the country; the second season he paid for everything; and the third he took the hounds on his own hands, relieving the committee of debts and difficulties, and acting with the liberality of a well-born gentleman. In another year he gave them up, having gained some knowledge of the pleasures of hunting, and the pains of an eminent position as an M. F. H.

The soul of John Everton was, however, above buttons; and, as hunt he must, he determined upon something better than the Bramble-and-Stubbs country for a permanency He came to ——shire, bought a noble property, built a very fine house, erected excellent stables, and filled them with horses, on which he was always mounting his friends. Every poor fellow who loved hunting, and had no money, was sure to find a welcome and an empty saddle at John Everton's. He built schools, endowed churches, bought livings to give away to poor curates, and lent money on I. O. U.'s to such an extent as to confound the money-lenders and to drive the Jews to distraction. He had a good round stomach of his own, but his heart was large enough for a dozen such.

And Mrs. Everton was very like him. She loved to help him do good; she had all sorts of hangers on—motherless girls and distant relations—whom she carried about, and dressed, and for whom, with a womanly instinct, she provided husbands.

If Mr. and Mrs. Everton had a passion, it was for filling their house, and the peculiar form it took during the winter was a hunt breakfast. Whenever the hounds met

at Fox Warren, and that was pretty often, for it was a certain find, there was a great occasion which they took care to improve. Hunt breakfasts are not at all the correct thing, especially in ——shire. Such things had never been known. A glass of beer to the servants, a glass of sherry to two or three dozen acquaintances, and a dry biscuit, is as much as is offered, and more than is usually wanted. But John Everton, Gent., would not be denied; and he really was so good a fellow, so kind, so hospitable, that nobody thought of giving him the cold shoulder, or letting him feel guilty of a solecism.

The present was one of these grand occasions. Everybody said, "What a bore!" but was not the less determined to hand his horse over to a groom for ten minutes, taste Mrs. Everton's spiced beef, drink one glass of cherry-brandy, and be off again.

"Here comes somebody, my dear," said the ex-sugar-refiner, looking out of a noble window on to the extensive park. "Where are my glasses? I'm blind as a bat. Ah! it's Tom Boulter. Capital fellow that! some pleasure in seeing him."

When Mr. Boulter entered, he proved to be a fine-looking man of about fifty, formerly in a heavy-dragoon regiment, and very good in the saddle. Having ridden some distance, he merited the eulogium passed on him by the appetite with which he attacked various dainties and a cup of chocolate, winding up with some excellent brown sherry. The master was not long after him, and drew up at the door of the house in an old-fashioned, comfortable sort of buggy. His cheerful voice rang out a hearty salutation to the host, who met him on the steps. He was surrounded in a few minutes by twenty of his admirers, and made his way to the breakfast-table, where all the women felt inclined to quarrel with the one who occupied the seat next that into which he had leisurely dropped.

Then came Lord Boldthrow, in a very neat phaeton: a sporting young nobleman whose salvation from utter ruin mainly depended on his love of fox-hunting. His early hours and hard riding from November to April were a brilliant contrast to his hard living and midnight revelry from May to August.

The Reverend Walter Carrington swung himself from a lengthy thoroughbred one at the door, and handed him over to one of the numerous retainers, supposed to be an Irishman, who addressed the worthy divine as "His Rivirence." Nothing could be more sportsmanlike or quiet than his well-tied white neckcloth, his long black waistcoat and broad-skirted dress-coat, his well brushed hat (I like a good hat out hunting of all things), and his loose, well-cleaned leathers and cream-coloured tops. His curate and he were under a tacit obligation never to be out of the parish together.

Joskins, the great short-horn man, came in to taste the tap at the pressing instance of the master of the house, "the very best fox preserver in the country, squire; feeds them with his wife's pet Dorkings when she goes to visit her mother." Being twenty stone, he was mounted on a strong pony.

"How are you, Mrs. Reynard?" said the squire, as that lady entered the room, followed by a small, well-got-up man, in a very neat overcoat, with much more of the gentleman-rider about him than the rough-and-ready sportsman. He looked all cutting-whip and patent leather, that is, as much as there was of him.

"How are you, Mrs. Reynard?" said the host at the same moment; "delighted to see you. And where's Reynard?"

"Here he is, Mr. Everton," replied the lady, getting on one side and admitting her lesser half to view

Major-general Reynard made his bow, and retired at once to the ladies' end of the table, where he paid devoted attention to one of Mrs. Everton's *protégées* and the teapot.

"Looks like a hunting morning, Ma'am," said Joskins.

"And the ground nice and soft," added Tom Boulter.

"I hope I shall find it so," rejoined Mrs. Reynard; "for I've been obliged to lend Reynard the only horse I have fit to go, and I'm on a raw four-year-old myself."

"I should have let him have that."

"Bless your soul! Mr. Everton; he'd only kill himself. I've ordered him home early to-day, to give that Cotherstone horse of mine a gallop this afternoon; he's going for the Cropperham Steeplechase the day after to-morrow, and I haven't time to look after him and the boy too.

It's a very fortunate thing for me that the general keeps his weight so well. If he pulls down more than eight stone I don't know where I shall find an honest boy again."

Here Mrs. Reynard sighed deeply, and held out her glass to the master of the hounds for some sherry.

"You don't mean to say that they're so bad as all that comes to, Mrs. Reynard," said George Cressingham, a racing man, who sat opposite, and was indulging in *pâté de foie gras*, from which nothing but racing could have diverted his attention.

"I believe Reynard's the only honest man I have about me. I'm sure I never know the secrets of a gallop unless he's up."

"Then lend him to me, I want a trial to-morrow; pray do, Mrs. Reynard."

"What, to try Slaughterer? certainly not, Mr. Cressingham; he would run away with him as he did with young Loftus."

"That was Loftus's fault."

"I'll come and ride him myself for you, if you like."

"And not say anything about the result, Mrs. Reynard. I shall be delighted."

"Ah! Trumps, is that you? Is St. James's burnt down?" said the master to that gallant young officer, who walked into the breakfast-room at this juncture, having had a fall over some rails on his road to cover. As he justly observed, every hack ought to know how to jump, it saves so much time.

"No: but Courtnay has gone on duty."

"Where are you?"

"I came by train this morning, and joined Carrington and Mentmore. They'll be here in a minute, but they would come round by the bridle road."

"Then if Carrington's nearly here we ought to be drawing for our first fox. Here's Bradfield: how are you?"

"Very well, thank you. How do you do, Mr. Everton?" said that young man, applying himself to the sherry.

"Miss Bradfield not coming to-day?"

"Not to-day—it's rather too far," and Bradfield warmed himself in a gentlemanly way.

"Here's Wright Scampington. That's a good book of

his," said Mrs. Reynard, "only a little too much hunting talk in it."

"Men will talk about hunting in hunting countries; and it is something in a book to find men talking about what their readers can understand."

"The critics are severe upon it," observed old Langsam, who had once tried his hand at literature and signally failed; "there are some very just remarks in 'The Revolver.'"

"I admire criticism immensely," said Trumps; "it's like shooting at a fellow from behind a stone wall."

"It is unpleasant to be the object of that sort of attack," said Mr. Everton.

"A man may admire a thing without any personal liking for it. However, he may write sport without much fear of the critics. They know nothing about it."

"That makes them the more difficult to satisfy."

"That's a remarkably good horse of yours, Benfield; that big bay horse with curby hocks," said Mr. Trumps, with a view to buying him.

"He is a good horse, captain, and has not curby hocks."

"Perhaps not. He carries *you* exceedingly well."

"And I hope he'll continue to do so," said Mr. Benfield, with a cheerful smile.

This ended that part of the conversation. If Mr. Trumps was wrong about the critics he may well be excused for knowing nothing about them. In the meantime the subject of these remarks entered the room, shaking everybody by the hand; evidently the popular man of the neighbourhood. The ladies all declared they were afraid of him; that is why they paid him such marked attention, I presume.

Wright Scampington had every advantage; good looks, good birth, good manners, good health, and good nerves; but he had no money. He had had one of those light flimsy educations to be got best at Eton and Harrow by an idle boy, of good abilities. He profited by it immensely to put clever quotations into his books; and it gave his English that sort of grammatical correctness which can seldom be achieved by women or self-educated men. He was essentially a man of light reading; spoke French with a certain facility, much better than he wrote it; knew some-

thing of German, and its literature, by name; always spoke of Dante as "the Sublime," and believed him to be so; of Hooker as "the Judicious," and had the same faith in him. Nobody thought he had any money, but everybody regarded his power to get it as certain, and treated him with that distinction which is shown to genius in the abstract. He accepted compliments on his books, mounts, invitations, and credit for knowledge which he knew he possessed not, but which he repaid from a fund of good humour, wit, *bonhomie*, and self-complacency, and with a small change of the very purest coinage of what he did know. I should like to have seen an encounter between my friend Wright Scampington and Doctor Johnson; I believe the great lexicographer would have retired stuck full of pins before he could have got one good thrust at his agile adversary.

"When are you coming to me, Scampington?" inquired Lord Boldthrow, rising with a dry biscuit in his hand, and looking for his hat.

"My dear fellow, that's rather good; how could I know I was wanted?"

"You promised me a visit the beginning of the season, at any rate."

"What's the use?—I've no horses."

"That's so like you. What's your weight, thirteen stone?"

"In the saddle rather under it."

"I can manage to put you up; come on Monday for a week—include Monday. The hounds are coming to Thrustingfield."

"'Pon my soul, that's exceedingly——," here Mrs. Reynard broke silence.

"But Mr. Scampington, Reynard expects you; and we shall be so disappointed if you don't come before the frost. I know we must have a frost soon, and the stud is pretty strong now; you don't mind riding young ones, I know."

"My dear Mrs. Reynard, I know how kind the general was, and if you have room and horse-flesh I shall be delighted, after my visit to Boldthrow."

"Then that's settled," said she. "Precisely," said he; and they both got up.

It may seem curious to the uninitiated, but there was not a more effeminate, lady-like person than Mrs. Reynard, out

of a hat and habit. She was accomplished, handsome, well-dressed, kind, and actively benevolent in her neighbourhood. A good wife, and had she been a mother, perhaps she would have been more like a woman. Nature had denied her that privilege, so she took to horse-flesh by her husband's example. She soon mastered the difficulties of that mysterious subject, and rode like a demon; far harder than he.

"Lord Mentmore and Mr. Carrington," said a splendidly decorated flunky, while the butler walked up to Mrs. Everton at the same moment and announced the carriage. The new arrivals were greeted as usual. Lord Mentmore was presented to the lady and the master of the house, to whom he made suitable acknowledgments for their welcome, but declined to sit down. Stafford Carrington broke off a crust of bread, and helped himself to wine. Mr. Everton was speeding the parting guests, while the master of the hounds continued to give every information in his power to the young ladies for their proposed excursion.

"Impossible, impossible to miss us; easiest road in the world to find, and the most accommodating foxes; sure to come this way."

"Oh! my dear Mr. Gornaway;" said the simple-minded hostess, "the very last time he went right in the opposite direction."

"Ah! I know he did—but he won't do it again!" replied the master.

"But why not?" continued the lady, looking for her husband, or some one to help her in her difficulties.

"Because we killed him for it. But come, Mrs. Everton, I know you ladies are impatient. As to Carrington, he'd sit here for ever; he has no sort of sympathy with the sex. Let me see you to your carriage, and then we'll make a start of it."

"Isn't he charming, Mary?"

"Delightful! So handsome, and such fun, dear!"

"Yes; and so clever, they say. Can do everything. What a pity he's spent all his money!"

"Well, now, that's what I like about him so much; for he had such a quantity, they say, that it must have been awfully difficult."

"Aunty, dear, isn't he a love?"

"Quite irresistible, my dears!" said aunt, laughing; "and now we'll go on."

They were an exceedingly merry party. The only unhappy person was Mr. Everton himself, who, when he looked at the table and the plates, was quite disappointed that his friends had not done more execution.

"Mornin', my lord—mornin', Sir. Yes, that's a neat hound. Here, come here, bitch; Bonnybell, Bonnybell!" at the same time pointing to her with the crop of his whip. "She's out of the Duke of Beaufort's kennel. Very useful hound that, too, my lord. Dairymaid, Dairymaid. No; there; that blue-pied hound—good legs and feet." And seeing that Lord Mentmore was fond of a hound, which is somewhat rare with our modern youth, and a judge of a hound, which is still rarer, Will Staples set to work to expatiate on his favourites, while the crowd rode up and down, smoking their cigars, and seeing nothing to admire so much as their own boots and breeches.

"Now, Will, are you ready? We'll draw the osier-bed first," said Mr. Gornaway, as he rode up towards the group, which consisted of huntsmen, whips, two or three kennel servants, a second horseman or two, a first-class horse-breeding farmer—such as every man likes to see in his hunt—old Joskins, and Lord Mentmore.

"All right, Sir," said Will, touching his cap; and turning round in his saddle, and giving a look to his whips, he jogged off to the other end of the park, accompanied by about a hundred and fifty horsemen of various qualities as to sport and position.

The carriage pursued its way along the park, and outside of the lodge gates, where, turning to the right, into the turnpike-road, the ladies took up a fine position for heading the fox, as well as for seeing the fun.

"Yo-oi, in there; yo-oi, good beetches!" said Will, as he waved his hand to some young hounds, that were rather slack; at the same time jumping his horse into the cover, by way of encouragement.

"Get to him," said Mr. Trumps, with a smart application of the thong, which had the desired effect.

It was a principle of Trumps', that no one thing was meant to be idle. He, himself, was the most active and energetic of guardsmen; when he was not travelling in

the East, or dancing at the Queen's balls, he was usually riding steeple-chases or running races at Copenhagen House, where he could give Walker, the twopenny postman, one yard in a hundred, and win with something handsome in hand.

While Will Staples was drawing the osier-bed, the field had scattered itself, according to its inclination. Some discussed the weather, the Saxonby ball gone by, and the —— ball to come, the breakfast, their horses, the fit of a pair of breeches, the beauty of Mrs. Reynard, the weight of Joskins, the wealth of Mentmore, the horsemanship of Carrington, and the last work of Wright Scampington.

"Scampington, old fellow," said Trumps, walking his horse round the forbidden corner of the cover, "why the deuce do all you literary coves wear black butcher boots instead of tops? Parson Smith does just the same since he's taken to novel writing.

"It's in order to dabble in ink without detection," said Wright Scampington.

Some were lighting cigars.

"No fox here," says Jones. "Give us a light, Robinson."

Some were on the look-out for horses, and talking to Barnum, the great dealer, or watching James Mason, on a young one, and wondering whether he would be as temperate with them. A few were tightening their girths, and straining their ears to catch the first symptom of a note proclamatory of a find. Suddenly a prolonged scream from the farther corner put them all in motion; and, as if there were a dozen ways to get to the hounds, they fled, some in one direction, some in another. Not a corner of the late *al fresco* coffee-room remained tenanted.

A vast majority wisely chose the road, up which they went *ventre à terre*, many hoping to see the hounds gone away in front, thus furnishing an excuse for further macadamising. They were doomed to be disappointed. Not a hound had had time to get out of cover. The first thing out of the osier-bed was Stafford Carrington, who, however, upon seeing the state of things, pulled up his horse, while Will Staples, horn in one hand and horse in the other, crashed through a piece of rotten fencing, shouting—"Hold hard, gentlemen, pray hold hard, Mr. Carrington;" without seeing anybody, but with an instinctive knowledge

of what was going to happen. The gate out of the turnpike-road swung open, and about fifty persons availed themselves of the privilege of a start before any hounds at all, who were threading their way, with a courage only belonging to a foxhound, amongst the horses, which had clustered about Will Staples' heels.

"That's right, gentlemen; spile yer own sport, as usual. Come up, oss!" With which adjuration to his horse, and a toot-toot on his horn, he settled himself in his saddle, and away he went on to the line of his fox, at a pace which showed he was not afraid to gallop.

The fields are large, thirty, forty, and fifty acres; and before the hounds have reached the hedgerow, they have laid themselves down to their work. There is a rush for the large white gate, and the man who first reaches it finds a score of old ewes against it, which refuse to move. When they have been ousted, their place is supplied by impatient cavalry from the rear, and the gentlemen are requested "to stand back a bit." At length the gate is opened, and the hounds are descried already, by this short delay, three hundred years a-head, having improved the occasion to get clear of the crowd. While the field on the left were pointing after old Joskins, through a beautiful line of white gates, which extended for miles, and which they seemed determined to follow, whatever became of the hounds, and while the roadsters stuck with great moral courage to Colonel Slowcome, of the militia, who every now and then pulled up to listen, with the air of a profound sportsman, the select few who had followed Stafford Carrington through the cover, or Captain Trumps and Laurence Bradfield round its right-hand corner, were enjoying the pleasures of something fast, if it was not to be long. The second fence in the line of the hounds was an oxer, of the most unmitigated severity—a broad and deep ditch, a thickly-laid fence, and a stiff rail about four or five feet beyond. Stafford Carrington knew it, and came down to it at a good hunting pace, holding his bright bay thoroughbred one tightly by the head; as he neared it he squeezed his horse, and giving him one sharp touch of the spur took it in his stride, looking neither to the right nor left. Three or four yards to his right Captain Trumps, being deficient in weight, cut a summersault into the next field, where, when tired of standing on his head, he fell flat

on his back. Laurence Bradfield went crash into the rails, cracking them by his weight as if they were touchwood; and Lord Mentmore followed him, having eased his horse when he saw the nature of the obstacle. Twenty more found an exit through the same hole, some of them wishing they had not been so adventurous; and others, encouraged by the chapter of accidents to proceed, headed by the first whip, who never stood much in need of encouragement to be out of his place—he dearly loved a run. Will Staples, on the left of Stafford Carrington, had made a double of it in a weak part of the fence, indulging a groom with a decided crowner, who was not blessed with the best head in the world—they none of them are.

"Over the hill to the right, Will," shouted Carrington. "Look at the sheep. There's a man with his hat off."

"Let 'em alone, Carrington; they're on the line; they'll soon have it again," said Mr. Gornaway; and he had hardly spoken before Merrylass opened once, and went away, followed by the whole pack.

Crash went the bullfinch, letting young Bradfield through, with a heavy mistake, into a green lane, in which he saved his horse; and pulling him together, without stopping, he sent him at the fence on the opposite side.

"Bravo!" shouted Sir Michael, who came galloping down the lane entirely by himself; "Bravo! I always said I was too light for this country. That would have turned over Stafford;" and halting at the next gate, he let himself through.

The pace to the top of the hill had been so severe that, though only four miles, the field might have been counted. The fencing, too, had been stiff, excepting out of the fallows, of which they had crossed two in the vale. Lord Mentmore had come the shortest way, but his horse had refused the fence out of the lane, and had not been persuaded to get over till the third attempt. Stafford Carrington had had the best of it, and Laurence Bradfield was within thirty-yards of him. Captain Trumps had reappeared after his fall, taking advantage of his light weight to ride a spurt; Gornaway was in his right place, and Will Staples was watching his hounds, as if the fate of Denmark depended upon Bonnybell.

"They've overrun it a bit—we'll sink the hill," and away he trotted. He had hardly turned in his saddle, when a

view-hallo from the valley showed him the line by Westerby Pastures for Killingham Gorse, into the covers at Spring Vale. "Six miles as the crow flies, and not a cover between as would hold a mouse for five minutes; forward on! forward on!" and he descended the hill at his best pace, followed by about thirty, who had benefited by the check to arrive. The gate at the bottom was held open by a young gentleman with a pitchfork. If his taste for sport was measured by his apparent admiration of its votaries, he might have been an embryo Osbaldiston; he stared, open-mouthed, at the red coats and leather breeches, and allowed nothing but sixpence and some coppers to recall him to himself.

The lane into which they had descended was choked with the steam of a hundred and fifty horses and horsemen. Most of those who had not seen a yard of it were describing graphically to their friends the line, the stiffness of the country, and insinuating, rather than asserting, their individual progress. Mrs. Reynard honestly admitted that she had not seen a yard of it, but she intended to make up for lost time. Jones missed them at the lane. Parson Smith, who was really pretty good, when he had a fiddle he could play upon, as Trumps called it, never got away. Everton had turned to the left, instead of the right, after crossing the lane.

"Tremendous fence out of that large grass field," said Boulter, who had never been near it, though a hardish man at times.

"Ya-as," said young Spoons, of the Buglers, "I follared Bradfield;" but he forgot to add that it was made as easy by that time as the passage of the Red Sea.

"Mentmore went it like a bird; why, Trumps has been down!"

"Of course he has; he's always down. I don't call that riding."

"You never fall, Jenkins; take devilish good care of that." Jenkins very properly did not deign a reply.

While this sort of conversation was going on, which, as it took place all at the same time, only occupied a minute, both Carrington and Mentmore were so fortunate as to alight on their second horses, with several more. Laurence Bradfield was out of the saddle in no time, and down the hill leading his horse through the gate. As Will Staples whipped

through on the opposite side, the latter stole a march down the lane, and riding parallel with the hounds, which began to run again, turned in upon them at the second field, thus saving himself a stiff pleached fence, over which our friend Jenkins, emulous of Trumps, crowned in the most unmerciful manner. As Bradfield nicked into the run, he saw Carrington still leading, and Lord Mentmore in close attendance upon him, but not taking liberties. For a couple of miles, several men went well. Wright Scampington began to show in front, as some others knocked off. Trumps was going manifestly in difficulty, but not to be denied. Sir Michael, on what he called a jumping hack, was leading a division that was indebted to his pilotage for being anywhere. The scent was improving every second, and the roadsters were hopelessly cut off. On looking back might be seen those who were only childishly daring. They had neither courage to refuse nor to go on. The country got wilder and wilder; the fences more uncompromising, and in many places made up with stiff timber and an open watercourse, for these were pasture grounds low and rank. The fox had left one line of hills, and was making for another. It was not a day favourable to impostors; and if——shire is not favoured with more than other counties, it has its share.

It was now a clear case of death in the covers at Spring Vale.

"Are the earths open, Carrington?" shouted Gornaway, putting his head straight for some rails, with a ditch on the far side, into which he dropped his hind legs suspiciously.

"I think not," replied the other, who held his own. "We thought it likely you might draw our way for an afternoon fox."

"We're very likely to if we go on this way; if you've any more horses I shall want to borrow one."

"You won't get as far," said Lord Mentmore, who pulled open a gate to let Will Staples through, "unless Spring Vale is nearer than I think."

In the next fence Trumps was obliged to give up. The decayed steeplechaser was not proof against the boggy nature of the ground through which he had come, and having jammed his head into the fence, with his fore-legs in the ditch above his arms, he allowed the captain to alight quietly, which he did, and immediately lighted a cigar.

"Quite done, captain," said Parson Smith, as he rode over by the side of him and tumbled on landing, but recovered himself and resumed his journey at diminished speed.

Mrs. Reynard had betaken herself to the gates, and followed Sir Michael. Boulter, Everton, and about six more were on very bad terms with the hounds, but might be said to be in it, if a lucky check could be brought about. There was no such thing—not a ghost of it. Wright Scampington was playing second fiddle, but as he was riding a thirty-pounder there was but little disgrace attached to his place.

The hounds were now out of the wet lands in the bottom, and were beginning to ascend the gentle slopes which led to Spring Vale. Stafford Carrington rode with manifest advantage from his knowledge of the country; every fence was familiar to him, but two or three still stuck manfully to his skirts. The hounds were quite mute; and the silence which reigned around declared the earnestness of the pursuit. Will Staples, who had not got his second horse, followed at a respectful distance. The hounds stood in no need of assistance. Every hundred yards increased the interval between Stafford Carrington and those who had gone thus far in the first flight. One alone he could hear ominously crushing into the fences not far behind. The difference between the two men was manifest. One was going over a country and the other through it; but a really good man with sufficient weight, who goes into his fences, is a dangerous rival. Of course it could be no other than Lord Mentmore. Every fence proclaimed the vicinity of his friend as it splintered and flew ten lengths behind him. His own horse, the chestnut, had been pushed to his best pace, and though he continued to jump, he was occasionally a little short. He rode him well, as well as bravely; but as they ascended another slope within half a mile of his father's covers, he thought discretion the better part of valour, and stopped to open a gate; as he swung it back on its hinges to give his friend a chance of following, he saw that he never altered his course. Pulling his horse together, and stopping his pace, Bradfield, and not Mentmore, jumped into a strong blackthorn ten yards to his left, and before he could set the chestnut going again, he had lost the lead. Within two or three minutes the hounds were in the cover, and Laurence Bradfield stopped in hopeless

despair, as ignorant of his road, as if he had been put down on Wimbledon Common in a November fog.

"This way—this way," said Carrington, bending away to the right, and trotting his horse round the outside of the spinney. Laurence Bradfield followed at diminished speed, both hoping, indeed believing, that here they were to finish.

In a moment, however, the dread truth revealed itself to them. The hounds had changed foxes, and there was no one there to stop them. The change, however, had given them time to get a pull at their horses; and as the hounds now turned short to the right, and began to hunt, they both at once made up their minds. The covers at Sommerton were but a short two miles, and they would get as far as that, if there was virtue in horseflesh, and indomitable perseverance. They had a good share of both.

To these two men the run had its interest, apart from the sport. Until the last few minutes the chase alone had warmed Stafford Carrington, and he was even happy in the idea that his triumph would be shared by Mentmore. When he found it was Laurence Bradfield who had so gallantly kept his place, his admiration, though sincere, was tinged with jealousy, and he determined to beat him. Laurence Bradfield had been accustomed to regard the performances of his neighbour in the saddle as a part of the man. Nothing in that way would have astonished him. He was prepared to believe all he had heard, and what he had occasionally seen confirmed his reputation. Stafford Carrington, on the contrary, had hitherto held the meanest opinion of his companion's prowess, and was the more chafed at being beaten by one whom he knew to be wanting in experience, but whom he found to be in every other respect worthy of his rivalry. A mile remained to the covers at Sommerton, where the earths were sure to be open. The change of foxes had not improved the scent, and already, within easy distance, men seemed to be dropping from this road or that lane who had been out of the last three miles, and had ridden for a nick. Bradfield and Carrington were alone with the hounds.

Running in the bottom below the covers at Sommerton was a brook. A line of alders pointed out the spot. It was no great size, perhaps twelve feet of water; but when hounds have been running for an hour and ten minutes with scarcely

a moment's check, the men that have gone through the run may be excused for a doubt as to the certainty of getting over. Both men knew the place. It was deep, and not very good landing. But when men feel for each other a certain amount of admiration, which produces emulation without begetting personal regard, they are sure to try to break each other's necks. There was nothing so likely to settle all pretensions as the brook; and as the hounds dragged their wet sterns up the bank and shook themselves, Stafford Carrington had made up his mind that, if he got wet, he would hang his pertinacious companion up to dry. They were side by side, and both raced down to the water.

The rest of the field now dwindled down to some thirty, who had been favoured by circumstances, had ridden into the road to trot on to the covers towards which the hounds were running, and which would probably finish the run of the season. A few pulled up within sight of the brook, and the villagers, whose houses looked on to the large grass field in which they were, shouted with delight. A few idle fellows had left their work, and were lounging about in the village, in hopes of a job of some kind.

"Stick to him!" shouted a bystander, as the chestnut horse with Stafford Carrington rushed at the bank. His fore-legs were over, but there was no footing for him behind, and as his hind-quarters sank into the stream, Carrington and his horse disappeared from sight altogether. At the same moment, Laurence Bradfield's horse got clear of the water, but, being nearly beat, fell heavily on the other side, giving his rider an awkward fall. He was up again in a minute.

"He'll be drowned!" shouted the women out of the windows, and out of hearing.

"Bear a hand here, Job!" shouted the men, and four or five rushed down towards the water's edge, too late to be of any service of course.

The first thing Bradfield saw was the hopeless state of Carrington's horse and himself, as he endeavoured to clamber out with the bridle still in his hand. Had the instincts of fox-hunting been strong in his nature as in that of many—had a tinge of Red Indian blood ever coursed through the veins of his forefathers—he must have remounted, and ridden straight up to the park-wall which lay before him. But he

did nothing of the sort. His triumph was of a different kind. Leaving the reins on his horse's neck, who seemed glad enough to stand still, he went straight to his neighbour to help him in his difficulties, having first pulled out his own stirrup-leathers. Throwing Carrington a stirrup, he was not long in landing him safely, and then following the advice of the latter as to the mode of running his leather through the other's girth, while Stafford Carrington held his head above the water, they were not long before they pulled up the white-legged chestnut on to the bank. Having seen him safe in the hands of the yokels, who had assembled in force, he slipped on to his own horse, and proceeded to join the hounds, horses, and men who were clustered at the wall-side clamouring for admittance.

Here a little difficulty occurred. We have said the park was surrounded by a most ominous wall; and ingress was decidedly difficult, if egress was not easy. The hounds had run their fox up to the wall, and he had evidently made his way through a meuse for the admission of the hares, which went out to feed. Loud and angry was the knocking, and curt and sententious the dialogue.

"Now, Will, who does this place belong to?" said Mr. Gornaway.

"Darned if I know—some mad doctor, I 'spose," replied Will, a little out of temper. "Here, let's come," and jumping off his tired horse, he procceded to break the lock of a door in the wall with his hunting-whip. Not succeeding, he had driven in a panel with an enormous fragment of wall he had picked up, and was proceeding still further in the work of destruction, when a rather authoritative voice desired him to "hold hard," and wanted to know what he was "about," at the same time fumbling at the lock.

"About breaking the door down, d— your eyes;" and at that moment the door opening, Mr. Staples marched in, leading his horse, as if the property were his own.

A huntsman to a crack pack of hounds, after a good run, is a privileged person, and very justly so.

"Do you know who I am, Sir?" said Abel Bradfield, crimson with rage; while Will, who saw his hounds at work, began to mount his horse, the remainder of the field following his example.

"Yes, I do; I 'spose you're the blackguard as traps our

foxes, as is bred in these covers, for we never find any here."

"I'm Mr. Bradfield, you scoundrel, and——"

"Are you? Well, I'd rather be a maggot in a nut than such an ill-conditioned old beggar;" with which polite speech Mr. William Staples galloped after his hounds, and, turning to the left, jumped a stiff hog-backed stile into the cover, which echoed with the music of the hounds.

Mr. Gornaway, Parson Smith, Wright Scampington, and some more took the right-hand side of the cover; while Lord Mentmore, Mrs. Reynard, and their followers galloped down to the left, along the inside of the park-wall. The hounds were running hard in cover, the check and delay had given new life to the horses, the belief that this was the original fox, and that he must be killed before he could leave the domain, encouraged all. Lord Mentmore stood up in his stirrups and eased him along the grass, believing that the end was at hand, when his horse putting both his fore-feet into a covered drain, without an effort to recover himself rolled head over heels, completely burying his rider under him in his fall.

When Laurence Bradfield returned to his horse after helping Stafford Carrington out of the brook, he found him in the custody of a face which reminded him of his struggle on the night of the ball. Mr. Dan Morton was acting as his groom; he gave him a shilling, and without attempting to catch the hounds, which he saw had got into the park, trotted sharply on to the lodge-gate, turning over in his mind the slight acquaintance which he had made with those great red whiskers and that heavy form, and feeling much convinced that that was the man, whatever he might have wanted at the Hall. He rode past the house quickly towards the cover, at the end of the park; and on his way he met a crowd of red and black coats, attended by four or five men on horseback. They were carrying the apparently lifeless body of Lord Mentmore towards the house. He looked sadly on the beautiful face, suppressed a choking sensation in his throat, and galloped back to make the necessary preparations for his friend.

CHAPTER XX.

ABEL BRADFIELD CATCHES A TARTAR BEFORE HEADING THE FOX.

"Two of a trade never agree."

On the same morning that Mr. Everton had opened his hospitable doors to the sporting *élite* of ——shire, and just about the time that Laurence Bradfield had reached the hounds, Mr. Hugh Darville sat in his easy-chair in his offices in Saxonby. Whether it was an *easy* chair or not is a matter of some question. He had some new and difficult electioneering business in hand; he was conscious that he was on ticklish ground with the road surveyors on a question of drainage; he had lately received an unequivocal symptom or two that an "esteemed client" was in hot water, in which he had a finger; and he had a touch of incipient gout.

The room in which he sat was well calculated to inspire the ignorant with a just appreciation of the terrors of law, and the difficulties of justice. He had before him a large leather-covered table, on which were laid ominous looking papers tied with red tape; covenants, leases, indictments, cases, Smith *v.* Jones, Brown *v.* Robinson. Round the room were ranged tin boxes, bearing the names of the best families in the county. Hugh Darville's *clientela* was no common one. The shelves bristled with volumes bound in white calf, lettered and labelled in various manners, but all betokening deep research and heavy practice. Darville's was a common face, and not uncommon character. Circumstances had acted on the latter more powerfully than on the former. It retained the roundness of youth without its freshness. Lines were deep and frequent about the eyes and forehead. The latter was broad but not high, and the head bald, sprinkled sparsely with short grey hairs. His figure was inclined to stoutness, without being ungainly. His mouth was generous, impulsive, but sensual; his eyes were indicative of an artificial cunning, and an instinctive fear. They seemed to look behind him.

He was acute, without being intelligent. He was liberal in money, which he made rapidly and spent lavishly, with some selfishness. Who does not? He liked to do good; and he liked the credit of it. He had much tact, and had he been better educated would have been more formidable; but a certain coarseness robbed him of his power and influence, excepting with those who required his services.

His chief clients, and not to make use of an anomalous latinism, his chief patrons, were Sir Michael Carrington and Abel Bradfield. He received the rents of both; he managed the estates of both (as far as the latter trusted anybody to do his business); he was a counsellor to both in their troubles; and was supposed to know more of the secrets of both almost better than they knew them themselves. In one thing only was he allowed to be his own master between them. Himself a Tory when there were such things, the son of a Tory, and of a Tory family, he was tacitly absolved from his allegiance to the Sommerton party, whenever such an emergency as an election contest occurred. He enjoyed necessarily great intimacy with both, which involved constant dinners, and a restricted friendship with the ladies of Sir Michael's family; and a mysterious connection with the Bradfields which had ripened into a sincere regard for his son and daughter.

Hugh Darville was a man of sanguine temperament, but he had lived since early years with a millstone round his neck. One false step in early life had overshadowed his entire existence. He had become possessed of a secret, which made him an accessory to a great fraud; and the inability to break through its thraldom had modified his whole nature.

Wrong-doing is seldom an efficient bond of union, unless self-interest unites accomplices. Fear casts out love, as much as love casts out fear. This is especially the ease where the advantages of evil are unequally shared. The strong man is jealous of this possession and thinks he should have greater security for its permanence than he has. The weaker is jealous of his conspirator's strength acquired and confirmed, as he believes, by his forbearance. If Hugh Darville was undeservedly comfortable, retribution was at his door in the form of Abel Bradfield.

"Good-morning, Mr. Bradfield," said the lawyer, somewhat obsequiously, and rising.

"Good-morning," replied his visitor, without, however, removing his hat, and standing on the other side of the table, as though he were about to deal over a counter. "May I ask the meaning of a report which has reached us at Sommerton of some further change in the county representation?"

"Pray sit down, Mr Bradfield! there has been a talk—a question of some such possibility; a mere possibility. You understand me, Mr. Bradfield. Charming morning," added Darville with a weak, and, as he knew, a futile attempt to change the subject.

"I don't think so," said Bradfield, seating himself rather insolently, with his hat still on. "It's like every morning in this miserable climate. But I came here to talk about something else."

"Ah well! just so. Business is business: more money to invest? Land, Mr. Bradfield, say I, land. The landowners are the real men of power, and always will be in this country. Nothing like a landed aristocracy."

"And nothing so expensive. The tenant farmer lives upon us. He takes out of the land all he can get, and we pay for the high state of farming which enriches him."

"But a high state of farming improves the property, surely, my dear Sir; and rents may be raised."

"Then why the devil have you not raised mine?"

"Well, well; but——" and Darville made a deprecatory movement.

"It's very well to say 'Well, well;' would my tenants like to buy the property, and find the capital which I have to find them?"

"They haven't got it; and it would scarcely repay such men to be in your position, to exercise the influence you possess."

But the soothing syrup which had quieted the bear before was unavailing now, as he answered sulkily, "Influence, an influence that's thwarted in every way, at home, abroad, by those of my own household, and here am I with almost millions, I, to sit still and see a beggarly baronet put a county into the pocket of his son, when he's tired of the bauble."

"Mr. Bradfield!"

"Is it true, or is it not true? that's what I want to know."

"My dear Sir!"

"Will you answer a plain question or not, Mr. Darville? Is Sir Michael's son to be put in nomination in the place of his father?"

"There has been some talk in the county of such a thing it is true."

"There has been some talk of such a thing! And why was I to be kept in the dark on such a subject? Are my interests of less consequence than this needy baronet to you, Mr. Darville?"

"Your language and manners, Mr. Bradfield, put it out of my power to answer those questions," said the lawyer, whose heightened colour would have announced to one less blinded by the ill-temper into which he had wrought himself, a disposition to rebel.

"You've answered such questions before, and have found no fault with the language or the manner." It was true; he had listened to such language blandly and smoothly enough; but the last straw breaks the camel's back. The lawyer bit his lip and resumed:

"Lord Crackborough has signified his intention of supporting Mr. Carrington, and so have many others, who have opposed his father; provided that no personal acquaintance of their own party come forward."

"Then I shall oppose it. I shall oppose any such disgraceful monopoly as these hole-and-corner proceedings. Lord Crackborough will find it to his interest not to oppose my nomination. Yes, Sir, my nomination. Is there any reason, Mr. Darville, why I should not oppose this precious baronet myself?"

"You forget that you are talking to Sir Michael Carrington's accredited agent, Mr. Bradfield."

"I forget nothing, Sir—nothing whatever of our former relations. I know that we hold a mutual interest in assisting one another; that your reputation is as necessary to you as mine to me; but where are the proofs? Who will venture to believe an aspersion at the end of so many years, when the cause has been twice tried and found rotten, and you held your peace without one tissue of evidence? Where are the papers? Where are the witnesses? Do such

things exist? If I fall, does not your ruin precede mine? And is mine likely to depend on a broken reed?"

"Cruel," said Darville, clenching his hands.

"Cruel, indeed! have not I abided by our implied contract? Are you not rich and well to do in the world? Have you not had my affairs to manage, and my property to play with?"

"No, no, Sir, never. I have acted as an honest steward——" and again Darville rose from his chair.

"Silence, Sir. I have done everything for you. You have been well paid for your forbearance, as long as it was needful; and might be so still. But why join my enemies in plotting against me? I have never interfered with your zeal for this baronet, whom you serve on the pretended score of old friendship——"

"My father and his were the closest friends, as far as their circumstances would permit;" but Abel Bradfield proceeded without noticing the interruption,—"or from longstanding prejudices, which have died out with everybody but himself and his self-sufficient son."

"The men of your own party who will support him, will do so because they believe in his moderate views. You yourself can have no wish to represent principles which are almost inconsistent with the possession of such a property as your own." Darville would still willingly avoid an open rupture with so dangerous and inconsiderate a foe.

"I represent what opinions I please, Sir, so long as they are opposed to the views of Sir Michael Carrington. Why not in person?"

"There is nothing to prevent it."

"Will you forward my views, Mr. Darville?"

"It is impossible. You know my position so well that it is cruel to ask it."

"Then you are he who prevents it." A silence ensued, in which Abel Bradfield strove with some success to suppress his anger. He had an object to gain, and he thought he saw before him the only means of accomplishing it. "Darville, we are foolish to quarrel."

"I think so, Mr. Bradfield." There was a pause, and Darville resumed:

"God knows how anxiously I have sought to avoid it." His eyes filled when he thought of the children for whom

he had toiled—of the boy who was a high wrangler, and whose hopes and prospects might be dimmed by the recollections of a father's disgrace, for which no money could repay him—of a daughter, whose beauty would fade in the shadow of a parent's degradation.

Abel Bradfield looked at him with stern eyes. How he hated him for a tenderness with which he had no sympathy—how bitterly he felt that, if they had a common fault, he sat in the presence of a man immeasurably better than he.

"You will help me in this matter, then, will you not?"

"Show me how."

"Use your influence with Sir Michael." Darville appeared to reflect.

"I have a sort of influence with the baronet, it is true." At length he said musingly, and growing paler again, as he twisted his glasses backwards and forwards, while he spoke—"But if Stafford is bent on starting——"

"What then?"

"All my influence, anybody's influence, will be of no avail."

"Why so? I thought all the obstinacy of the family was with the old fool."

Abel Bradfield did not see that every disrespectful allusion to the family called up a fresh colour in the lawyer's cheek. Darville was in prejudice and in feeling much more closely allied with the county people than Bradfield himself, notwithstanding all his assumption.

"Few people know Stafford Carrington. Stafford Carrington will go through life as he is said to ride over a country. He will not exert himself without provocation; but start him and few men can beat him; no man can stop him from trying to be in the first rank. He's very like your own son," said Darville, with some degree of tenderness in his tone, for he had learnt to admire Laurence; "if he had lived less in the fashionable world he would have been very like him."

"I see nothing remarkable in my son but his wilfulness; but why should young Carrington be tempted to start at all?"

"Your own son is the spur to his ambition. Under the exterior of an idler, and of a fashionable clubman, nothing

more, for Stafford Carrington does not even affect vice, he conceals plenty of talent, a taste for reading, and clear and decided views. Since the acknowledged success of Mr. Laurence Bradfield, he has applied himself to business with greater energy than before; and I am given to understand —rather, I cannot help knowing—that he has compared himself and his career unfavourably with that of your son."

"Flattering, at all events," said Abel Bradfield, with half a sneer.

"Imitation is said to be the greatest of all flattery;" and Darville smiled.

"It's the least delicate; and Laurence has returned the compliment with a vengeance."

Darville chuckled secretly. His client was completely off the scent, and if he could only keep him away from the election, and leave a favourable impression of the younger Carrington, it was as much as he had a right to hope for, more than he expected.

"How so? there seems little that Laurence Bradfield could have to learn from Stafford Carrington, warmly as I have spoken in his praise."

"I left my newly-fledged member going to curry favour with the country party by trying to break his neck with the hounds."

"A good thing too, Mr. Bradfield. It will give him a great opportunity some day of uniting two great parties and interests in this county, of one of which at least you may claim to be the head."

Strange to say this compliment grated upon the manufacturer. At that moment he would like to have been the smallest of the legitimate aristocracy—

> "Nemo, quam sibi sortem
> Seu ratio dederit, seu fors objecerit, illâ
> Contentus vivit."

Horace knew something of the world, even as it now is

Notwithstanding that the conversation had lasted some time, and, as we have seen, had put on various phases during the hour Mr. Bradfield had been in Darville's office, it was manifest that each wanted still to say something. Each felt a difficulty; or was it only that restraint which a know-

ledge of anything forbidden is apt to produce—a knowledge which made our first parents ashamed, and which when they had gained it, they would willingly have kept to themselves?

Darville rang the bell, and ordered some sherry and a biscuit. While they drank a glass, each was busy collecting his thoughts for another attack.

"What brought that fellow Morton back to this country?" said Abel Bradfield.

"Do you mean young Morton, as we used to call him, or the old man?"

"The old man? What old man—his father?" and Mr. Bradfield stared with eyes that looked strangely scared.

"Yes; Giles Morton, or Morton Giles, as he was called in Claygate, years ago. Are you speaking of him?"

"Of course not. I was speaking of Dan Morton. The scoundrel has returned to this country some time ago. I found him work as long as he would do it, and money when he would not."

"Which you found was much the oftener of the two. It's a bad plan."

"Assuredly: but what was to be done? Why didn't he stop where he was?"

"Because he had spent all his money, and committed some crime, probably, which rendered his absence necessary. He was always a bad fellow."

"And who should support him in his idleness?"

"You were wrong to begin it. A vigorous resistance might have frightened him. Besides, he involves himself in ruin if he divulges. Your liberality is his only resource."

"And he tries it to the uttermost," said Abel Bradfield, with a sigh.

"Then resist him now. He is not such a fool as to face starvation."

"He fears it less than you do, Darville."

"He is alone in the world. I fear for others, not for myself."

"Otherwise?" And the malice of the devil was in the speaker's eye.

"I never could have borne it. I might have left the country. Would that I had done so. I might have dis-

closed all I knew—the world is not so hard. If there is wisdom in a multitude of counsellors, there is pity in their judgment too. I might have expiated my first and only step from the paths of honesty, but I had others to consider, whom I could not consult."

The tone in which the lawyer spoke, more than the words, which were commonplace enough, might havo melted some hearts; but Abel Bradfield had cased his round with the hardest metal, and the most pliable we know of, and it was not touched one bit.

"As to this fellow Morton, resist him; he knows who his friends are, who protects him at the bench, who gives him his cottage, and pays him the wages of honest labour for poaching and idleness. Stop it." In another's case the lawyer was bitter enough. His feelings were scarcely genuine; but they might have been; at least, they were better than none.

"And yourself, Darville? If I asked him he would say the same of you. Justice should be even-handed. Let us stop the supplies." Abel Bradfield looked stonily at his supposed victim; he was playing with him before landing; this was the exquisite part of the sport. "He can do nothing. Who will believe him? A poacher—a vagabond—an idler. No testimony; no witnesses."

"None?" said Darville, as pale as ashes, and rising to his feet, as if the effort to sit were painful.

"None."

"Listen, Mr. Bradfield! I have eaten of your bread; I have received good and evil at your hands; I respect and love your children; and I would not see them dishonoured by act or deed of mine. I was a young man, just rising in the world, happy in a newly-formed home and ties, when I became a sharer in a secret, of which you and your family have reaped the fruits." Darville shook, but not with fear now—it was with excitement. His face was no longer round and unintellectual. His forehead was swollen with veins; his eyes had forgotten their cunning and their fear; they were honest and determined. It was Bradfield's turn to tremble! "I have borne the burden I then took on me meekly—resignedly. Some men might have lightened it —you have not; but you have paid me for it. The proofs are not wanting—witnesses are forthcoming." Bradfield

became so faint as to lean on his chair for support, into which he dropped. "There, Sir, drink that;" and he poured out and handed, as steadily as he could, a large glass of wine, "it may prepare you for news. Old Morton is alive. More—he is in the Saxonby workhouse at this moment, dying. The papers you would have given ten years of your life, or half your future, to have seen moulder into ashes, still exist."

"You lie, Sir! you lie! This is to intimidate me. This is to gain a purpose of your own."

"Mr. Bradfield, I forgive your suspicions. Ask your own parish priest, Mr. Scarsdale, whether the old man is alive or not. And I tell you that those papers exist, and they must be found. I will confess to you that I know nothing of them; but they are in your hands, and they must be destroyed, if you would ensure your own safety, and my reputation."

"Scarsdale—Scarsdale," repeated the manufacturer, with deep emotion, "and he knows this—." The man's plight was pitiable.

"He knows nothing! and if he did, the ravings of imbecility will make but slight impression against the position of so much wealth and respectability." The last words were uttered with the slightest tone of sarcasm, but it died away immediately.

"And you, Sir, will make your own terms, I suppose?"

"I tell you again, Mr. Bradfield, that I know nothing of these papers. I want no terms for myself. I tell you that those proofs are in your house. Search for them, as you would for hidden silver and gold; and when you have them burn them. Burn them, I say; the whole house, if you will; but destroy them first, and then set your best friends at defiance."

Is it wonderful after this that Abel Bradfield headed the fox?

CHAPTER XXI.

HINTS FOR A SENSATIONAL NOVEL.

> "The fellow is distract, and so am I,
> And here we wander in illusions.
> Some blessed power deliver us from hence."
>
> *Com. of Errors.*

ALL men have their eventful days, why should not places have them too? At all events this was an eventful one for Saxonby, as far as our story is concerned. We have seen a nobleman nearly killed, and a millionaire discomfited. A little earlier a melancholy scene was enacting elsewhere.

Scarsdale sat at breakfast. He had made up his mind for a holiday. The parish of Sommerton was in a healthy condition. He had seen his schools, and done all that he conceived necessary the day before, and he was about to enjoy what he was pleased to consider a day's healthful and rational amusement. There came a knock at his door.

"Hallo, Dalton! Good-morning; you're out early; take a seat."

The master of Saxonby Union did as he was bid; and Scarsdale swallowed half a cup of tea preparatory to business.

"Mrs. Dalton thought I'd better come myself than send any o' those lads. They're a little uncertain, Sir, about getting back again when they once gets out."

"If it's business, I always find it better to do my own than trust to other people," replied Scarsdale.

"Well, Sir; it is business. You've been to see old Giles twice; and he's taken such a fancy to see you again, that I promised to come up. It isn't that he dislikes our chaplain, who's as good a man as ever lived, but he's always hankering after you, Sir."

"That's very complimentary, Dalton; and if I can do the poor fellow any service, I shall be very glad. Have you seen Mr. Lightfoot?"

"No, Sir, not yet; but that's all right, I'm sure."

"Doubtless: but there's an etiquette in these matters, as

well as among you soldiers, Dalton. So you must just take a note to him, and I'll come down after breakfast." Scarsdale finished his tea.

"Thank ye, Sir, I'll speak to the chaplain. But the poor old man can't last much longer, and he's something or other on his mind, as he can't die easy without saying, and he won't say it to anyone but you."

When Mr. Dalton had departed, carrying with him a note from Scarsdale to the chaplain, mentioning the circumstances of the case with as much delicacy as he could, and offering his services in the emergency, he proceeded to dress, preparatory to his visit to the union.

Scarsdale was not yet a bishop, or even a high dignitary of the church; he had nothing of that portly character in his appearance which warrants the adoption of knee-breeches; yet when he threw off his *robe de chambre* he stood confessed in Bedford cords of the newest make and pattern. He uttered no sound expressive of regret; not a sigh, not a murmur escaped his lips; but he took them off with a philosophy which might have become Byng when he laid aside his sword, and which proved his greater right to wear them. In a few minutes he had completed a more clerical toilette, and within half-an-hour he was ready to accompany Dalton, who waited down stairs, with the necessary permission.

On entering the room set apart for those who were *in extremis*, and where there happened at this time to be no one but the old man in question, Scarsdale was struck with the change in his appearance. His great frame was still apparent, but his face was worn to the bones; and his hands, as he spread them before him on the counterpane, now rolling up a little thread, now snatching at the sheet as he lay anxiously watching the door, appeared like a network of blue veins and tendons. One thing struck Scarsdale at once; it was the return of intelligence to the features. There was nothing idiotic, counterfeit or real. There was the impress on them of a vast responsibility; a tremulous anticipation of a future; a hope that all was not quite lost, which was heightened by the appearance of Mr. Scarsdale.

Scarsdale approached the bed; and the man turned a feeble glance towards him.

"This is very good of you, Sir."

"How do you feel?" said the clergyman, taking one of his hands in his for a moment.

"Better and clearer this morning, Sir; but very, very weak; I can't turn round."

"I'll come the other side. Can you hear me?"

"Better than I have done for months past. As I get nearer the end of this world, I seem to have all the faculties again, which I shall soon do without, and which I so often have misused."

"There are few of us who have not."

Dalton had left the room, and Scarsdale had gone round to the side of the bed where his patient could see him with more ease.

"Ah! Sir, that's the way you gentlemen always talk; and it's right enough too; but you don't mean as I do, Sir. There's a deal o' difference in crime."

"And a deal of difference in the temptation to it," said Scarsdale; "not that I wish you or any man to think lightly of the offences he has committed; but the worst offence you can well commit is to despair."

"Yes, yes, I know, Sir. It's the only one as is left me. Must I be a sinner all my moments, to the very last?"

"In some sense we all must; not absolutely, but we must carry our sinful nature with us to the grave. Whom God loves he chastens, Morton; let us hope that he chastens you."

"And what's a poor weak cretur like me to do, Sir? I never had no book learning. When I was a boy things wasn't as they be now. Ah! What can I do?"

"Bear your sickness patiently, and if you have done wrong to any man, make amends for it, restore him fourfold." Morton winced perceptibly.

"That's the road to heaven, is it, Sir? Oh! it's a strait and narrow path for such as me; and what is it the minister says, Sir, about faith?"

"He says you must show your faith by your works, or God himself would not believe you."

"It's a hard saying."

"It is when a man has no faith; but that's not your case."

"You think better of me than I deserve, Sir."

"I think only of you as a fellow-creature, Morton, and a

Christian; wanting pardon, and looking for it in the proper place. I think of you, as Christ has thought of thousands, and as I hope he will some day think of me."

From that time Scarsdale talked seriously to the old man, not despairingly, nor over hopefully; for he saw that he was wavering about some wrong which he had done in earlier years; and that he was willing to persuade himself that it need not be exposed to human eye. Nor need it. But the discipline is wholesome and good; and there is hope of a wound being cured when the probing has been severe. An honest, truthful mind may be trusted to general confessions of error; a shifty spirit requires to be held fast by bit and bridle lest it fall upon and crush the possessor. It is not good in all cases to spare the rod.

Having got thus far he easily persuaded the old man to listen to portions of Scripture which appeared to bear upon his case; above all he joined in the beautiful service of the Visitation of the Sick; and it was not until Scarsdale saw that he had made a good impression on the dying man, that he rose for the purpose of taking leave.

"Mr. Scarsdale, that's the name, is it not, Sir? Come nearer; I want to say something, but my head is wandering; here, come nearer, Sir, close to me."

Scarsdale leant down. His voice was not so clear as it had been; for during the whole of this conversation, and during the prayers which were read by his bedside, there had been a remarkable intelligence not only in his face but in his voice; and the questions he had put from time to time had been more acute than the language in which they were put would have led Scarsdale to believe possible.

Leaning down then, and propping up the speaker as well as he could, with the scanty bolsters belonging to the room, Scarsdale waited the communication. At that moment an idea flitted across his mind. Looking at the old man, to see that he fully understood, he said:—

"Attend to me one moment. If what you tell me involves the happiness or interests of other people in any way, it will be my duty to tell it, and to take what steps I think right to do justice, or to punish wrong. Do you understand what I mean?"

The old man nodded his head in assent.

"Then say on, my good friend, and the Almighty help you.

to look to your Saviour with a conscience void of offence to God or man."

"Amen!" said the dying pauper. And Scarsdale again leant down close to his bed. At first the confession or acknowledgment went smoothly on of youthful follies, maturer sins, manhood's crimes. At length it reached a point at which the speaker's voice began to fail again: names were mixed up in confusion, Sir Reginald Carrington, Henry Bradfield, the Squire. Then he spoke of robbery, and flight, and some papers, and of his own complicity. "Tell them to look in the room—my son Dan knows all about it—in the Hall at Sommerton. The old man put them there, and I helped him. Let the rightful owner have them, Mr. Scarsdale—the rightful."

The voice had got weaker and weaker as he approached what should have been the climax of his confession. Scarsdale struggled to catch the remaining words. Suddenly the speaker stopped. Scarsdale turned to look, and as he turned the head fell forward, and all that remained on earth of old Giles Morton was in the arms of the parist priest of Sommerton.

What Scarsdale had been able to collect of the poor old sinner's confession, with the surmises he had made from former innuendoes, set him thinking. Your earnest practical man hates a mystery. To be the conveyancer of other people's secrets is terrible work—it is to have the slow and tortuous path of the covered cart through life instead of the steady and rapid flight of an open vehicle. A great secretmonger is always in danger of running up against something, and finding nothing upset but himself.

Having therefore got, as a matter of duty, what was likely to be a great and profitless burden, the next thing was to get rid of it.

Saxonby was not remarkable for clever people, rather, I should say, people gifted with good common sense. Indeed, I know no place that is. Therefore, as lawyers are supposed to be paid for giving advice (and nobody ever gives anything worth keeping), everybody made a point of going straight to Hugh Darville in all difficulties. He was as competent as most men, and as impartial in his judgments. As he justly observed, however, he never got at the truth. Clients always told their own story with their own colouring,

so that he usually had to give counsel according to his impression of how the matter was likely to be.

He had a great regard for Scarsdale; he believed him to be thoroughly honest, and what he had seen of him he liked much. In truth, he sometimes fancied he might have made a son-in-law of him, had it not been for the witcheries of Miss Bradfield. "What with Sir Michael's interest, we might have got him a chancellor's or a crown living, and the young people would have done well," said he to himself, upon the two or three occasions on which the curate had been to talk to him at his office.

He had had time to recover himself from his conversation with his wealthy client, and was applying himself sedulously to his business, as he always did, when his clerk opened the door, and intruded a shock-head of unbrushed hair.

"Can you see anyone?"

"That depends entirely upon who it is, and what he wants."

"I've not said you are engaged; but, of course, I can; the office door is shut. Don't be alarmed; he can't hear. Who shall I say you are engaged with, on urgent business, at the present moment?"

"Who is it, stupid?"

"There, don't be annoyed. It's nobody of any consequence: only the curate. I forget his name."

"What, Slowbody?" said Darville, rather dreading the infliction.

"No, no; the other one; your friend, Mr. Bradfield's curate."

"Oh! Scarsdale? Certainly, show him in. What have you kept him waiting for all this time?" and Hugh Darville, anxious not to lose time, went on reading a brief. The head retreated.

"How are you, Scarsdale? I'll attend to you in a minute."

Scarsdale took a seat.

"Now then, how are you; and what can I do for you? I suppose my clerk told you I had a room full?"

"I shouldn't have believed him, if he had."

"That's candid. Why not?"

"Because I saw Mr. Bradfield go out half-an-hour ago, and nobody has been here since."

"Your eyes and your brains go together, Scarsdale. Now tell me what you want. Anything more to do with those iron shares?"

"Nothing whatever; I'm perfectly satisfied with the investment, and much obliged to you for your assistance. I came to talk about something else."

"Going to be married?" said the lawyer, quite certain that he was not, but very willing to put so interesting a subject into his head.

"Not exactly; that is, not at present. All parsons are going to be married some day or other, I suppose."

"In spite of their teeth. You've found that out with the limited experience one gets in a country town. How's Mrs. Tailby?"

Scarsdale only laughed, and said he believed she was very well.

"Perhaps your cousin's dead, and the living is vacant. If so, I presume I may congratulate you;" and Hugh Darville looked serious enough for a minute to induce the belief that he was so. Scarsdale knew him better, and only told him that he had still his work to do in Sommerton, "and occasionally elsewhere."

"Talking of livings," said the lawyer, in reply, and this time looking neither so cheerful nor so straight into his friend's face, "talking of livings, do you ever go to the union now, for Lightfoot? There's old Giles Morton, or Morton Giles, I fancy you take some interest in; at least, I do myself as an old acquaintance. We were talking about him the last time you came in. You have been there to see him, I think you told me."

"I've seen him again to-day. He is the very person I came to talk to you about."

"Ah! really. Fine old man, I think; of a great age, too, he must be; let me see, eighty or more. Mind gone, somebody told me."

"I believe I did. I thought so from the former conversations I have had with him—I did not think so this morning."

For some reason or other a shade, scarcely of pallor, but rather of anxiety, crossed Hugh Darville's cheek. It gave him an older look than he usually had, which was one young for his years.

"Ah! then you think—that is, you fancy—that—that, in point of fact—I really forget what the subject of your former conversation was, exactly."

"You mean that you think I have reason to attach more importance to his apparent wanderings than I have done," said Scarsdale, who looked a little hard into the lawyer's eyes, which again sought his gouty foot; thence they travelled to some papers on the table, and drawing half a sheet of a torn note towards him, he affected to scribble on it, while he answered, as unconstrainedly as he could—

"Yes—yes—exactly so; that is, the conversation was about Sommerton, and some reminiscences of—let me see, there was a note. Something about old Sir Reginald and Mr. Bradfield. You have it, of course?"

"I'm sorry to say that I have lost it." The look of anxiety partially fled from the lawyer's face, and he recovered his animation. "I lost it, I think, in the village, for I certainly had it with me. Circumstances arose in Sommerton which directed my attention to other things; and when I wanted to perform my implied promise to the old man by giving it to Mr. Bradfield, the paper was nowhere to be found."

"And he has not given you any more of these fugitive productions? After all, my dear Scarsdale, it was but some mummery of the poor old man, depend upon it. However, he hasn't produced any more mysterious memoranda?"

"None."

"But he may do so, poor fellow; bother your life out perhaps with messages to Sommerton and Spring Vale; perhaps to me; all round the country, may be."

"Never."

"Ah! you can't tell—very odd fellows those old paupers. We lawyers see a good many things that parsons know nothing about."

"I dare say you do, fortunately for the parsons. But old Giles will not trouble me with any more papers."

"Why not? When those curious old fellows, who haven't led the quietest of lives, and who have travelled half over the globe are ailing, they get the most extraordinary crotchets into their heads, about the sins they have committed, and the people they have had to do with, and the secrets they have been entrusted with, and all sorts of wonderful things, and people that they have never known at

all. Now I dare say that old Giles Morton will some day persuade you that he has dealt in half the murders in the country, and certainly knocked on the head half the colonists of Australia, or wherever he went to; and perhaps involve you and me, and half-a-dozen more of us, in a wonderful web of his own weaving."

"That he certainly never will, you may depend upon it."

"Why not? They all of them talk of themselves as miserable sinners, which they are; and then they get to attach some particular virtue to a confession of what they never committed. Very likely to send for you again next week to listen to some more rhodomontade of the same sort, only with different names."

"That he certainly never will. Take my word for it."

Darville appeared excited in his determination to fight out the subject, and Scarsdale rather laughed at his own jocose pertinacity, under the circumstances.

"Why not then?" said the other. "They all of them do."

"Because he's dead. The old man died in my arms an hour ago."

To say that Darville looked relieved is the mildest form of expression, if his features were at all an index to his mind. He was very considerably relieved, and most unexpectedly. The man in whose hands, as far as he knew, was a secret which might have exposed a crime to which he had admitted himself to have been accessory, though with extenuating circumstances, was dead. He had died without giving any more documentary evidence of complicity. Was it possible that he could have made any verbal statement of circumstances which could have involved himself and Abel Bradfield in any way? The first object was to ascertain what he had said, the second to rebut it, if needful. The reader already knows that he had participated in some sort of wrong; that he had repented of his ill-doing almost as soon as it was done; but that he had not yet reached that state of repentance which is not satisfied until it has restored fourfold, as an evidence of its sensations, where an otherwise fair reputation might be blasted without attaining any object. If he could have now undone what he had done, he would probably have set about it; but to rob his family and himself of their fair fame for an unpractical

punctiliousness was more than he was capable of doing. So he said—

"And you are come here to tell me something about him? Some more last words of John Baxter?"

"I confess that was partly my object in coming, but you seem scarcely to care about the communication."

"My dear Scarsdale, as far as you are concerned—that is, if it is for your satisfaction—I shall be delighted to hear you first, and advise you afterwards."

"Well, that's all I can possibly want; so——"

"Excuse me; many persons come to me for advice who give me just as much intelligence of their affairs as they think good for me or themselves. Half confidences are useless. In such cases a secret should be as close between a man and his lawyer, as between a man and his horse." (Mr. Darville lived in a hunting country.) "But I am sure I have nothing to fear from you on that score."

"Nothing whatever; and yet it seems very absurd, Darville. Do you know I cannot now tell what he did say of consequence; or rather I cannot find anything to put together into connected sentences to lay before you;" and the curate began to think how he should begin, although the convictions and impressions remained upon his own mind as forcibly as ever.

"Well, what did he say? Out with it, my good fellow, and let me see what I can make of it; perhaps we may put it into shape together;" and Hugh Darville rubbed his hands with a cheery good-humour, which represented only his intense desire to get at the bottom of what had been told.

"He told at first of his childhood, and then of his youth; that the one had been neglected and the other corrupted."

"Of course: just as I said," replied Darville, drawing his paper nearer.

"His great error, as usual, poaching and neglect of church and religion, for he never seems to have been an intemperate man."

"No, he never was—he was a clever, clear-headed fellow——"

"You knew him, then?" said Scarsdale in his turn, hurriedly, and assuming the place of the cross-examiner for

a moment. Darville appeared embarrassed for an instant, but replied calmly enough—

"No, no; that is, not personally; by hearsay very well; he had a sort of reputation in the neighbourhood, and we lawyers are bound to know everything; besides, he was about thirty years older than I am; but I beg your pardon, Scarsdale; pray go on with your account."

"He spoke of Australia, and some man called Jackson, a postillion, a friend of his own son, and in connection with them of Mr. Bradfield; the first Bradfield, I mean, and the old Sir Reginald Carrington; then he came to some story about parchments, as he called them——"

"Parchments: what do you suppose he meant by that?"

"Well! it's difficult to say; he was incoherent rather; but the idea had gained great hold upon his mind. I presume he meant some sort of deed, or legal papers; it seems a common name among poor people for such matters."

"Undoubtedly—anything more?"

"Yes: he spoke of the house at Sommerton; and he tried to explain the situation of a particular room in the Hall, with which he himself had had to do."

"You don't know of what trade or calling he was, do you, Scarsdale?"

"No, indeed I don't; I never asked him."

"A lawyer would—that's unlucky;" and Darville looked acutely out of one eye.

"Why so?"

"Something to have known what he could have to do at Sommerton Hall."

"Truly. One could find out probably at Claygate, his native place."

"Not if he's been in Australia so many years since." Scarsdale looked up again, impressed with Hugh Darville's assumption that it was since his connection with Sommerton. He said nothing however. "Did he give you no clue beyond this to anything?"

"I think not—stay—yes, he did. He said something about the Sommerton Estate, and everybody having their own."

"Ah! that's important, you think;" and Darville laughed again; not very naturally; but still the laugh was a good one, as times go; "and that's all, Scarsdale.

What do you make of it?" and again he drew his note paper towards him.

"It was because I could make nothing of it, that I came to you."

"Really. Well! I can make nothing of it, either; making nothing, you know, is a contradiction in terms. Nobody can make nothing."

"So I should think; nobody is the only person able to do so. Now your opinion, Mr. Darville? Let us know what you think of this business."

"Were these things all he had to confess?" asked Darville; and then he took up a pen and his note paper, and ran his eye down it. "Then let us see to what it all amounts. Let us sum up. No witnesses to call, of course."

"First then," began Scarsdale, when he was interrupted.

"Yes! first we have," reading from his note paper, "juvenile delinquencies: common to us all, no men know that better than you. Eh! Scarsdale?"

Scarsdale assented—"What next?"

"Poaching: a conventional crime—punishable by some magistrates, venial by others,—an heroic virtue or a vulgar vice, according to circumstances; neglect of religious duty, the peculiar privilege of the upper classes during the London season." Again he looked at his notes, while Scarsdale sat by, biting his lips, and rather inclined to be angry.

"Temperate, or, not the reverse; a great virtue."

"Certainly," said Scarsdale.

"Talked about Australia, an usurpation of the rights of the secretary for the colonies, and the leaders of the convict question." He went on, "And a postillion. A very matter-of-fact sort of person, utterly out of place in Australia. Then of old Bradfield, between ourselves a very great and most respectable old rascal; and then of Sir Reginald Carrington, the most finished gentleman of his day. George the Fourth always selected his friends with judgment."

"And treated them with cruel caprice, they say."

"Perhaps he did. The devil is not so black as he has been painted. But, to return to business. Here is something about Sommerton and a room, in which your late penitent seems to have been employed. If he were a carpenter, or an upholsterer, a mason, or a chimney-sweep, or if he were intimate with the old iron-master (a thing not im-

possible), nothing more natural. What else should he have to do with a room in Sommerton Hall?" The lawyer looked blankly into the face of his auditor, who was unable to reply, but who felt that the explanation was far from satisfactory.

"Oh! oh! and the parchments. Well! well! there may be something in that, to be sure; though I think not. Now, those are the heads of the business; what do you make of them yourself, Scarsdale?" and Hugh Darville pushed away his note paper and pen from before him.

"It is impossible to deny the truth of what you say, and yet I don't feel perfectly satisfied. There seems to be too much foundation for such a flimsy structure as yours."

"And too heavy a mansion built by you on so small a foundation. Given, as you Cambridge men would say——"

"I was Oxford——"

"Ah! I forgot—well then, as you Oxford men would say: Given a room in a country house, a fashionable baronet, a vulgar ironmaster, scenes at the diggings, a postillion, title-deeds, and a pauper's confession to find out—what? Capital material for a fashionable novel, in the hands of a very unscrupulous sensationalist; but utterly useless to frame an indictment, or get up a case. Serjeant Mellor himself would be at a loss."

"And that is really your opinion?"

"That is really my opinion." And so it was: veritably, truly. What should a man make out of such an outline; how should he fill it up, so as to carry probability along with it? As Hugh Darville remarked, it wanted a novelist, and one not over-scrupulous, to make anything of it. A lawyer and a parson; really the thing seemed absurd. The former practical and sound, the latter with no taste for romancing; looked at in this light, there was very little to be got out of it.

But there is another way of regarding most things. Men, especially honest men, have an instinct which dictates to them, frequently, what could not be discovered by the soundest principles of mental logic. A man feels a thing to be true, though he cannot tell you why. Upon the same ground as our dislike to Dr. Fell is our inherent sentiment of the "real state of the case." As conscience dictates what

is right, or points out what is wrong, without the trouble each time of going over the premises by which it reaches its conclusions; so a nameless sensation, as inexplicable as that which exists in a bat's wing, and almost as unerring, warns us of what is shrouded in a mystery impenetrable to the mere faculty of reason.

Scarsdale did not think over, nor argue the point with himself or with Hugh Darville; but he felt that, with all its absurdities, and the shortcomings of his late penitent's confession, there was a something in the background which ought to be solved. Whether he could do it, or whether he was the person to do it, was a question admitting of argument. Whether it was a will case, or whether it was a defective title; whether it was a fraud, or an accident, in which the Sommerton property and its owner were involved, he had no idea but that there was a real mystery somewhere round about Abel Bradfield; he felt perfectly certain. After puzzling his brains ineffectually for some time, and trying at last to get the better of it, by reading, he sallied forth for a walk. Most of his walks were in one direction, and he took the same route to-day; the road to Sommerton; where he might do some good among his people unostentatiously and unpremeditatedly. His mind still ran in the same channel; but it took a different turn, and involved himself personally in the discussion. If there was anything to be done, was he the man to do it? Certainly not.

Scarsdale never endeavoured to deceive himself. His personal quarrel and hearty dislike to Abel Bradfield would have decided the answer in the negative. A second motive drew him the same way. A certain sentiment towards Ellen Bradfield, which he had never succeeded in wholly repressing. These acted upon him as, what is called in mechanics, a Composition of Forces. Had they urged him in different ways, he would have been governed honestly by their difference as he was now by the combination of their effect. So, "Certainly not" was the answer.

I presume that the reader is not astonished to hear that Scarsdale, though *only the curate*, as a wholesale tea-dealer or general broker in a fashionable suburb might observe, had fallen in love with the daughter of the so-called Squire of Sommerton. He could not help it. That appears to be the most natural excuse for all such proceedings, and long

may it remain so. Premeditation in love is a sort of luxury which ought to belong only to crowned heads. Papas and mammas will be horrified at this latitudinarian doctrine; but I cannot help that, any more than Scarsdale.

After a time he made up his mind that it "would not do." Not that he thought or found that he was inferior to Mr. Bradfield in point of position; he was never taught to feel that excepting by those to whom he was perfectly indifferent. It was the uniform kindness and unembarrassed geniality of Ellen Bradfield that taught him a painful truth. From the day he set foot in the place to the present time, she had accepted his civilities and his services, had gone about the parish helping him to do good, had asked favours of him, and had been as perfectly unreserved in all her communications, as if he had been a brother.

Ignorant persons would have called her a coquette, or the gentleman presumptuous, had Scarsdale made her an offer and been refused. He was no such fool. He saw his way, and began a retreat, which bid fair to be as successful as that of Xenophon or Sir John Moore. And every day that he retreated, he provoked a higher respect of the lady in question. He had become almost capable of a friendship, more lasting than, if not so exciting as, love.

He was walking briskly, with his eyes on the ground, across the road, having arrived at some such point in his meditations, hearing nothing, seeing nothing, *totus in illis*, when a horseman at full speed came suddenly upon him. The man pulled with a jerk, and was just about to swear, a not uncommon habit with grooms when they have nearly caused the death of a fellow-creature, when catching sight of the black coat and well-assured features of Mr. Scarsdale, he stopped his horse and touched his hat.

"What's the matter, Morgan? anyone ill at Sommerton?"

"Lord Mentmore's had a fall and has got percussion of the brain, Sir. I'm going for Dr. Probewell." And the man went away at his best pace.

Mentmore at Sommerton. Where? in the village or at the Hall? probably the latter. Just a twinge of jealousy came over him. It was cured by a heap of stones and a large puddle, into the latter of which he slipped from the former, over which he stumbled, from not thinking what he was about. It was not his way usually; he must have been very bad.

CHAPTER XXII.

A SLOW RECOVERY PREPARATORY TO FALLING AGAIN.

"Not very dangerous, except to those that are careless; but withal, he *blushed* as he spoke."—*Pilgrim's Progress*: BUNYAN.

"PERCUSSION of the brain," as the Sommerton groom called it, is an exceedingly unpleasant condition of life. Whatever it was that affected Lord Mentmore, he was carried, as we have seen, senseless into the house. A suite of rooms was immediately prepared for him; messengers were sent to Spring Vale, to apprise his late hosts, and to desire his valet to come over to Sommerton; and to Saxonby, to fetch Dr. Probewell, who made use of such hard language as to frighten the housekeeper and his lordship's valet exceedingly. "Pupils dilated, stertorous breathing, absence of pulsation," said the doctor. However, it was a great day for him; and the first earl that he had ever had the pleasure of prescribing for gave a dignity to his manner and a consequence to his orders, when he returned home, which was more amusing to his neighbours than gratifying to his own household.

But when such a carcass as this is to be fed upon, it is considered the right thing to call in more vultures, lest the solitary provincial bird shall become too much swollen with fatness, or the body should fail of proper honours. So they sent off to the county town for an eminent surgeon, and to London for the earl's own physician. The last was a little bored by the journey, which he took in the night, to save time, and for which, at an early period of Mentmore's recovery, he received a cheque of seventy-five guineas. The infirmary surgeon and the country practitioner divided the rest of the booty pretty equally, the former receiving his in the more honourable way of fees, the latter in the more profitable one of visits, bolus, draught, pills as before, *ad infinitum*, until about the third week, in spite of most energetic remonstrances, Lord Mentmore would go out riding and was obstinately denied to his medical man.

"How do you feel to-day, Mentmore?" said young Brad-

field, entering his room towards the end of the first week and sitting down in an armchair, opposite the sofa on which his friend was lying.

"Better, thanks to your kindness; rather dizzy and weak, but that will be all right in a day or two, I hope."

Bradfield shook his head.

"Not quite so soon as that. Fellows don't lie insensible for about eight-and-forty hours to get all right in a day or two. However, I'm glad to see you as well as you are."

"Have my letters been sent up from Spring Vale, Bradfield?"

"Yes; Sir Michael and Stafford Carrington brought them over yesterday, and wanted to see you, but you were asleep, and old Probewell——"

"Old Humbug would'nt let them, I suppose."

"I think he's right, for a day or two, I must confess."

"Come, Bradfield, nonsense; I surely may see anyone to-day? I'm nearly as well as ever. Just look here," and the impatient young nobleman essayed to walk, and nearly tumbled down, upsetting a small round table and a piece of china in his struggles to save himself.

"Now you're satisfied, Mentmore, I hope."

"I'm satisfied I am not as strong as you are. I never was. But I cannot see why I should not see Carrington, if he calls."

"Well! you shall see him; only behave discreetly. Not too long, nor too much talking. Are you tired now?"

"Not in the least."

"Then tell me how it happened, for I've never heard."

"The hounds were close to their fox, as I thought, and being anxious for a kill, after so good a run, I was galloping as fast as I could go along the outside of the cover. I think Beneventum was a little leg weary—almost everything was beat—and he put his foot into a drain, or a rabbit-hole, and rolled over me."

"The very worst fall a man can get. The horse is all right, I saw him yesterday."

"Yes; I'm glad to hear that. It was the very first question I asked, as soon as I recollected anything about the business," rejoined Mentmore. After a pause he added:—"By the way, Bradfield, how curiously things come about. This rather severe cropper will serve a good purpose. I

have long wanted you to be more acquainted with Carrington; I think you would understand and appreciate one another; and I'm sure the ladies of the family would."

Bradfield put on his usual peculiar smile, and then said—

"My father has his prejudices; but I have made some advances myself, lately. I've been to see Miss Carrington."

"Miss Carrington?" and Lord Mentmore stared, and smiled too.

"I mean the lady known as Miss Philly Carrington."

"Oh—oh—oh! I see. A charming person, but scarcely a young man's companion."

"On the contrary; I enjoy her conversation much. Quaint, epigrammatic, and full of anecdotes of a former period. She interests me exceedingly."

Mentmore hesitated a moment, as if he was doubtful how far he might proceed; but a short time had produced a more rapid intimacy than usual, perhaps from their earlier acquaintance, and he said in a lower voice,—

"I should have thought the other Miss Carrington more likely to have interested you than Aunt Philly."

"Ah!" said the other, dryly enough, but without changing his habitual look of indifference or light-heartedness; "there's no accounting for tastes. Besides, Miss Carrington is unapproachable by any but the *haute noblesse*."

"Indeed you make a great mistake, my dear fellow; and, if that was a gentle hit at me, you were never more wrong in your life."

"Is it so?"

"It is so, indeed. No one can know her without liking her. Her beauty alone is sufficiently attractive; her charming temper, and manners, so thoroughly ladylike and unaffected; and as to the *haute noblesse*, I believe that to be the very last thing she thinks of in a husband."

Laurence Bradfield knew Lord Mentmore well enough to know that he was speaking the truth, and that had he not been intending to do so, he never would have broached the subject. He looked, however, steadily at him for some seconds, while the young earl examined the seals of his letters.

"Do you know that you are not to read too much at present?"

"Yes; I did hear so; but letters accumulate; I must

run through them. Ah! here's my good aunt, Lady Elizabeth Derwentwater—three days without an answer;" and he rang a handbell, at which summons his valet appeared from an inner room:—"Bring my writing materials, Watkins, and put them down here."

"And must you write to Lady Elizabeth to-day?"

"Indeed, I must; she'll be quite distressed. She is the only person who ever tries to control me, and to whom I am indebted for occasional contradiction."

"Let me write, and say how unwell you have been."

"My dear fellow, you'd have her ladyship here to-morrow."

"I am sure my mother would be very happy."

"Then your mother would be very different from me, and the rest of us too, I imagine. She's a clever woman—fond of management. Let her do all that at Silvermere and Derwent; there's plenty of room for her genius."

"I have not the pleasure of Lady Elizabeth's acquaintance, but——"

"I hope you soon will have. This very letter, which you object to, is about my Easter invitations, over which my aunt presides. I am in hopes of persuading yourselves to be of my party. We must find something to do for a fortnight before the London season, so I hope I may count upon you and Mrs. and Miss Bradfield."

"Thank you, you're very good; I have no doubt that my mother and sister will be very happy, and I shall endeavour to enjoy the recess." And then he left his sick friend to his own devices.

The illness of Lord Mentmore had induced an interchange of civilities between Sommerton and Spring Vale. It was necessary that it should do so. The old people did not meet. Sir Michael called upon Lord Mentmore, and left a card on the hall-table: his passing civility was understood to be a necessity, and not returned. But the rest of them got on well enough; and Laurence had evidently taken Spring Vale Cottage by storm. He was very constant in his visits; and it is only just to say that Aunt Philly encouraged him to repeat them.

Mentmore recovered as rapidly as a nobleman attended by three doctors could possibly be expected to recover. He found Sommerton a pleasant residence enough, and, as

he regained strength, accompanied the ladies in their drives, or Laurenee and his sister in their rides. He did not return immediately to Spring Vale nor to Silvermere. In point of fact, he found a strong attraction in the society of Miss Bradfield to remain longer, and was willing to believe that politeness required a prolongation of his visit. Mentmore had never been taught to thwart himself, and he considered it almost a divine excellence to bear the occasional thwarting of others.

Laurence Bradfield went frequently to Spring Vale Cottage. He was a remarkably clever person, and old Aunt Philly enjoyed his conversation as much as he did hers. He occasionally saw Evelyn Carrington there, and his pleasure was not lessened by that circumstance. Occasionally when she rose to go, he would take his leave at the same time, and accompany her as far as the garden gate. There their roads diverged; she turned up towards the Manor Lodge, he down to the left along Water Lane—a short and cheerful walk through the fields to Sommerton.

"Aunt, that young Bradfield, who has just been returned for Plumpton, is not such a bad fellow after all," said the Reverend Walter Carrington.

"Then, Walter, you'd better imitate him."

"He's a dreadful Radical."

"Is he? He oftens comes in here, and I never have found it out."

"He would hardly bring his politics with him to Spring Vale."

"I think he carries his opinions about with him for everyday wear: your idea is, that they are, like most people's religion, kept for holiday use."

"He'll be a great man some day," rejoined the parson.

"And a good one, nephew, if I know anything of character."

"He ought to marry well, aunt; it would give him a good start in the county."

"Perhaps he will, Walter; it's high time you set him the example."

"Can't afford it, my dear Madam."

"Yes, you can, Sir: I'll tell you how. Sell your hunters, and get rid of your curate; your wife will do the weekly duties of the latter."

It was a little remarkable that Evelyn Carrington never mentioned his name.

"Stafford, what book is that you are so deep in?" said Evelyn, one morning.

"Hallam," said Stafford, looking up affectionately from his book in the beautiful library of Spring Vale Manor; "Hallam."

"What's that about?"

"A great many things."

"What? the way to preserve foxes or pheasants?"

"Foxes or pheasants! No; constitutions."

"What? on training—that the papers are so full of since the last boat-race?"

"No, no, my dear Evelyn; not physical constitutions—political."

"Oh! politics. How stupid I am. Then you mean to start, on papa's retirement, for the county; and you are preparing for it?"

"Not exactly that, perhaps; but it becomes one to be well informed."

"I thought you were well informed, Stafford; everybody says so."

"How kind. I thought so too, but I have found out that I am not."

"What do you call a well informed man?"

"I call young Bradfield a well informed man. They speak very highly of him at the Parthenopeium, and deservedly so. It must be a nuisance to him to be so rich."

"Why so?" said Evelyn, who could not comprehend that inconvenience.

"Because it must be so difficult to do anything with no motive for exertion."

Mrs. Bradfield sat at breakfast; and Mr. Bradfield, after opening his letters, and cursing the tea, for the adulteration of which he declared that Alderman S—— ought to be hanged, opened a conversation.

"Who dines here to-day besides Lord Mentmore?"

"Nobody that I know of, unless you have asked some one."

"I expect Lord Holocaust by the three o'clock train from town, and his son Lord Frederick Derrynane. They will be here about five; the carriage must be at the station.

Next week I expect Sir Alexander and Lady Muscatel, the late Lord Mayor, Mr. and Mrs. Bertrand Smythe, Sir Peter Foozle, and the Duc de Belle Alliance. He's a very distinguished member of the ex-royal family. Everything must be got ready for him, and he will be treated like a crowned head while here. He stays two days to see my books."

Mrs. Bradfield felt very uncomfortable; but, as most women do, trusted to the chapter of accidents, and said she would do her best.

"You know what Lord Holocaust is coming here for, I suppose?"

"I have heard you say, with a view to proposing his son for Ellen. Does she know anything of it herself?"

"Not unless you've told her, which you're just fool enough to do. What is it to her? What time does Lord Mentmore usually appear?" asked Abel Bradfield, with a frown

The fact is, Ellen knew all about it.

"Usually at luncheon—not before. He still looks very weak."

"It's very unlucky that Lord Holocaust should come now just as Lord Mentmore is recovering," said Bradfield.

"It cannot make much difference, I should think; they will be company for one another. I'm sure Lord Mentmore must find it stupid enough. Is Laurence coming down to the dinner?" replied his wife.

"Your son, Madam, does not condescend to consult me; and as I have not asked him, he will probably be here."

Mr. Bradfield walked out as Ellen Bradfield, looking as lovely as only an Englishwoman can look at nine o'clock in the morning, walked in and took her seat.

"Do you know that Lord Holocaust and his son are coming here to-day, Ellen?"

"I have heard something about it, mamma."

"Have you been told the object of his visit, my love?"

"I think I know, mamma," said Ellen, blushing and looking a little pained.

"My dear, your father has set his heart on this."

"I don't think it has much to do with *his* heart, dear mamma; and I feel little inclination to sell mine. However, we need not trouble about it yet."

"That's just what I say. Nobody knows what may happen, dear. Don't you think, Ellen, it would be a good op-

portunity to invite the Carringtons to dinner, to make up our quarrel, while Lord Mentmore is here ? "

" Leave the Carringtons to ask us, if they wish for our acquaintance. What is to be done with Lord Mentmore to-day ? Laurence is in town."

" He must go out in the carriage, unless he will ride. I can't think, Ellen dear, why he doesn't ride that quiet pony that he sent for last week."

Ellen did not enlighten her mother as to the probable cause. We will.

Lord Mentmore was falling in love ; and seeing no pleasanter method of passing the day than in the society of Miss Bradfield, he simply rode when he could ride with her, and was always too weak to ride by himself on the days when Laurence Bradfield was away. He was quite sure to prefer the carriage this afternoon, and Miss Bradfield was very conscious of the fact.

" Sir Michael, wait a moment before you go out. Don't you think it would be a good opportunity to make some advance to the Bradfields, while Lord Mentmore is with them ? Shall we ask them to dinner next week ? " said Lady Carrington.

" D—— the Bradfields, my dear ; but do just as you please," said Sir Michael ; keeping to himself the comforting assurance that he had quite prevented the possibility of Abel Bradfield's acceptance of her invitation.

While these scenes of every-day life were enacting, two persons were pre-eminently uncomfortable ; and they certainly deserved to be so. One was Dan Morton, the other was Abel Bradfield. The first of these carried about with him his own incubus. He had struggled for it ; and now that he had got it, in the shape of a parchment, as he was pleased to call it, he did not know what to do with it. It was his constant companion. No familiar could have been more faithful ; nor could he have hugged his dearest friend with greater solicitude ; for he carried it about all day in his velveteen shooting-coat, and placed it under his pillow at night, where it did not tend to soothe his slumbers. But I think I have said all that before. The only solace to his wounded spirit was in fresh depredations, which he still committed on the lands of his patron, Abel Bradfield, almost with impunity. He firmly believed in the intrinsic value of

his stolen property; but he was impatient, and unable to realise.

Abel Bradfield, since his visit to Hugh Darville, had been singularly irritable, even for him. Perhaps for the first time in his life he had got some advice which he meant to follow, and was quite unable to do so. "Burn it, burn it, if you burn the house down," was the warning he listened to. But before he could burn it, it must be found. So day after day, as opportunity offered, the search went on, but the missing paper could nowhere be found. What if it should already have been destroyed! Possibly it might have been; but by whom? At first he searched the house from head to foot; his private room was then devoted to the more careful scrutiny of such documents as offered any hope; still he was unsuccessful. For some days he was urged to renewed exertions; until at length an useless restlessness took possession of him, and he wandered from room to room of his vast mansion, with a despairing scowl upon his hard features. And he was unable to ask for assistance in his search or sympathy in his loss, which made the case only worse.

But there is scarcely any constitution which has not some remedy for its exigencies. In the midst of his dissembled terrors he was to receive visitors. Had these been ordinary persons, with no interest attaching to them but that of his usual guests, they would only have increased his irritation. But they were to forward one of his great schemes. They were people well known in fashionable life, and whose countenance would at least give him a step towards his favourite projects of self-elevation. Lord Mentmore was with him, accidentally it is true; but what an accident! Lord Holocaust and his son had announced their intended visit, and with what a purpose! the ex-Lord Mayor and his wife, a City man truly, but distinguished above all City men —shall I say by his pompous vulgarity and immense fortune? and the Duc de Belle Alliance. H.R.H. were cabalistic letters almost capable of charming anything or anybody. "Lord Mentmore! Lord Mentmore! an earl descended from the Tudors, with a rent-roll of seventy thousand a year," said the manufacturer to himself, "why might not he have done for his daughter?" and he forthwith began to despise the Holocaust alliance, as heartily as he had desired it. "At least they might have put off their visit for another week

or two. But could one ever have calculated on such an event?" No! nothing, not even his successes, went right with him.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A LITTLE SOCIETY, QUITE A 1.

"Suche dir die wahrhaften Vorzuge der guten Gesellschaft, wo du zugelassen wirst, anzueignen."—*Deuts. Maxn.*

THE Duc de Belle Alliance arrived in due course of time at Sommerton. If he is a man fond of attention, he must have been much gratified. His outward demeanour, however, rather falsified that notion. For two days he was bored to death. He was brought from the station in the finest carriage and with the finest horses (four of them to do two miles) that Mr. Abel Bradfield's well-stocked purse could furnish. The carriage indeed was a fine ex-sheriff's vehicle, hired for the occasion. He was literally bowed from the door of the railway carriage, through a host of officials and retainers, by Mr. Abel Bradfield himself, who remained uncovered throughout the ceremony in spite of the remonstrances of Monseigneur. He was made to ascend into this City conveniency, where the excellent Duc was compelled to sit in state; and Abel Bradfield, his host, followed by himself at an humble distance in his own private brougham. Arrived at the Hall the same terrible ceremonies awaited him from the assembled guests, who had sacrificed their own sense of decorum to the earnest solicitations of the master of the house. Nothing occurred to mar the beauty of these arrangements, but the absence of Lord Mentmore, who was too formidable to be taken into consultation on the subject; and the fall of the stout and somewhat infirm Mr. Timmins, the butler, in his attempt to back up the stone steps of the portico. The Duc nearly tripped over him, and very good-humouredly held out his hand to raise the fallen worshipper. He was highly de-

lighted when he arrived safely indoors, and was allowed to pay his respects to the ladies in his own way, who received him at the top of the aforesaid steps.

A foreign duke, of the ex-royal family of his own country, is a great personage for Mr. Abel Bradfield to have received as a guest at Sommerton. It was a relief to find that that eminent man was a much better-bred person than his host, and that he fell at once into an easy conversation, which put everybody at their ease, unless we except Sir Alexander Muscatel, and what he called his lady, *autrefois* his wife. These two could not be made comfortable even by the *bonhomie* and elegance of so well-bred a man as the Duc de Belle Alliance. Lord Holocaust and his son had seen royal dukes before, notwithstanding their expatriation, as they called, curiously enough, a lengthened residence in Ireland. Mr. Bertrand Smythe, *né* Smith, and his wife, were not people to be abashed by anything, and believed that an Englishman was equal to the whole of the nobility of the Continent put together. Mrs. Bradfield's gentle and unaffected simplicity of manner was her best guarantee for never committing herself, and Ellen Bradfield never shone more conspicuously than when her talents for society were called into play.

The Duc, himself one of the most, perhaps the most, accomplished man of the age, had a happy tact of saying a few words on subjects likely to meet the capacity and tastes of everybody. To the ladies, obviously the house, its beauties and curiosities; to his host, who was busied about many things, his books, his farm, his ironworks (of which he was honestly ashamed by the way), afforded topics of conversation.

"Lord Holocaust: I think we have met before, at Lady ——'s."

It was a flattering reminiscence on the part of the Duc. Lord Frederick Derrynane was presented personally; he bowed smilingly, stroked his moustaches which were handsome, and hoped Monseigneur had enjoyed his journey.

"Yes! indeed," said His Royal Highness, with but little accent, "the country is very fine, and the weather not cold, that is, for the season."

"Sir Alexander Muscatel and Lady Muscatel," said Mrs. Bradfield.

All stood still, as the Duc was not yet seated; and as he preferred warming himself with his back to the fire on the hearth-rug, it was not quite clear whether they were to spend the next two hours in an upright position.

The Duc immediately inquired the fashionable news at the West-end, knowing that he could not more highly flatter an ex-lord mayor than by ignoring the City altogether. After a few more disjointed sentences, everyone began to wish that Lord Mentmore would arrive, quite satisfied that they should then see the proper way to meet a Duc of the blood royal; and he did arrive just in the nick of time.

"Ah! mon cher Mentmore," said the Duc at once, rushing forward to embrace his friend. "You here? That is a pleasure."

"Yes, Monseigneur. I am indebted to Mr. and Mrs. Bradfield for a long visit, and for great kindness after a bad fall. I have been laid up here;" and then commenced the most natural conversation in the world, about hunting, shooting, dukes, marquises, London, Paris, and the hundred-and-one things which intimates do talk about. Sir Alexander and Lady Muscatel were astonished, and Mr. and Mrs. Bertrand Smith flattered to find that a royal duke, after all, talked and looked very like other people. Indeed His Royal Highness began to lose caste, or something akin to it. The present remaining semblance of royalty was rather an uncomfortable one—that all stood round him on the hearth-rug, as if he had been the Lincolnshire fat boy, the learned pig, or Miss Biffin.

Having arrived at the fact that he might be talked to without any great danger of a *lettre de cachet* and the Bastille, Sir Alexander Muscatel cleared his throat for action; and a lull having come after a good joke of Lord Mentmore's, at which the Duc laughed heartily, it appeared a good opportunity for saying something. Having made up his mind that he was expected to say something about his own doings with great people, and having been on the deputation of City aldermen, who had represented that portion of London before his Majesty the Emperor of ——, with a pomposity of voice and manner, and with an effect which was perfectly electrical, he inquired of His Royal Highness "Whether he was acquainted with his Majesty the Emperor of ——,

as he had passed several days at the ——, and he had found a most charming and affable person?"

The faces of all the people in the room, excepting that of the royal personage addressed, assumed a very extraordinary change from gay to grave. The Duc, however, stroked the large imperial he wore, and answered with great calmness, and a sly look at Mentmore, which produced a laugh on that nobleman's countenance—

"That he had the honour of his acquaintance, but that circumstances prevented them from meeting so often, or fraternising so intimately, as they might have done."

Taking compassion upon the terrified looks of Abel Bradfield, who cursed all the aldermen in the world at the same moment of time, the Duc referred to his library, and mentioned some rare edition of the "Epistles of Abelard," which was understood to be in Mr. Abel Bradfield's possession.

Having relieved Sir Alexander Muscatel of his difficulty, the Duc at length threw himself into a chair which was at hand, and took up "The Times." Lord Mentmore took possession of a pamphlet; and the ladies followed one another out of the room. Retired grocers are very respectable people, but they ought to arm themselves with the weapons of society, the Peerage, Foreign, Colonial, and British, before they enter upon the arena of conversation with foreign dukes.

The two days of this distinguished meeting passed over pleasantly and rapidly. There were farms and improvements to be inspected; machinery and iron-works, early cucumbers, valuable Elzeyirs, illuminated missals, rare copies of rarer pictures, as subjects of conversation, an afternoon's drive, which the Duc divested of some of its formality by requesting permission to accompany the ladies, and which deprived Lord Frederick Derrynane of his seat in the carriage, Lord Mentmore occupying the vacant space next to the Duc. There were some horses to be looked at; and had there been some to be ridden, Monseigneur would willingly have given up the Aldines and Elzevirs, for which he was ostensibly Abel Bradfield's guest. As it was, he retired to the stable with Mentmore, and smoked his eigar after breakfast without regretting the absence of his host. Even indoors he liked his room better than his company. Dinner,

under such circumstances, is a heaven-born institution indeed. At all times such a thing is acceptable. Whether it consists of a potato, a pipe, and a go of whisky, or the most elaborate performance of Soyer, Udc, or Francatelli; whether it be taken under a hedge in a gipsy tent, in a puddle at a pic-nic (this we take to be the worst possible form), or in a Belgravian dining-room, the result is the same. It supplies a want. Among the wealthy it is far more valuable, strange anomaly! than with the poor. The tinker satisfies nothing but his hunger, as he sits beneath the sweet-smelling curtains of the hawthorn tree sheltered from a summer's sun. The dinner of a gentleman is intended to satisfy half-a-dozen wants, and oh! rarity for this world! answers its purpose. His hunger, his vanity, his prejudices, above all things his *ennui*, are satisfied by his dinner.

Having bored your friends, and having been bored by them, from 9 A.M. to 7.30 P.M., it is a proud position to sit opposite to one's wife, supported on either side by a royal duke and a puissant earl. As Abel Bradfield sat down to this delicacy, he was a proud man. To some it might have occurred that his position was the greater, that he had arrived at it in spite of external circumstances. It ought to have been a subject of congratulation, that his father being a nobody, and his grandfather having no existence at all, he was the host of princes and the possessor of boundless resources. He could not shut his eyes to the advantages of his fine rooms, handsome pictures, burning lights, and sumptuous fare, but he would have been prouder of it all, had he acquired it by no industry, no talents, no perseverance, in himself or his father. He would like the honour and its source to have been further apart. He was not a man to believe that, in the absence of abstract qualities, the heat is more intense, and therefore more valuable, before its radiation. He would have given a certain portion, even of the substance, for some of the shadow; and enjoyed a name which had been made for him by the virtues of a mediæval ancestor, far more than one attainable by his own. I do not like those men. I love hereditary titles to respect to be accompanied by a practical claim upon mankind; and I know that they frequently are; but I love, even beyond it, an innate sense of virtue and honour, which will strive to make for itself a name and rights

truly divine, by exertions employed for the good of our fellow-creatures.

Abel Bradfield had none of the latter feelings, he was proud only that his wife sat between the Duc de Belle Alliance and Lord Mentmore, and rather ashamed of the reason why.

"Ah! mi Lord Mentmore; you are well, here. The house is good, the cuisine is good, and the daughter of our friend is *superbe*." Royal dukes are human.

"You think so, Monseigneur; the young lady will be flattered," rejoined Mentmore.

"Yes: you think so—truly she is charming. You English are very proud of your aristocracy. Here is our man of iron presents you with a model for countesses."

"But in our country we make countesses of them."

"A mesalliance," said the democratic royalist.

"There need be none. In England there are other patents of nobility besides birth."

"Wealth and talents," replied the Duc; "but you think nothing of them."

"Plaît-il, Monseigneur? pardon me. For the first we have the greatest reverence; the second requires but one generation to be forgotten in the natural claims of a title; a combination of the two overrides the other; and the possession of all these is——" Lord Mentmore hesitated for a word.

"Irresistible," interposed the foreigner. "Yours is an enviable position, mi Lord Mentmore."

"Your highness thinks so?"

"Certainly; you can convert anything into the Countess of Mentmore."

"You know Lord Frederick Derrynane?"

"No! but I see him here; why do you ask?"

"He is to convert our host's daughter, Miss Bradfield, into an earl's daughter-in-law, so that I, at least, have no chance of the result your highness proposes."

"Then we must not take Derrynane's seat in the carriage again to-day. We shall ride;" and accordingly they did so, while Lord Derrynane pushed his advances by those skilful means which are said never to fail, provided—there be no stronger army in the field, to relieve the place. There! that's sufficient, we need go no further down the list of "ifs."

"I hope your Royal Highness enjoyed your ride this afternoon. Lord Mentmore is an excellent pilot, I believe."

"Very much indeed, thank you; we went through a fine country for hunting; the fields are very large between here and Spring Vale. My friend Sir Michael Carrington has also a fine place there," said the duke, from the other end of the table.

"You have been there, Monseigneur?"

"Yes, to-day. They are a charming family." Abel Bradfield could scarcely conceal his vexation, but he choked his choler with a glass of wine, which did not rise high against a royal duke. "We saw Miss Carrington, who is lovely; and Mr. Stafford Carrington was not at home. I dare say the young ladies are intimate?" added he, turning to Mrs. Bradfield.

"Not very," replied that lady. "Have you known Sir Michael long?"

"My acquaintance is more with Lady Carrington, who used to be much abroad at one time. She was frequently in Paris."

"Charming place, Paris," began Sir Alexander Muscatel, who was about to give the company some of his experiences of Parisian life, when he was cut short by one of the chance guests, who said "hot," and another, who remarked "that depends on the time of year, cold enough in winter."

"You should go to Egypt," said Bertrand Smythe, though he did not say why, and as nobody seemed anxious to attach this general remark to himself, it fell to the ground.

Miss Bradfield inquired of Lord Frederick whether he knew the Carringtons. "Yes! he did a little. Faith! Carrington gave himself airs. Not his style of man at all." The duke also told the company, that he had ridden from Spring Vale, round by Saxonby, where he had inspected the national schools, the church, and the union workhouse: a lively occupation, to which royal dukes, especially foreigners, are handed over by their friends.

"Any news in Saxonby, Lord Mentmore?" said Mr. Bradfield, anxious to say something. Royal dukes are not supposed to understand county politics, but he answered with great readiness, "We heard that Sir Michael Carrington was going to—to—give up—what you call retire from Par-

liament; and that his son would take his place." Lord Mentmore continued to eat without confirming or contradicting this intelligence; but no apple of discord could have produced greater effect than this did upon Abel Bradfield. However, there was nothing to be done but to grin and bear it, which he did, like a bear at a stake.

The dinner was half over when the servant threw open the door, and Laurence Bradfield walked up to his mother, and saluted her. He was presented to the Duc, who greeted him cordially. He then made a general salutation to the company, with an apology for not having arrived earlier. "Business of the House;" and a side-table was prepared, from which the young man talked, and ate, and drank alternately.

"Business of the House!" Here was a pretty way to treat a prince of the ex-royal family of ——, thought Mr. Bradfield, sen., "business of the House. What house? certainly it was not the business of the house of Bradfield to do so." And as if this little pill was not bitter enough, it caused him once more to reflect upon the intelligence with which the Duc had just enlightened the table. Laurence Bradfield continued to eat and drink, as if there were no such thing as a royal duke or a vacant seat in Parliament.

Before they retired for the night Mentmore announced his intended departure, "the day after the next." The rest of the guests were to terminate their visits about the same time, the great lion of the meeting being due at some other showman's on the morrow. Thus the coast was to be left clear for the premeditated movement of Lord Frederick Derrynane. Poor fellow! he was not bad in himself—not more vicious than two-thirds of the fellows who had been at Eton with him; but circumstances had made him half a fool, and other circumstances had tended to keep him half a knave.

The first half of his nature blinded him to the fact that such a girl as Ellen Bradfield was not likely to unite herself to the whole which two such halves presented; and when he did find it out, the most flattering unction he could lay to what he called his heart was that Mentmore had forestalled him. What made the matter worse was that when rejection came, which of course it did in course of time, and in a manner as delicate as it was decided, he could not help exhibiting his want of generosity.

"Is there no hope that—that time perhaps—haw—ha-a——"

"None whatever, Lord Frederick; in such a matter it is better for me to be candid, and to state that I do not feel that time could change the purport of my answer."

"Ah! Miss Bradfield; I am unfortunate," replied he rather bitterly, instead of appreciating the honesty which was intended to save him useless pain, "had I but known beforehand of the—the—haw—pre-occupation—ha-a."

"My lord, I really do not understand your meaning."

"Ha—ha—of course—haw—Lord Mentmore—his appearance here may have—ha—ha—prejudiced."

Ellen Bradfield drew herself up, as well she might, and looking Lord Frederick Derrynane straight in the face, she said,

"I can only understand your meaning now, my lord, to be one of intentional insult. Permit me to assure you that if Lord Mentmore had never been born, it would have made not the slightest difference in any sentiments I may have expressed towards you. I beg to wish your lordship a very good-morning;" and Miss Bradfield walked rather decidedly up to her own apartments, leaving Lord Frederick Derrynane with the gratifying assurance that he might order his portmanteau to be packed at once.

In the meantime Mentmore himself thought a great deal about his visit to Sommerton; and perhaps the strongest symptom he discovered of admiration for his late host's daughter was to be found in an increased dislike to Lord Frederick. It was a sort of negative acquiescence in the promptings of his inclination rather than a good wholesome principle of love for a beautiful and generous girl. Mentmore, I have said, was very much spoilt about women, and had been made suspicious; so that with many charming traits of character, he had his faults, and a shyness of susceptibility was one of them. He was, however, as usual, immersed in business. Long absence from home brought an accumulation of tenants, bailiffs, stewards, head-keepers, stud-grooms, and above all his master of the horse, who had run over from Newmarket to have a chat about the horses, and to report upon the favourite for the Two Thousand.

"How is Stonehenge?"—he was a magnificent colt by the Druid out of Idolatry.

"Looking wonderful—he had a three-mile gallop this morning, and I saw him again this evening, before I came away," said Wilfred Jones, a man who had spent all his money and all his time on the turf, and having nothing to do of his own, was now looking after Lord Mentmore's stud at Newmarket. It was no sinecure, and Wilfred Jones found it none. It ought to be acknowledged that he tried to do his duty.

"Ground in good order?" asked his lordship.

"Capital: and he does strong work now; he wants nothing but the last polish."

"Have you anything on your own account, Wilfred?"

"Oh! a trifle—of course I've backed him."

"You needn't do so any more; I've put you on. You can have a tenner with me;" and Mentmore pulled out his book.

"There's not much chance of my doing any more. I called at Tattersall's as I came by, and some one has been before us."

"The devil there has!" said Mentmore, who was hasty at times, of course.

"I can't make it out, Mentmore; I wish I could, but there's something wrong; Jackson sells his information, or else he is circumvented by some scoundrel or other. The horse was at fourteen to one. After the private trial, the moment I got into the ring, I was offered nine, then seven, then five."

"What did you do?"

"I took the nine in ponies, and offered to lay the five—no takers. I found out that Jackson has lately had a visitor, a rough-looking customer; one of his former pals; and anything like that must be very bad form indeed. It must be stopped, or no good can be done with the stable. I'm afraid you stand a good lump this time?"

"More than I can afford," said his lordship, a thing he seldom admitted. "However, if it comes off right——"

"Dinner is served, my lord," said a servant throwing open the door; so Jones and Lord Mentmore finished their conversation over their wine.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE FIRST APPROACHES.

"Under floods that are deepest,
Which Neptune obey,
Over rocks that are steepest
Love will find out the way."—*Old Song.*

It was a very bright, hard-blowing day in March. The trees were bending to something approaching a hurricane, and the clouds flitted past in rapid succession, chasing one another through the sky. Laurence Bradfield was down in the country for a few days, having had rather a hard time of it at St. Stephen's. Weather was of little consequence to him; and having invited his sister to a walk with him, which she had declined, he took his way alone to the cottage at Spring Vale, pretty sure of finding its owner at home on such a day. For once he was mistaken. The old lady was out.

"And where is Miss Carrington gone, Nurse? I am anxious to see her to-day."

"I imagine she may be up at the Hall, Sir," replied her favoured domestic.

"Then I'll call again by-and-by." Laurence Bradfield did not think it necessary to say that he had not yet the *entrée* to those holy precincts.

"Very good, Sir," said Nurse, and shut the door with difficulty in the face of the March wind, which carried a whirlwind of dust into the square hall.

Laurence Bradfield walked into the village, and turning up the hill approached the rectory; as he came opposite to it the gate opened and Evelyn Carrington came out. They greeted each other kindly, and Bradfield looked down upon the light-hearted girl with a curious interest.

At that moment she looked exceedingly pretty. Indeed, it is not certain that many men would not have preferred her to Miss Bradfield. The colour in her cheeks, the smiling dimples, the rounded chin and feminine mouth with its dainty pearls within, the glossy hair now dishevelled in front by the boisterous wind, and the laughing, love-beaming

brown eyes with their long dark lashes, were all external signs of the happy disposition and affectionate heart which endeared Evelyn Carrington to everybody around her. These are not, however, generally the signs of the highest class of English beauty. They usually accompany a lower conformation of character, a lower type of mind. Whence comes it, then, that Evelyn escaped this defect? From the natural simplicity by which every action was accompanied, and by a beauty and delicacy of figure not inferior to that of Ellen Bradfield herself. If the latter was fitter to share the council-chamber and the throne of a king, the former looked more like the mother of his children, the participator in his domestic happiness. If dignity and easy greatness sat well upon Ellen Bradfield, a cheerful brightness and sunshine distinguished Evelyn Carrington wherever she appeared.

"Miss Carrington," said he, crossing a remarkably muddy road, which was, however, drying by the wind; "it's long since we met. In fact not since the day of the eventful run when Lord Mentmore hurt himself."

"No; have you heard of or from him lately?"

"Not a word;" and here Laurence looked at her. If he expected a tell-tale blush or any other change, he was doomed to be disappointed. "Mentmore has too many irons in the fire for much letter-writing."

"Not more than yourself I should think. Surely, Mr. Bradfield, you are the busier man of tho two."

"I think not. The largest hunting establishment in England, a string of horses at Newmarket, forty thousand acres of deer-forest in Scotland, with what shooting and fishing I know not besides; a large house in town, and three in the provinces, with a villa at Como, and thousands of tenants and dependants amongst whom he is to distribute some hundred thousand a year, is a busier man than the Member for Plumpton." They continued to walk side by side till they came to the gate of Miss Philly's cottage, where they stopped walking, but continued to talk.

"Perhaps he may be. He ought to be, certainly. I wonder if he's happier for it all?"

"A man can only partially command happiness, Miss Carrington, whoever or whatever he may be."

"I cannot help liking Lord Mentmore so much, that I

never think he makes enough of himself. His resources are so very great."

"Everybody likes him, and I doubt not he might be a greater and a wiser man; but who could not? At the same time, it must be allowed that no man spends money so gracefully and so fearlessly, and surely that was one of the purposes for which he came into the world."

"But too much on himself," said Miss Carrington.

"You desire to distinguish between self-love and selfishness; but Lord Meutmore cannot help appearing selfish, when he may be acting for the simple benefit of others."

"But he would be as well with a twentieth part of the horses and a third of the houses; he can neither ride them nor live in them."

"That proves his disinterestedness. He cannot use all he has, a third of the numbers he has, but he keeps them for the good of trade and the benefit of his friends."

"Ostentation?" said Miss Carrington.

"You like to hear me defend him. He wants a more powerful advocate, at least an honester one."

"Why should you say that, Mr. Bradfield?"

"Because——" and here he paused and looked down, but as if determined to look the affair straight in the face, he raised his eyes again and met hers; "because I would prefer to plead for myself to you."

If the words could have been misunderstood, the tone in which they were spoken could not. Evelyn turned her head and blushed scarlet. It was impossible for her to answer immediately, so utterly unexpected had been the turn which the conversation had taken. Bradfield continued with rapid utterance:

"Oh! Evelyn, forgive me if I have offended you; the opportunities I have had of seeing you lately left me no alternative but to tell you. Perhaps I am premature, it may require time to efface certain prejudices; but give me hope, and then see the name which I am capable of making, with such as you to share it." The secret was out and in plain enough language now; and Evelyn Carrington hung her head in the silence, not of displeasure, but almost of despair.

And how was it possible to tell him without offence?—and how could she offend one of whom she knew nothing but

good, and who loved her, as she had guessed indeed long before?

"Mr. Bradfield, you don't know—there are circumstances which make it so difficult for me to answer properly;" and here she hesitated and fairly broke down. The heavy tears hung on the lids that had never known sorrow before, as she began to feel all the happiness she was doomed to lose.

He interrupted her, and took her hand, which she did not withdraw, and then turning away from her so as not to be witness to her distress, he said, "Yes; I know there are circumstances—but why should there be? There are prejudices of birth to be overcome; but may not honesty, and wealth, and learning in this country create a title to respect? There are sorenesses which have rankled long in the hearts of our fathers, but must they be perpetuated in us? Ask your aunt's advice——"

"There is no one like my mother; you do not know her; but my own sense tells me that I ought not to listen longer."

"But you—you are not ashamed of an honest man's love?"

"I ashamed? oh no! but you scarcely know——"

And at that moment old Aunt Philly appeared at a cottage door about thirty paces from the gate on which the lovers were leaning. Evelyn Carrington turned to go with one look of affection, which held out but small expectation of success, and Laurence Bradfield crossed the road to Aunt Philly.

The ice was broken and it looked very much as if they were likely to drift beneath it.

"You have been faithless lately, Mr. Bradfield."

"To you I have, Miss Carrington," said Laurence, who had recovered his equanimity by an effort. In fact, his was a cheerful disposition, which never saw the impossibility of anything; the having started on the race seemed to him an earnest of winning. "I have been away, in town."

"Doing your duty."

"You hardly think so."

"I beg your pardon. I should like to see you with other views of what your duty is, Sir; but I don't think you do it the less heartily because you are wrong. Saul made a vigorous convert, and so would you."

Laurence smiled in the faint, half-mocking manner so peculiarly his. He never laughed; but a light came into his eyes, which he must have known was becoming to him.

"That's a left-handed compliment. You must regard me as very bad, Miss Carrington."

"I regard you as very good among the very bad: there, Sir, will that satisfy you; now tell me the news, for my nephew is too busy to come and see an old woman."

"Ah! immersed in politics. I hear he is to succeed Sir Michael in the county. A malignant still, you know; but less vicious."

"Is there to be an opposition?"

"Certainly not on my part, and I know of none. I have neither heart nor part in the matter"

"Truly then, Mr. Laurence, I ought to have less confidence in your goodness than I had. I thought you were bound to fight always."

"I declined the combat once before and am about to do so again. Need I be dissatisfied with Plumpton?"

"No, Sir; but this county is a fine opening for an ambitious man."

"Perhaps I'm not an ambitious man, Miss Carrington."

"But I think you are an ambitious man, Mr. Bradfield." And the old lady shook the stick which rested by her side at the speaker.

"For the sake of argument, granted; but must it be political? Might I not have another ambition—a more honest one than that of rivalry? If both sides could give a little and take a little, what good they might do. If Mr. Carrington descends a step from the pedestal of Sir Michael, Laurence Bradfield may come down from that of his father. There is a large class of moderate politicians rising, who shun the extremes of both parties, and who must eventually be the men of the day."

"You think so, Sir; and why?"

"Because they will be the advocates of discussion rather than opposition, and from among them only practical measures will come."

The old lady shook her head. "Don't believe it, Sir. No country prospers without strong and marked partisanship — a powerful and unscrupulous minority keeps the Government on its best behaviour." Perhaps the old lady

was right, after all. "Now, Sir, does your ambition go no further than that?"

Laurence Bradfield had made great friends with Aunt Philly during the winter. He felt from the day of their walk in the fields that sort of respect which belongs, between persons of like dispositions, to sympathy. There was a great deal of affection mixed with it; and that she was Evelyn Carrington's aunt did not depreciate the old lady's value in his eyes. Rising therefore at this last question, and feeling that now or never he might interest her in his fortunes, he walked deliberately across the room and placed himself opposite the fine roomy armchair which the little hunchbacked lady occupied.

"Yes, Miss Carrington, I have an ambition; and now forgive me if I offend you. I have not been able to see Miss Evelyn Carrington without feeling for her, long since, more than for any other lady of my acquaintance. I have been taught by the world that we tradesmen suffer under a peculiar disadvantage. I believe the teaching to be false, for I have never felt it; and in matters of sentiment the heart is the best instructor." Miss Carrington was perfectly silent now, and rested her long chin upon the top of her ivory-crossed cane. "You think differently, my dear Madam; naturally you do. You were born to do so, and you have been educated to do so." Still the old lady was silent. "And that is why I ask your pardon. It is for offending your prejudices, Miss Carrington, not your convictions. Her prejudices were giving way, but she had not yet arrived at any convictions. "To be plain, I love your grand-niece, Miss Carrington. I would willingly be born again of a high and noble family, if I could, for her sake—but I can't. But I can do something more, perhaps better; I can make a name and a position apart from the wealth of an unknown manufacturer, which a whole people shall be taught to reverence. Until I have advanced some steps upon my road, I shall not ask for my reward; when I do I shall ask you to befriend me."

There was much of enthusiasm—of fanaticism, if you will—in what Laurence Bradfield had said; but there was good, honest, sterling truthfulness at the bottom of it. As he stood erect before her, the light shone again in his blue eyes, and his broad chest swelled; and the little old lady

put out her hand to him, and looked up with a kindness of which she was capable, but not lavish, and said,

Laurence Bradfield, at present you can only have my good wishes; when the times arrives, you shall have my good word. Sit down; let us talk awhile."

And so Laurence Bradfield sat down by Miss Carrington, and talked not altogether on indifferent subjects: that is to say, he spoke of his aspirations, his intentions, his hopes for his fellow-creatures; of the good he desired to do, and of the difficulty of setting about it in the right way; and he taught the old lady a lesson which all the Carringtons and most of their neighbours had to learn—the true difficulty with which the rich man has to contend on his road to heaven. It looks so very easy to do good when one has the means, and it is really so very hard; so that is the exercise of patience, and judgment, and tact, and consideration. Anybody can squander money, and very few can spend it.

And the old lady herself was not silent. She told him of the difficulties of his suit, and taught him what he did not understand—that the grievances were legion; that they were older than election opposition, and began when his grandfather had no opinions at all; that they were not only those of class, and of money (which is always a thorn with the losing side), but that there were definite, though unsubstantiated, charges against the early colonists of the Sommerton property, which, though they only affected the present generation collaterally, were positive offences in the eyes of those who suffered by them.

And as Miss Carrington related by scraps the same unvarnished tale which she has told once before in this book, Mr. Laurence Bradfield's eyes grew larger and larger; as his astonishment increased, his hopes grew less.

"And do you really mean to say, Miss Carrington, that my grandfather rested under such a suspicion of—what shall I call it?—meanness or treachery?"

"He did what was right in his own eyes: he bought up a poor man's interest in an estate, which he saw would repay the purchaser, as it has, hundreds per cent. Everybody in the same position would perhaps have done so. It wanted a large mind to resist. As to the payment of the loan by my brother, it rests on grounds that the world has

long declared to be untenable, but which are clung to with increasing tenacity by a family which yearly feels the want of it more acutely. Now you see the difficulties you have to overcome. I know them well, and Evelyn knows them; it is but fair that you should know them too."

CHAPTER XXV

A MYSTERIOUS AND UNSUCCESSFUL SEARCH.

"And so may I, blind fortune leading me,
Miss that which one unworthier may attain."
Merch. of Venice.

MR. ABEL BRADFIELD sat late after breakfast. The ladies were gone, his son was in town, and he recreated himself with a second cup of tea, which Mr. Timmins had poured out for him, and "The Times" newspaper, which, unlike Mr. Bright, he still continued to take, in spite of the cheaper dishes of literature and politics which have been served up of late years with the morning meal. He felt a considerable degree of interest in politics at all times; at least, he professed to do so. It is the correct thing, and a prudent thing, when men have arrived at colossal fortunes, which may be diminished or increased by the fluctuation of markets and the manœuvres of speculators.

At present he was more interested than usual, for he read a brilliant leader on a debate in which his son had taken a conspicuous part, and of whose praises, as a young member, the article in question was lavish. He had an idea that he had not done his son justice, now that he saw he was likely to be a great man without his assistance. He thought that he should be more considerate towards his failings, the chief of which seemed to be a determination to go his own way, and to break the bonds which ought to have enchained him to his father and the opinions of his party. His present effort on popular education was at least creditable to his brains and his eloquence, if it did not fully

satisfy the demands of ultra-Radicalism, and the conclusion he came to was, that Laurence was henceforth to assume a position at home, which the world was bent upon giving him abroad.

Another reason for this tardy act of justice was the ingratitude of his daughter. Ellen, the one thing he had cared about, and that more for the gratification of his vanity and schemes than for real love, had thwarted him; Ellen Bradfield would not be married to one coronet, and appeared entirely indifferent to the possibility of another. Ungrateful girl! She had done nothing to conciliate Lord Mentmore, and she had positively refused Lord Frederick Derrynane. To tell the truth, she seemed careless as to the claims of the whole British peerage; and, with all her beauty and hauteur, with her calm self-possession, so becoming the head of a ducal or baronial table, she looked very like throwing herself away upon whatever proved to be the object of her affections. Marriage was not a subject on which she often indulged in conversation, but when she did, her notions were peculiar, to say the least of it.

"The most despicable thing upon earth is a man or woman who marries for any reason but one—pure unbiassed affection."

That was the only shot she fired during an animated contest on the subject, and Mr. Bradfield had not forgotten it.

At this moment his mind was occupied upon the desirability of patronising his son and snubbing his daughter, and his teeth upon a piece of toast, when the door opened, and the servant announced Mr. Darville. He was closely followed by that gentleman.

"Good-morning, Darville; glad to see you." This extent of civility was caused by the instantaneous recollection that he required his services. "Take a seat."

The servant put one opposite the squire, and Darville took it.

"You've come about that business? Have you done anything?"

"I have." But for once in his life the lawyer did not dive into his tail-coat pocket and produce a roll of papers, tied up with a piece of red tape. "But not much."

"Well! never mind; I'm sure you've done your best this time. What is it?"

"First let me tell you about the county. There can be no opposition."

"D— the county, and the opposition too, Sir. There can be none unless I offer it, and my son refuses to stand by me." He looked in Darville's face, and he saw that his temper had got the better of his judgment, as it usually had done. "I beg your pardon, however, but I am anxious about the other matter—those papers."

"Not more anxious than I am, Sir. They are not forthcoming, unless you have them. But I have gained some intelligence, since my interview with Scarsdale."

"Scarsdale again?" and Bradfield half rose from his chair. "What has he to do with it?"

"Something, at all events. He received old Morton's confession, if it may so be called; and, though he could make nothing of it, there was something in it, I can assure you."

Abel Bradfield repeated the word "Scarsdale" to himself several times. It certainly was an awkward business to have anything like a secret in the hands of Scarsdale, for Abel Bradfield judged most men by himself.

"But I told you this before, surely?"

He certainly never had, for Abel Bradfield was not the man to forget it.

"Never," said he; "and now what have you done, Darville?"

"I have ascertained that there is in your house a room, and that, if those documents are in existence, they are in that room."

"And in which room do you suppose they are?"

Abel Bradfield had forgotten son, daughter, and everything else, in his anxiety to know.

"That, Mr. Bradfield, is for you to say. You must ascertain in which room old Morton Giles was likely to have been employed. It is the only clue we have."

"Have you consulted his son?" demanded Abel Bradfield.

"He has disappeared. I have tracked him to Newmarket, but he was again away, and nothing further can be heard of him. I must ask you one or two questions, if we are to be certain that we are on no wild goose chase. How are you assured of the existence of this document at

all? All conjecture appears to me to be in favour of its destruction."

"No, Darville, no. It was put away. The secret was in the hands of two or three, whose own safety was at stake, it is true; but still they knew the facts of the case. The destruction of the instrument itself would have finally compromised the whole. My father's dying breath declared its existence, and nothing but the suddenness of the last moments prevented its disclosure. Besides, he had a motive."

"And that was?—if I may venture to ask."

"A compromise, or future restitution. My father was actuated by nothing but a determination of making a fortune. Money would have induced him to do anything, and when you consider its power, who can be surprised at it? It is everything to all men. By keeping back the release, he held in his hands a means of compromise at all times. The worst come to the worst, he could have destroyed it at a moment's notice. If restitution would have paid him better, he had it in his power so long as he held that paper, and no longer. But I had it from his own lips: so far he got when a final paroxysm deprived him of speech, and I learnt no more. I learnt enough to know that I was in anybody's power, and with none of those safeguards of which my father held the key." The very thought produced a terrible revulsion in Abel Bradfield, who, looking around at the luxury by which he was surrounded, saw no less plainly the uncertainty of his position. The contrast was the more striking between such boundless resources and his present helplessness.

"Then you require nothing but reassurance of possession," said Darville, whose own participation, extending only to guilty knowledge, required nothing but the non-existence of the papers in question for his safety.

"On the contrary;" and Abel Bradfield's hard features showed, by the trembling lip and loss of colour, the malice wrought within; "on the contrary if I could only be certain that they were gone—that they never could reappear for the benefit of the former possessor, even after my death—I could bear anything." And then, forgetful of his former pride, which had concealed from his wife and daughter how bitterly he had suffered, he went on with a history of

his wrongs. "From the time I have lived in the county to the present day, he has made me feel his heel. He has insulted me before my brother magistrates, by contemptuous opposition or callous indifference. His wife and daughter have been taught to ignore the claims of the ladies of my family in public and private. As a neighbour, I owe him nothing but hostility. His cursed family, and their preeminence, have turned all hands against me. When I might have succeeded, he has thwarted me; when I would have done good, he has been beforehand with me. The very sight of him has made the waters bitter that might have been sweet. I have been more democratic than my nature, because he has been the embodiment of aristocratic pretensions. In his own house he has treated me with an insolence that was the more galling, because it could not be resented. Amid it all I have had but one pleasure, the recollection of the revenge I was taking, and I could die almost happy if I were well assured that he could know it hereafter. I have had but one pleasure—the contemplation of the straits to which he has been reduced by my father's treachery. Think of that, Sir; think of that;" and the man laid his hand upon his heart, to still its beatings. "What must I feel, when I tell you that I can set ignominy for the being who begot me, and for those who come after me, in the scale with my hatred towards Michael Carrington?" As Abel Bradfield concluded these words he sank into the chair he had quitted at the commencement of this discussion, and wiped, with trembling hands, the huge drops of perspiration which had settled on his brow.

Hugh Darville was thunderstruck—he was frightened; and pouring out a glass of water, from the caraffe which stood on the table, presented it to his friend. For some time neither spoke. The lawyer was unable to offer any counsel which could stem the tide of the other's indignation. Abel Bradfield had nothing more to say. At length he resumed, in a cold and trembling tone:—

"That paper I must have, Darville. Can you find it?"

"Everything shall be done that I can do to discover it; and if I could lay hands on Morton, I don't despair."

"Spare no efforts; money shall be forthcoming. I have often had to modify the demands of that scoundrel, but this time he may name his price."

"I don't know that he can assist us; I only hope so. He was with his father not long before his death, and there is a probability of his knowing something; at all events, he can tell us whether and where his father worked for Mr. Bradfield."

At that moment a ray of light seemed to illumine Abel Bradfield's worn features. He was about to speak, but with a strong effort he repressed his first effort, and merely thanked him for his assistance. In a few minutes the lawyer took his leave.

He was scarcely gone—the echo of his footsteps had scarcely died away from the marble flooring of the hall—ere Bradfield rose. "How fortunate! Not before him, however. What an idea!" He then rang the bell.

"Order a fire to be lighted immediately in the little room at the end of the passage; I have some business to transact; and see that I am not disturbed."

His orders were instantly obeyed. In less than half an hour he began a search in the same chamber in which we have seen Dan Morton pursuing the same occupation. It was not with the same result. First he looked for the keys, destroying three or four memoranda, and consigning them to the fire; then he searched the iron safes and boxes, but he knew as well as most men that there was nothing there. But he had suddenly recollected that, in this room, his father had passed much of his time, and that here Giles Morton had been employed in putting up the mantelpiece, and in superintending the arrangements of the room. Bit by bit the whole thing came upon his recollection. This table was old Morton's work; the chair on which he sat was the old man's suggestion and manufacture. How could he have been so shortsighted? Thank goodness Darville was gone, and now he could have it all to himself.

He then began to examine the room: the wainscot, the shutters, the closed drawers of an escritoir; but his search was unsuccessful. He turned to the mantelpiece: he examined the carving, he tapped the panels. Ah! what is that? As he looked at the square centre his hair grew cold, and that ominous beating of the heart began. He looked closely at it. What? It has been tampered with: lately, too. The place where it had been closed had been lately moved. He presses it sharply—it yields immediately

to his touch, and, as the panel slides back, he discovers an empty space.

He is sick at heart—sicker than Dan Morton, when he first saw the empty safe—and fell back, for this is his last chance. The paper has been there and is there no more! Can it be destroyed? No! for the evidence of his own senses shows that something has been taken thence. By whom? That's a fearful question for Abel Bradfield to answer. Is he surrounded by spies? Who are his servants? Do they know anything about this? How should they? Is it his son?

It seemed to Abel Bradfield that that paper, in the hands of Laurence, would be sure to reach its destination. He knew his son too well to think that he would have hesitated a day: that was the only gleam of sunshine that visited him in his darkness. Yes; there were but two people who could have had access to it, in any way interested — Hugh Darville and Laurence Bradfield. The former? Impossible! The latter? Improbable! Besides which, he knew well that his first impulse would be to bring it to him—to his father. Yet they distrusted one another, and he might have taken it elsewhere. However, it must have gone one way or the other, whoever had it, to himself or to Sir Michael Carrington. He had heard nothing of it yet. Could it be a myth altogether! Inaction was worse than death. He was compelled to hope for the best and to suffer the worst, and so we must leave him for the present.

CHAPTER XXVI.

SILVERMERE.

"Er muss reisen, aber zein Herz bleibt zuruck."
KOTZEBUE.

LONDON was not yet full, but the clubs were. Business had brought the men to the metropolis, now that hunting was almost over. A few packs, with fine woodlands, or in wet or not very forward countries, were having a few more last days, and a monomaniac or two stuck to them still; but the majority had changed their quarters; and Limmer's, and Long's, the Clarendon and Stevens', the Arlington, the Reform, the Conservative, Boodle's, Brookes', and White's, gave evidence of the migratory nature of the English gentleman.

On the steps of one of the principal political clubs of London stood half-a-dozen men of various ages discussing the debate of the previous evening.

"What do you say, Milham?" asked Lord Gossamer.

"The most promising young one out, my lord."

"A trifle heavy; not prosaic exactly, but bookish," rejoined his lordship.

"Requirements of the age, my lord. No use now to talk about what one doesn't understand. Time's rather valuable, and the country has found it out. Besides, education is a toughish subject; not like any of your light questions—a continental war, or Schleswig and Holstein."

"Very eloquent; at least he was listened to very attentively for three quarters of an hour."

"Plenty of sense, as well as sound. That's what people like now. The speech reads as well as it sounded. Depend upon it there has not been a better maiden attempt these five years," said Admiral Downright.

"Rising young man," said Tom Dunderfield, who had been one himself the last five and twenty years, and always acknowledged, but hated rivals.

"Rising," said Milham, "you mean risen. Upon my soul it was the most refreshing thing we've had this session,

It was delightful to see the way in which he overhauled Thwackham's theories, and separated the chaff from the wheat. He put us all in the hole—his own party as well as ours."

"What do you call his party?"

"Why, he sat on the Liberal benches and talked Conservatism—that is, it looked like Conservatism trying to find its way out of the surrounding darkness by the light of Liberality. He'll soon have a party of his own, if he makes many more such speeches as that."

"But he calls himself Liberal."

"His father takes the trouble off his hands in that respect, though he declined to stand for his county on the Liberal interest," said Milham.

"That's because he would not oppose the Carrington interest."

"Considerate of him," said Dunderfield; "have the women nothing to do with it?"

"Women? I should think not—what can they have to do with it?" asked Milham, who never saw anything beyond his nose, and that imperfectly.

"Oh! nothing, of course," rejoined the other. "I merely asked the question; don't say I said anything about it; only they do say he's confoundedly attentive to Evelyn Carrington; and certainly the old iron-master's money might not come amiss in that quarter. Two generations of Carringtons are about equal to a general war."

At that moment Laurence Bradfield appeared on the steps, and the coterie separated, looking at one another unutterable things.

"Hallo! Bradfield, where are you going?" said Carrington, who crossed Pall Mall at that moment, and thought of nothing better to say.

"I'm on my way to Mentmore's; but I must call at Sommerton on my road, as I have to take down my mother and sister to-morrow. I shall endeavour to stay for the recess."

Stafford Carrington manifested greater interest in his proceedings, and asked him "by what train he intended to go?"

"By the 3·30 P.M. Saxonby to-morrow. It will get us down in time for dinner."

"I'm very glad to hear we shall meet. We are going down to-morrow too, probably at the same time."

The young men parted, both in excellent humour with the other, and neither willing to admit the reason why. Evangeli!—the messengers of good tidings are always welcome.

The most beautiful place in the county of —— is Silvermere. It has belonged to the Mentmore family since the Wars of the Roses, at which time it came into their hands in exchange for an estate which had been forfeited during an opposition occupancy of the throne in those troublous times. The house was large and commodious, without one architectural beauty. It partook of all styles, and had enjoyed apparently the worst epoch of each; and yet, from its situation alone, it was never regarded than as one of the lions of the county. It was placed half-way down an amphitheatre of magnificent woodland hills. On three sides the most luxuriant foliage alternated with abruptly terminating hills. Here and there a vista was opened to a distant prospect, disclosing the blue outline of another country. Three sides of the house itself were backed by noble trees, at a sufficient distance to relieve it from dampness; and notwithstanding its architectural deficiencies, it stood out from its dark-green background a noble mass of warm coloured stone. The turrets at either corner were adorned with flags during the residence of the family, and marked to the neighbourhood a season of hospitality and cheerfulness, which had made it famous from generation to generation.

It was approached on all sides by fine roads, showing the taste and munificence of its owner, as you came nearer the property. For a mile or two around, before entering on the domain, the roads and hedges were trimmer, the little villages and school-houses neater, the sides of the ways were kept with more scrupulous care and attention. The very children and old dames looked brighter and cleaner, as they curtsied to the occupants of one of the castle carriages, or a fly evidently bearing its freight to that all-powerful mansion. Once within any of the numerous lodge-gates which surrounded the home-park, and the traveller had come upon a garden. Each side of the well-gravelled drives was mown like a lawn for some ten or twelve feet back, till the

mossy turf lost itself gradually in the shrubs and among the bolls of the magnificent trees, on which might be seen and heard the shy wood-pigeon; while below ran constantly across the road the pheasant and the rabbit, more in wanton gambols than in fear. At intervals along the green turf were planted the finest of our hardy shrubs, and choice Americans, azalias, and rhododendrons; and the feathery branches of the deodara, the araucaria, and the Wellingtonia swept the ground. Here and there a rustic temple, or the porch of some secluded keeper's cottage, drooping with creepers, just beginning to bloom again, gave a look of homely comfort to this Arcadian scene; and a bubbling fountain invited the stranger to linger yet, before he terminated the enchantment of nature by the tamer enjoyments of artificial life.

Approaching the house the woods widen, and are thrown back into large open glades, displaying a park, in which deer may be seen herding together, and the long-haired black north-country cattle grazing in all directions. On the right lies the beautiful piece of water, from which the place has taken its name. Its shores are studded with boats, punts, and all the adjuncts for pleasure parties and sport. On the left a broad and gently-sloping road, of the finest gravel, leads up to the principal entrance to the house, which recedes between two projecting wings. On the one side lie the offices, and on the other lie rooms less frequently in use, excepting when (as on the present occasion) an influx of company brings them into occupation. The large reception rooms lead from the hall, and with the exception of the billiard-room, look upon the other side of the house.

But the grand feature of Silvermere still remains to be portrayed. The fourth side looks, unimpeded by trees or hills, along a lovely vale as far as the eye can reach. A river's silvery stream winds rapidly but smoothly through it, forming here and there larger reservoirs of water, as the beauty of the landscape may seem to have required. Immediately in front of this side of the house is the flower garden,—a garden not only unequalled in England, but in any part of the known world. It is what is usually known as a lawn, but of such vast and inconceivable dimensions, that the word conveys no sort of

idea of the reality. It is a lawn in its luxuriant and mossy turf, in its perfect order and beauty, in its perfection of detail. It is a park in its size, in the undulations of its ground, in the magnificent grouping of its finest trees; some of which in their untamed luxuriance have grown downwards and again taken root upwards, forming from their single stems whole masses of foliage, and showing suckers larger than the parent stem. Here in every variety may be seen the most magnificent and costly firs, cedars, and pines; art and munificence supplying the deficiencies of our colder clime. Large and well-arranged conservatories exhibit the most rare and costly exotics; and are so built and placed as to give a fairy-like lightness to their size and extent. Here and there, one above the other, are basins, on whose bosoms are erected fountains from the finest models, and which throw their waters hundreds of feet high, colouring the landscape to the eye as it looks through the dropping spray. When summer brings her flowers to perfection, huge masses of the most brilliant colour may be seen with scarcely an intervening space of green in some places, whilst in the further distance, and over the hilly sides of the lawn, along the slopes, and through the scattered foliage of the shrubs and trees, the eye may trace a ribbon-border of the brightest flowers stretching away to the utmost limits of the lawn. Silvermere, in a word, was one of the loveliest spots in existence; it had neither a rival nor a mistress.

Before Laurence Bradfield and his mother and sister started on their proposed visit, two things occurred which we must not pass over.

It will be in the recollection of the reader that when Laurence had his struggle with Dan Morton in the plantation, the only trophy which he brought away with him was a leaded stick. It was nowise remarkable, and looked at first sight equally capable of knocking on the head a man or a pheasant. On closer inspection, however, it proved to be so.

Miss Bradfield had a dog, a water-spaniel and retriever; as a favourite he was occasionally to be found in all parts of the house. One evening as they were sitting after dinner, in the temporary absence of Mr. Bradfield, Sambo entered the dining-room, bringing with him the stick in question.

He laid it down with much grace by the side of his mistress.

"What has the dog there, Ellen?" said Laurence.

"A stick, dear; he brought it out of my room, I suppose. It has been there some time."

"Just let me look at it—thank you; I know it," and he smiled quietly. "Curious wood, is it not? very heavy—I forget the name of it—but I know it is Australian."

"Australian: is it? Nanny Fletcher says it belongs to Dan Morton."

"And who is Dan Morton, Ellen?" said her brother, with some animation.

"A great big fellow, who lives by poaching and other respectable means. He professes to be a tenant of papa's and to work at the iron-works; but I never heard of his doing anything."

"Then Mr. Dan Morton is the gentleman whom I caught poaching or love-making here one night. Capital stick, isn't it?" and here Laurence Bradfield surveyed his prize complacently,—"handsome wood."

"Of course, I remember; she told me that he had been years in Australia. He had to leave the country for something or other, not very creditable."

"Precisely—he must be the person. And where is he now?"

"Oh! I haven't the slightest idea. I scarcely know him; but it's an old Sommerton name."

Laurence appeared to meditate a few moments, then his face resumed its ordinary serenity; and picking up the stick he stood by the door while his mother and sister retired.

Ladies'-maids are of delicate materials; still they find a limit to their ailments, when their mistresses exhibit an antipathy to chronic ill-health. The consequence was the speedy recovery of Ellen's maid, and the return to her house of Nancy Fletcher. Thus it came to pass that the piece of paper which Scarsdale had dropped, and which Job Fletcher had carried to his wife, still remained in her possession; and though it excited her curiosity, it can hardly be said to have much perplexed her. After some time, however, spent in conjecture, as it contained the names of two families with whom she had some sort of connection, and seeing no

other way of setting her doubts at rest, she determined upon taking the paper to Miss Ellen, as she was called in the village.

Miss Ellen was rather puzzled at the circumstance ; and not having much idea of business, very naturally postponed entering on the subject until she should see her brother. Laurence, however, was not to be caught during the session at all times ; and thus the note which old Morton had given to Mr. Scarsdale passed about two or three months in the hands of Mrs. Job Fletcher, and the same time in those of Ellen Bradfield. Knowing but indistinctly the relations which had existed between the Bradfields and Carringtons, she had put it away, and when chance brought it to light she felt very little interest in an old and time-honoured memorandum. She did however much the same to resolve her doubts as Nanny had done before to her. She presented the paper to Mr. Scarsdale.

"Bless me, Miss Bradfield ! and where did you get this ? "

"Nanny Fletcher gave it to me. She knows nothing about it; no more do I."

"And why did you give it to me ? "

"Because you are the great 'medicine man' of the village; and if it is of no use to you, I'm sure nobody else knows what to do with it. I was going to destroy it."

"But it belongs to me."

"Belongs to you ; does it ? Then I wish you joy of so valuable a possession."

"I must have dropped it in the village. Good-morning, Miss Bradfield."

'He's a very curious person is Mr. Scarsdale. I never used to think him uncertain, but he is very much altered these last three months. My poor father frets him, I presume ; but that's no reason he should be so very odd in his manner to me."

Ellen Bradfield was not in love, or she might have been odd herself.

Scarsdale had recovered his lost note, and was not much nearer the end of his skein for that. He had only been reminded that if Sir Reginald Carrington would go to Patcham and pay some money, he would receive the

release. Heads or tails! there was not much to be got out of that.

"Hallo!" shouted Captain Trumps, with his mouth full of *cotelette aux points d'asperge*, and rushing to the window, "here's a row, Lady Mary." Lady Mary deserted her egg; and a very pretty couple they looked as they stood, framed and glazed, staring into the garden. "Look at the people: there's something wrong. By Jove, they're all coming towards the house."

Lady Mary applied her glass to her eye, and beheld the advance of apparently hostile troops from all quarters, over-running the whole garden, sauntering here, there, and everywhere, stopping to admire the views, or to take up a position, looking up at the trees, and speculating on them as a catapult for forcing the doors. "Dear me, Captain Trumps, what is to be done? And what a set! did you ever! they look like operatives."

"By Jove, this is the great unwashed; some beastly attack on the aristocracy," said Trumps, who was rather amused with the proceeding, and who smoothed down his black, glossy, crimpled curls, for which he was remarkable among his brother officers. "Lots of women too; and there's one with a baby. They don't go on to the grass, that's one thing; Mentmore's deuced fond of his grass, Lady Mary."

"But, dear me, Captain Trumps. Why don't you ring the bell? surely the house is going to be put into a state of defence—pray ring the bell."

"Oh! certainly, if you wish it;" and Trumps went to the bell. Everybody else had finished breakfast an hour ago. Trumps and Lady Mary were always late, from some curious coincidence, which neither of them could explain. Having rung the bell, he resumed his place at the window, and burst out laughing. "Oh! I know what it is now. These are the people from Coppernails; it's a town about six miles off; it's a great fighting place, and Mentmore has lent them the park. Most good-natured fellow, Mentmore. I suppose they've mistaken the way."

Lady Mary was not an admirer of the Prize Ring, so she said, "Lent them the park! oh! nonsense, Captain Trumps; how could he lend them the park? He's a magistrate, and a legislator, and all that sort of thing."

"Oh!" said Trumps, laughing heartily, "magistrates and legislators like fights, and wouldn't put a stop to them for the world. It's only the police. Those fellows are always in the way, except when they're wanted. Oh! oh! I say, Mr. Stubbs, there's a lot of people all over the gardens; hadn't you better tell Lord Mentmore as soon as possible?"

"Yes, and get the front door closed and barred," added Lady Mary, "as soon as possible." Mr. Stubbs made his way to the window.

"Oh! my lady, you needn't be afraid, my lady. It's only the people from Coppernails. My lord allows them to come every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday; we have a thousand or more sometimes in the summer; they bring their perwisions, my lady."

"What, then, are we confined to the billiard room, or the open country for the day?" asked Captain Trumps. "I vote we go for a ride, Lady Mary."

"Oh no, Sir, certainly not. There's my lord, and Mr. Bradfield, and the duchess, and Miss Bradfield, and Mr. Carrington, and most of the gentlemen, have been out there this half-hour. Would you take a little more tea, my lady?"

"No, thank you, Mr. Stubbs."

"Just bring me those cutlets, Stubbs, if they're hot. Thank you, that will do," said the captain, helping himself "the cream, please; that will do;" and Mr. Stubbs left the room, while Lady Mary resumed her seat.

"That's so like Mentmore, isn't it? I do think he's the kindest creature in the whole world," remarked her ladyship, who having partly given up Mentmore as a bad job after three seasons, still had the good sense and honesty to praise him. Trumps felt a little aggrieved.

"I thought Mentmore was by way of being a tremendous Tory?"

"So he is, I believe; that is, he voted with dear papa last session, on the censure of ministers; but he has very Liberal notions on some points."

"And this is one of them."

"Well, now! I declare I like him all the better for it," said the lady; "he always thinks for himself, pa says; and that's something."

"Yes! I think he is a capital fellow; but this is entirely Bradfield's doing; he has become uncommonly thick there lately. What do you think of the girl?" This was rather a sharp thrust from the captain; as it was currently reported that Mentmore was turning his thoughts that way.

At that moment he entered the room. "Oh! Lady Mary, I am ashamed of you; we finished breakfast an hour ago; but I hope you have everything you want; if not, Trumps will be so good as to ring for Mr. Stubbs."

"Lord Mentmore, is it true that you have these people here all over the gardens three days a week?"

"Indeed I do, Lady Mary. I hope it meets with your approbation."

"Oh! that's so charming. It is so delightful to see them about, with their dear little babies, and hard-boiled eggs, and that sort of thing, you know. It's so good-natured of you, too, for they must do a great deal of mischief."

"None that is not set right in a day," said his lordship.

"But they pick the flowers and break the shrubs."

"Very seldom indeed; besides a flower or two would not ruin us here, though it is strictly prohibited, as you may see in the grounds. They're very well-behaved, good sort of people, and work very hard at times; an outing, as they call it, does them good."

"I'll tell you what, Mentmore, you ought to return you own man for Coppernails—there's no mistake about that."

"Perhaps I do," said he, laughing; "would you like to sit for it, Trumps? is that the sort of constituency you'd like to shake hands with?"

"I'd rather do it after they were washed," said Trumps; turning his ring round, and looking at his own neat, well-shaped, and well-coloured fingers.

"You're fastidious. Bradfield does not care a straw about it. He says there's more dirt done by clean hands than by grimy ones, sometimes."

"That's your new friend, Lord Mentmore," said Lady Mary. "He's charming, quite. I do delight in originality."

"Then come out into the gardens; you'll see plenty of it. Come along, Trumps, if you're going to stand for Coppernails, you must get some knowledge of your constituency.

I'll introduce you ;" and they all went out to look at the people, who were already, thus early in the day, scattered over the pleasure-grounds ; admiring the views, or the flowers, or lounging by the cool-looking reservoirs, waiting for the playing of the fountains, which had been promised them.

One of the circumstances connected with Mentmore's popularity, was his regard for other people. It was not that he was not selfish ; any man brought up as he had been, must have become so, more or less ; but he made certain self-sacrifices to the masses, which showed rather sympathy with classes than with individuals. It is a higher excellence of the same virtue. Sympathy with individuals is often prompted by personal liking ; sympathy with the multitude, never. The *civis Romanus* was a greater man in the integrity of his character than Pylades or Orestes. The greatest security for success in life, is a genial sympathy with other people. When a man wants this, he may be a good friend and an excellent man, but he can never be a popular one.

The greatest boon that had ever been granted to the poor of Coppernails was this rural treat. Overworked, sometimes half-fed, they still strove for an occasional holiday as far as Silvermere. If a man had only bread to eat, he could here eat it with his wife and children, surrounded by luxuries of nature which few could enjoy. Monday is a proverbially idle day among the factory people. Whole van-loads in the fine spring and summer weather might be met between the two places ; to be counted always in hundreds, upon great occasions by thousands. But it was something more than this. The people began to attach an importance to this permission which it did not carry with it. They regarded the owner of Silvermere as a personal protector. It seemed to them as if nothing could go quite wrong while they participated in such splendour. They came to attach some of his greatness to themselves ; and many a heart-ache has been cured or postponed by the unpretending and natural thoughtfulness of Lord Mentmore.

On the present occasion the groups which filled the grounds appeared to be actuated by a delicacy not commonly attributed to English people. There was an evident wish not to intrude upon the company at the castle;

and a great portion of the garden nearest to the house was thus unoccupied excepting by the guests or the family. Lady Mary, aided by Captain Trumps and Lord Mentmore, became wonderfully bold, and was soon amusing herself with the peculiarities of that class of the people of which she knew least. Trumps was quite at home; and called his companions' attention to the beauty often met with among the class of operatives. If less healthful than that of peasant life, it is frequently more delicate, and approaches more nearly to an educated standard of excellence.

Just then a shout arose, which faintly spread through the grounds, and a concourse of people ran towards the water, as the fountains began to play. In a few seconds they were throwing their jets high in the air, and the people were amusing themselves as the spray, borne by the light breeze, began wetting the women and children who stood nearest to the water's edge. A little incident took place which attracted attention to a man who might otherwise have escaped remark, unless it had been given to his fine proportions and handsome face. On the upper side of the highest basin stood Lord Mentmore, the Duchess of Caradoc, Lady Mary Gwendolyn, Miss Carrington, and Mrs. Bradfield, with a few of the hardiest spirits, anxious to obtain a closer inspection of the duchess and her bonnet. For the benefit of the reader we may mention that it was of grey crape and point lace.

Lower down stood Stafford Carrington, Ellen Bradfield, and her brother; three or four men, who were the devoted slaves of any pretty woman for the time being, and our friend Trumps, who amused himself with backing one gold fish against the other, with the colonel, for half-a-crown a mile, as he called a stipulated distance marked by a stick at the bottom of the pool. When the spray fell on the tidy bonnets and shawls of the excursionists, there was a little push to get out of the way. In the *mêlée* a young and delicate woman, who held a child of some weight in her arms, was pushed so near the edge of the basin, which was undefended, that she fell over the side, and she and her child were straightway immersed in the water. It was deep enough to have drowned the baby, and as the poor woman raised herself, so she seemed to think, by her appeal for help. At that moment a handsome-looking fellow in a

shooting jacket, with fine dark eyes and hair, and remarkable in the crowd by his height and figure, walked off the stone edging up to his waist, and seizing the child as it lay a bundle of screaming clothes, about to sink, handed it to a bystander as huge and strong as himself, and as ugly as the other was handsome. Having then tenderly wiped its little face and hands, which were none the worse for the washing, he handed it to its mother.

The incident had not escaped notice, of course, and Lord Mentmore sent a gardener to have the woman and the child taken to one of the lodges. When he went down to look for the man, thinking his wetting should be rewarded by a sovereign, he and his friend were nowhere to be found.

"Do you see the man's face, who picked the child out of the water, Ellen? I know it quite well, but cannot recollect who it is. Here, come nearer; there he goes, with that great big fellow; he looks very little like a Coppernails man."

"Yes! I know him well enough. What can he be doing here? It's Job Fletcher, Laurence."

"So it is, Miss Bradfield: what capital eyes you have; and that's the greatest poacher in the country with him, that big fellow. His name's Morton. He's been up before my father often enough."

"The other's a Sommerton man, Mr. Carrington. I should have thought you hardly took sufficient interest in our village to have known anything about him."

"You know he married a sort of maid and *protégée* of my great-aunt, so that we have some sort of acquaintance with him. Besides which I feel an interest in many things that I get very little credit for, Miss Bradfield, and Sommerton is one of them."

Ellen Bradfield distributed the leaves of a rose rather deliberately on the grass, and was suddenly seized with an anxious desire to know what Captain Trumps was about.

"Trumps, Miss Bradfield? Just now he is torturing goldfish with his riding-whip. Curious how naturally cruel we all are."

"Inconsiderate, I think you mean; and men more than women."

"Perhaps that's the right word; the result, however, is the same. But I am not prepared to subscribe to the last theory, by any means. Indeed I think the reverse is the case."

"Why, Mr. Carrington," said the young lady, opening her eyes, "you forget all your sports: the foxes, the birds, the fish, to say nothing of the infant recreations of birds-nesting, ant-destroying, cockchafer-spinning, daddy-long-legs-mutilating, and all the other juvenile amusements of the male population."

"Truly you seem remarkably well-up in the sports of childhood, as well as manhood; but you know there are theorists who vow that foxes like being hunted, and horses ridden after them. To be sure, we never suspect young ladies of catching flies, or spinning cockchafers, but they are supposed to have methods of their own for torturing their enemies; and what makes their cruelty the more wanton—it is said their friends."

"Oh! that is a charge quite unintelligible; let us have an instance?"

"Here comes one—Trumps. He is a miserable example of the cruelty of Lady Mary Gwendolyn."

"Now I understand, Mr. Carrington. Allow me to say that she should be regarded rather as a general practitioner, with an interesting case on hand. The remedy is entirely in his own hands, or Lady Mary is only acting as the Nemesis of coquetry. Captain Trumps is a very feeble illustration of your doctrine."

The gallant officer was just advancing.

"Well, Trumps, what have you been doing?" said Lord Mentmore, who had just joined them.

"I've been doing the colonel out of three half-crowns. He laid me three to one on one of the fish, while they were running; and just at the finish I came with a rush and won on the post by a short head. I think it was that last scientific touch under the ribs that did it though."

"Oh! that's your idea of a *finish*, is it?"

"If that's your idea of a pun, Mentmore, permit me to say that the colonel beats you into fits. When the match between us was first proposed, he thought we might both go *to scale*."

The colonel, being like many other colonels, not in the

habit of electrifying his auditors by his wit, received a disproportionate ovation in his absence.

"What do you propose to do to-day, after luncheon, Lord Mentmore?" said the charming Duchess of Caradoc—charming in spite of her high birth, large fortune, and good looks, things which are supposed by some writers to militate against true virtue or goodness.

"I propose that we should visit the ruins of Silverstone—for there is a Silverstone as well as a Silvemere. Now, duchess, you shall do me the favour to chaperon Miss Bradfield, and I will accompany you, as I know all the points of interest. Lady Mary shall change places, and go with Mrs. Bradfield, and Captain Trumps shall be their escort; he knows all the country, and has amusing legends to tell of all the brooks, and many of the fences in it. Then, Bradfield, how will you go?"

"If you will lend me the pony I rode yesterday——"

"Oh! stay; we must provide for Lady and Miss Carrington. Stafford, you ride; or do you prefer the phaëton?"

"Oh! pray don't have out a hack for me," said Laurence Bradfield, suddenly changing his mind as to the eligibility of riding; "I really should be most happy to escort Lady Carrington, if she will allow me."

"I prefer driving, Mentmore, I assure you; and if I don't inconvenience you, and the duchess——," said Stafford Carrington.

"Inconvenience!" said the duchess, with her blandest smile, "when was Mr. Carrington known to inconvenience anybody by his company?" It was so true that he might have done so by his absence, that to any impartial observer the change of countenance upon this rearrangement of parties, in at least four instances, would have been eminently apparent.

"So much for us," said Mentmore; "but what's to be done with Lord Dallington, and the colonel, and Stapleton, and Wilfred Jones, and three or four more? My aunt won't go; she never goes out with a party, sight-seeing? I think we'll give them the break; they're all men, and can smoke and do as they like. Dallington and Wilfred Jones are sure to handicap half the horses in Newmarket before they get back."

The ruins were probably a great imposition—I know they generally are—but the ride answered its purpose. Mentmore lionised the duchess, as in duty bound, and Ellen Bradfield fell to Stafford Carrington's share.

Mentmore was scarcely satisfied with the arrangement—man is sometimes as changeable as woman. Once he had desired, above all things, that his friend Carrington should be more intimate with the Bradfields, and was disappointed that it was not so. His own accident had led to the fulfilment of his wishes; and now he almost regretted its results. The truth is, he was beginning to feel a renewal of that interest in Ellen Bradfield, which he had already experienced when a guest at her father's house. He was in a different situation here. Other ladies demanded his services, and, as a host, their demands were to be complied with. Even so, he would have preferred a less good-looking and attractive substitute than Stafford Carrington to take his place by Miss Bradfield's side.

"What did you think of the ruins, Bradfield?"

"Dam old," said Wilfred Jones, who had not much idea of antiquity, excepting by the mouth. "Couldn't do much in the way of making a house; too old to breed from I should say."

"The situation is considered very fine," continued Lord Mentmore, not paying much attention to Wilfred Jones, except on the subject of racing.

"So it is. In themselves not so picturesque as some; they are in too good preservation. Some Dowager Lady Mentmore's house, I presume?"

"Yes; that's exactly what they are. And what will you fellows do now?"

"I'm going down to the cricket-ground." "So am I." "And I." "I must write letters," said Bradfield. "As you like, I'll come shortly," said Mentmore. "You'll find Carrington, and Miss Carrington, and some of the ladies down there now."

Bradfield's letters were very short that afternoon.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AN AMBUSCADE.

"Illi alternantes multâ vi prælia miscent
Vulneribus crebris."—VIRG. *Georg.*, lib. iii.

I LIKE a cigar; and if intoxicating liquors have been obtained from different plants producing however a like effect, the same cannot be said for the narcotics in which we indulge. Each contains its own peculiar principle. I have no desire to rank with the opium-eater. The hop produces gout, notwithstanding its adherents over every country in which Englishmen have set foot. Strychnia, its occasional substitute, has peculiarly unpleasant results. The poppy and the lettuce are said to soothe pain and induce sleep; and a decoction of the former in use in Persia produces such marvellous effects upon the brain, that the most fulsome compliments follow the most violent quarrels and abuse.

But no such results spring from the moderate use of tobacco. If men could only be persuaded that pipes are for the vulgar, and, however fragrant, cannot but lower the true gentleman in his own estimation, we might still enjoy our national narcotic without a murmur. "Those nasty pipes," says Mrs. Smythe; "not that I object to a cigar, my dear. I'm told the Duke of Cambridge, and even the Prince of Wales, occasionally indulge in such a luxury." Of course! When the troubles or excitements (for there are men, whatever philosophers say, who have troubles, as Banting *par example*) of the day are over, when a really unexceptionable dinner has been tempered by a moderate use of the very best vintages, can anything be more delightful than that one well-made, well-conditioned cigar? None of your delicate, lady-like cigarettes for me, the very rolling up of which produces a feeling akin to medicinal treatment, but a fine full-flavoured regalia redolent of the south-western hemisphere, allaying all irritation, and predisposing to a calm and imperturbable self-reliance, which treats all questions, from personal abuse to pecuniary loss (the two

hardest things in life to bear), with a spirit of philosophic indifference. I have imbued even the females of my family with the same enlightened view of this theory (in my own case I may say practice), and I perhaps owe to it, in moderation, that happy temperament which has carried me through innumerable difficulties, and for which the author believes himself to be as remarkable as he is grateful.

Well! it seems that plenty of persons are of the same opinion too. All the men in Lord Mentmore's house smoked, excepting himself, and he did his best to encourage it, by supplying the cigars. I don't know who was his man, Hudson, Carlin, Goode, or whether he imported them, as some men do their wit, from a native manufactory, but they were first-rate. The consequence was unmitigated patronage by Dallington, Trumps, the Colonel, Carrington, Stapleton, Wilfred Jones, and Bradfield, whose parliamentary duties seemed to involve him in a round of dissipation, entirely foreign to the sedate and sedentary habits of his former university life. A good fellow and a good man is often a different being; in Bradfield the two had found a home.

"What does Lord Overham think of his horse for the Guineas, Trumps—have you ever heard him say?"

"If he thinks half as much of his horse as he does of himself, he must have tolerable hedging even at his present price; and it's not a very short one," replied Mr. Trumps, whose opinion of Lord Overham did not tally with that young nobleman's own estimate of his advantages.

"But have you ever heard him say anything about it?"

"No, I haven't, nor anybody else either. He never mentions him for two reasons."

"What are they?" The room seemed interested in the reply.

"First of all he doesn't know how to pronounce his name quite properly; and secondly, he's afraid of Wilfred Jones getting the information."

"Trumps has eaten something that has disagreed with him," said Stafford Carrington; "he is a complete *mauvaise langue* to-night. Mentmore stands a whole pot of money on his horse, doesn't he?" This question was addressed to Wilfred Jones, who replied by puffing slowly out a

volume of smoke, and looking as if he had not heard a word.

"The horse ought to win; he did a good thing with Agricola at even weights yesterday," said Lord Dallington. Still Wilfred Jones smoked on.

"Won his trial with seven pounds in hand; it makes the Guineas quite safe, and he'll be first favourite for the Derby. I hope all you fellows have got your money on; they only bid me seven and eight to one at the Corner yesterday;" saying which Mr. Trumps, Lieutenant and Captain, uncorked a bottle of seltzer water and poured it on the top of some sherry.

"I took fifteen ponies in the winter," said Carrington; "the only bet I have on the race."

"It's a good bet now, Carrington," said Wilfred Jones at last.

"I feel inclined to stand it—I suppose the horse is sure to win?"

"He's a very good horse and bred to stay. Idolatry would stay for ever;" and here the master of the horse having satisfied prejudices, and told nothing that was not well known before, relapsed into silence and enfolded himself in smoke.

"What a good-natured thing it is of Mentmore to have all those people in the gardens," said Laurence Bradfield; "he says they do no harm."

"I thought that was what you fellows go for; Lady Mary says it's a Liberal dodge to go for the manufacturing interests," said Trumps.

"I don't think Mentmore cares more for the manufacturing interests than any other. There seemed to me to be some people there who certainly hadn't much to do with Coppernails."

And while the rest of the company amused themselves with divers subjects, I may as well give a sketch of our friend Wilfred Jones.

The enormous increase in the size of studs had created a want. Formerly noblemen or gentlemen were considered capable of managing their own racing establishments. They were no longer so; and it became necessary to select a friend or acquaintance of equal capacity, but less means, to overlook the training, entering, and general care of the

horses. It was not an uncommon thing for a man to place his property and his honour in the hands of a master of the horse. This was precisely the case with Mentmore. With a colossal fortune, but without time to enjoy more than a twentieth part of it, his princely munificence was equal to the support of anything. Over his racing establishment he placed, with proconsular power, one Wilfred Jones.

What were his antecedents? I propose to give them as the type of a rather numerous class of the present day. It will not occupy a minute.

Wilfred Jones was a cornet in a cavalry regiment. As a boy at school he had been remarkable for keeping his place without ever indulging in the luxury of a book, or a verse task; and he had the peculiarity of being always, even as a youngster, the companion of bigger boys. This characteristic had stuck to him through life. It could never be ascertained that he had any money, but he maintained his position in society by spending four thousand a year; and though socially a lower-form boy he was always to be found among bigger men. He had graduated at Eton, and in the —— Hussars; was capital company; lived entirely upon the turf; numbered a certain Lady Jones among his relatives; spoke of his *gens* (our people he called them) as of undoubted respectability; and whenever he was missed from the great clubs, Long's, Limmer's, or the Arlington, was supposed to be staying with an aunt in Bryanstone Square.

In appearance he was well-made, well-dressed, and gentlemanly-looking; accustomed to the usages of good society, speaking but one language, and that questionably, more from habit than education. Strictly honourable, though the world scarcely believed it; good-humoured, well-disposed, a friend to all men, and a great favourite with fast women; pre-eminently a non-marrying man. In a word, Wilfred Jones had the misfortune to be born with the tastes of fifteen thousand a year, and with just three hundred to gratify them.

At this moment Mentmore, to the surprise of everyone, opened the door.

"Who's for an expedition?"

"What's the row?" asked Trumps.

"'Sackham, the keeper, has been here, and he says there's some poaching to be done to-night in the Home wood. Who would like to come?"

The volunteers rose as a man. "Trumps, as a military swell, had better have the post of danger," said Dallington.

"Certainly!" said Trumps, who, to do him justice, looked as eager for the fray as anyone; "but just explain, that's a good fellow."

"Well, then, at this time of year there's a great trade in pheasants' eggs; and poachers in a place like this are as thick as thieves upon the ground."

"Precisely; and if I understand rightly, Mr. Sackham wants an auxiliary force, as he expects rather more trouble than usual."

"Look here; we have had information that the poachers here have been reinforced by a part of a strange gang; and as it really is of great consequence to have the eggs just now, as I don't approve of buying them unless I know where they come from; Mr. Sackham wants to organise a force sufficient to catch these fellows, and he thinks he can do it to-night. The moon will be up in about an hour; so we've no time to lose."

"Nothing more charming," said one. "I'll just change these things of mine," said another. "Give me a glass of that sherry," said a third. A fourth inquired whether Sackham provided sticks, which he did; and a fifth borrowed a pair of shooting boots and gaiters of Mentmore's valet, having nothing but thin boots and shoes with him; Carrington inquired for a pea-jacket, as it was cold, and some vesuvians; and Bradfield rolled himself from his arm-chair slowly but determinedly, as he said to Carrington, "Now we shall catch that infernal rascal we saw in the morning, with my sister's good-looking friend, Mr. Job Fletcher, or I'm very much mistaken."

Mr. Sackham stood outside with a strong army of under keepers; it is just possible that he might have turned out with a whole body of villagers to surround the woods, or to beat them as on a battue day; but the lateness of the intelligence prevented any premeditation. He was compelled to use the materials which presented themselves, and we are bound to speak well of their readiness and adaptability to the work. When he was joined by the amateur division, he

would have been formidable under any circumstances; the presence of so much gentle blood made him doubly dangerous to his enemies.

"You don't mean to say these fellows show fight for the eggs, Saekham?" said Laurenee Bradfield.

"'Deed they do, Sir; your poacher, 'specially them as comes from a distanee, or one as has had his six months, be uneommon spiteful." And Mr. Sackham clutched his small leaded stick, which he carried in his pocket.

"And what makes you think these fellows come under that description?"

"I know last summer assizes the Chief Baron gave six months and hard labour to some of our men in hope of breaking up the gang, and he nearly sueceeded, but there's a bad lot come over from Cambridgeshire. They hear all about my lord's birds and his shooting, at Newmarket, and there's a ready sale for eggs all over those parts; Suffolk's a great county for preserving, Sir. The worst of it is, the gentlemen ain't particular enough; and some o' the keepers knows it's as much as their place is worth to be without birds; and then they will buy any quantity, as long as they don't come off their own grounds."

"I suppose they often do?"

"Lor', bless ye, Sir, many a time I've had eggs offered me, taken from here the night before; but my lord won't buy from the poachers; and now they've found that out, it's astonishing what little egg-stealing there is about these covers. It's all these blackguards from other parts; but we'll be even wi' 'em."

The wood in question, and a small field near it, in which were a great many coops for the hatching out of eggs by hens, was some little distance from the castle, and on their way thither a quiet conversation of the kind above related took place more or less along the whole line, between Lord Mentmore's guests and his keepers. As they approached the scene of action, strict silence was ordered, and Mr. Sackham proceeded to marshal his troops, with reference to the ground, and the object he had in view. Let us state these in a few words. The wood was tolerably large; in faet of such an acreage that escape was not difficult should the marauders get timely notice of the advent of the keepers and their assistants. It had been reconnoitred in

the day-time by some of those who had taken advantage of the public day in the grounds, and the fact that a great number of nests were to be found in one particular part of the cover was now as well known to the poachers as to the watchers and keepers themselves. In the centre of the wood was a broad ride, used during the hunting season, as the principal road through the cover, then deep and holding as the nature of the soil necessitated, and now dry and full of deep holes and ruts, as clay is accustomed to become after the first winds of March followed by hot weather in April and May. It was, therefore, difficult to run in, even to an active man, and hopeless to anyone else. The thickest boots and the most lithesome ankles would have the best chance. At the top of this ride was a well-covered circular hill, and around this hill was the place most in request by the pheasants for laying. Little rippling streams ran down from springs in its sides, which formed convenient basins here and there for water, and altogether from the lighter nature of the soil, and facilities of food, it was more frequented than the rest of the wood. The ride before mentioned ran round the base of the hillock, making a gentle rise all round; and information had been given from a well-informed source that this was the key of the poachers' position, from which some hundreds of eggs might be obtained.

The object of Mr. Sackham was not to scare them; or a show of his real strength might easily have effected it. The safety of his pheasants, and that of his neighbours, rather depended upon capturing a sufficient number of these poachers to break up the gang; and as "evil communications corrupt good manners," to deter the weak and vain, by making an example of the evilly disposed. There is no crime in the world, perhaps, in which the gradations of vice are so marked as in poaching; and one reason why a very severe punishment for anything like open and daring assault, or a public defiance of legal strength and authority is desirable, is the hope that younger hands and less malicious offenders may be deterred from a career whose end is unseen, and whose results cannot be calculated. This by way of parenthesis.

"Now, gentlemen," said Mr. Sackham, in an audible whisper, as the moon showed herself above the horizon,

large and luminous, "single file, if you please, in the shadow of this fence. It leads direct to the bottom of the cover. I'll tell you, gentlemen, which way to go when we get there. Sykes, go on, and lie down quietly within thirty yards of the gate at the end under the old gipsy's oak; and put Bill Thornton opposite, about the same distance. If they come in at the bottom, close into the edge of the ride, but don't let them hear or see you. If they run for it, they're sure to run that way, down the hill—we'll leave two or three of these gentlemen in the ditch by the gate to help, and you're sure to get some on 'em. When you close, blow your whistle; not before." And on they marched in single file, as ordered; each grasping a weapon of defiance or attack, in divers costumes, as fancy or convenience had dictated: knickerbockers, jack-boots, thick shoes, and gaiters, and one or two improvident souls, with their black dress trousers tucked into their boots,—vain defence against brushwood and gorse, at least three feet high.

"Beg pardon, gentlemen, but there's somebody a smokin'; nothin' a poacher knows better nor the smell o' bacca."

Trumps and Carrington extinguished their cigars in silence. Before long they reached the corner of the wood, which here formed a right angle with the fence; and Mr. Sackham proceeded to make his final arrangements for netting the lot. They were somewhat as follows:—

Two men were deposited in a wet ditch, outside the cover, close to the gate, to assist Sykes and Bill Thornton in stopping the fugitives, should they take to the main ride for escape. Trumps and Lord Dallington occupied this place of honour. As smoking and talking were forbidden, they had timo to calculate the chances of committing manslaughter, or being murdered; not exactly an "even main chance." Be that as it may, they promised great things, and were very likely persons to fulfil their promises. The rest were carried through narrow and unfrequented paths, with much mystery and quiet, parallel with the great ride, and posted at intervals of about one hundred yards, with orders to render assistance upwards, should Sackham blow his whistle, or cries of assistance reach them from the upper end, or to keep close and follow up the fugitives, should they be seen making for the gate at the bottom. The gentlemen

thus placed at intervals, were faced on the other side by corresponding sentinels along the whole line. Wilfred Jones, Stapleton, Laurence Bradfield, Carrington, and Lord Mentmore, with some more watchers, followed slowly towards the hill; and when there, were placed at intervals round its base, concealed by brushwood, bolls of trees, or loose boulders, which lay here and there on the slope the signs of some former operations of nature, more in the way of Lyell or Tindal to explain than in mine. Having thus laid a remarkably creditable ambuscade, Mr. Sackham betook himself to the rear of the hill, determined upon making his attack from behind, at which moment he was to be joined by the sharp-shooters in front. It was calculated that the sudden attack from all sides at once, would necessitate a surrender.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE EGGS ARE SAVED, BUT NOT THE BACON.

"Wann man unter den Wölven ist muss man mit heulen."

UNDER no circumstances whatever could the situation be called a pleasant one. To men who are particular about their digestion, or their health, or their boots, clothes, or appearance, it was decidedly the reverse. However dry the soil by nature (and the Home wood was not remarkable that way), there is always a sufficient quantity of rank grass, ferns, or bog, in the middle of the night under a May moon to intimate the possibility of a cold in the head; and not unfrequently of young and vigorous thorns to make moving about in the dark exciting, to say the least of it. The fanciful and imaginative call up in such moments pictures of those they love, or of possible adders which may sting them, an allegorical parallel by no means contemplated when I began this sentence, but flowing spontaneously from the pen of one whose knowledge of the subject is happily theoretical.

Stafford Carrington and Captain Trumps were not the only persons whose sufferings might have been mitigated by tobacco, but who were restrained by a sense of duty from that indulgence; and the contrast between their present condition, and that which they had left so lately, added to their sense of "the inconvenient."

The trenches is dreary work; and Laurence Bradfield, by far the most philosophic of the volunteer party, could not help wondering how long they were to wait for the sport that was promised them. With his back to a tree and his legs in a tangled mass of wet grass and ferns, he may be forgiven if he doubted the pleasures of contemplation, and sighed (not aloud) for a more active exercise of his powers.

"Suppose they should not come at all," said Stafford Carrington to himself; "if any intelligence has reached them that we have been put upon our guard, what fools we shall look! and how long are we to be kept in suspense?"

"I hope we shall have to fight," said Captain Trumps, also to himself; "I don't see the fun of sitting in this ditch till daylight and then having to walk back again."

Lord Dallington was wondering how many months they would get when they were caught, and whether anything under six would be a sufficient recompense for an almost certain attack of gout. Lord Mentmore was fond enough of his shooting to be personally interested in the fate of his eggs; and to do Sackham justice the present gang of poachers was not that with which he had ever been in league. To say truth he had no idea of foreigners coming on his beat, and with some of them he was at deadly feud, having deserted them some five years back to get an honest livelihood, which he did in his own way. He was the only one of the party who thoroughly enjoyed these hours of inactivity; and it is astonishing how warm one is kept by a good wholesome anticipation of revenge.

It was impossible to tell exactly how long they had remained each in his uncomfortable position, which defied sleep or sentiment notwithstanding the moonlight, chequered only by fleeting clouds. It might have been one or two in the morning, when near the top of the cover a very gentle crackling of the underwood began to be heard by those nearest the base of the hill. Presently two or three hen

pheasants were seen to run in the open glade, with a slight "gluck," not slowly, but as if alarmed, yet unwilling to quit the spot from which they had been driven. These were evident symptoms that something unusual was occurring. Perhaps a cat, or a weasel, or some vermin. This was not impossible. Still the hope that it might be a termination to their suspense was cherished by the watchers about the knoll. "Up guards and at them," would have been a welcome sound to Laurence Bradfield or to Stafford Carrington, while Trumps and Dallington, and the rest of the watchers along either side of the broad ride, listened anxiously for a whistle in one part of the cover or the other.

At that moment, while the hens were creeping through the brushwood anxiously looking back to the nests from which they had escaped, Lord Mentmore passed close to Stafford Carrington.

"Mentmore," said he, in a hoarse whisper. Lord Mentmore turned his head. "Have you seen anything?"

"Yes; it's all right. Sackham's on the move; keep close till you hear the signal, and then we have them. They can't get away. Where's Bradfield?"

"Farther on, I think—but I can't see him."

At that moment a very soft muffled sound of a small sheep-bell, scarcely distinguishable, came down the breeze.

"Ah!" said Mentmore, "I thought so. They've the dog; it's almost light enough to have done without it, as some of them have been in the covers to-day. But it's all the better; if he moves, they must be taken. There goes one."

A single figure, apparently armed with a thick stick, and carrying a small net, or something of the kind, passed quickly from one tree to another, whilst a shrill whistle, and the sound of a shot followed by a low moan, told that the battle had commenced in earnest. Up rose a dozen stalwart forms at once, flitting like shadows as they rushed across the bright moonlight and were again lost in the dusky shadows; all towards one point; the brow of the hill. For there stood Mr. Sackham, backed by three or four keepers, already exchanging blows with the foremost of, at least, a dozen marauders. The diversion made in his favour by the noise of the coming aid was of great and signal service. One half at least attempted to escape by the main ride;

while the rest, ignorant of the numbers by whom they were beset, fought on, exchanging blows and compliments with undiminished zeal.

"Get back, Bill," said a huge poacher, in whom the reader may recognise Mr. Dan Morton, "get back; some of those fellows are off; it won't do to stop here," and acting on the advice he retreated before Sackham, who was vigorously defending one of his men already down. A few seconds, however, brought up the reserves, and in an instant Stapleton, Wilfred Jones, and Stafford Carrington were struggling with their assailants. Lord Mentmore went straight to the poor fellow on the ground, clearing his way with a vigorous blow from a short cudgel, which he carried, and which took effect en the wrist of a scoundrel about to disable Sackham at the very moment.

"What is it, Sackham, badly wounded—gunshot?"

"No, no, my lord, that was only the dog; blow on the head—get him some water; I must have the big stranger," and the keeper pressed forward after Dan Morton. At that moment, however, there appeared on the scene a new character, Mr. Job Fletcher.

Job Fletcher had his notions of honour and chivalry; and though he was not particular now about taking a few pheasants that did not belong to him, he thought the desertion of a brother vagabond in difficulties a grievous sin. Upon my honour I think Job Fletcher had high notions of what is gentlemanly, which never have squared with the strictest rules of *meum* and *tuum*. Well! Job, accustomed to poaching in a quiet way, where the keepers knew him and where the bench of magistrates knew him, was a little out of his element in this heavy affair. At the first sound of a mighty army of assailants he had acted upon impulse, and turned to make the best of his own way back, with his companions. No sooner, however, had he had time for reflection than it occurred to him that Dan, who was a stranger like himself, might want his assistance. At all events they ought both to row in the same boat. So Job the dishonest very honourably made his way back to the scene of conflict he had quitted. There is honour, though not honesty among thieves.

Job Fletcher, we have said, was a fine, handsome young fellow, just the shape and make for a prize-fighter, worth

two of Dan Morton, and not deficient in natural science, which is an anomalous expression, but comprehensible to most of my readers. He straightway engaged Mr. Sackham, by a tremendous left-hander, which staggered that worthy official, and which would have been repeated with effect but for the intervention of Lord Mentmore and Wilfred Jones, who, having ascertained that his servant was not shot, but merely disabled by a blow, left him to somebody else, and went to the assistance of the keeper.

"Never mind about me," said Job, addressing Dan Morton. "You be off, you fool; it's only a three months' job." He continued to fight vigorously, as if he preferred to avoid even that contingency. "Be off, Dan, and tell the old woman it's all right."

Dan balanced in his mind whether this sensible advice was to be taken, and having upon his mind something a little heavier than the "poaching of eggs," had just determined on saving himself, as the aspect of affairs showed him he could not do much to save his friend. The best intentions, however, lose their value by being formed too late. On the collar of Dan's coat a hand was at that moment placed, which, having just disposed of a poacher, may be said to have warmed to its work. The other hand held menacingly a short stick, which, as he turned round to confront his foe, Dan grasped instinctively, aiming a blow at the same time, which Laurence Bradfield received upon the muscular part of the arm without much injury. The poacher did not recognise at once the young squire of Sommerton, but Bradfield knew his man to be the same whom he had seen in the gardens, believing him to be connected in some way with his own village, as the owner of the remarkable American bludgeon, and had consequently the strongest grounds for imagining that this was not their first struggle for mastery. What Dan Morton's intentions might be were not plain to Bradfield; his primary object was escape. Punishment was sure to fall heavily upon a man of his antecedents, if caught; and he had other particular reasons for not desiring six months', or even two years', hard labour at present. Bradfield with his usual good-natured *insouciance*, but vigorous determination when roused, was bent upon disabling and capturing his father's tenant.

Blows were falling thick and heavily in other parts of the wood; but the battle especially raged in the main ride and round the hill. The poachers who had made their way down the ride towards the gate, were compelled to proceed slowly and laboriously, from the nature of the ground, followed as they were by Stapleton and others, gentlemen and keepers. As they neared the gate, a fresh band appeared in front—Trumps, Lord Dallington, and two watchers. A very short and decisive skirmish ensued, in which nothing suffered but Lord Dallington's right arm, and Captain Trumps' hat. One of the poachers lay stunned and bleeding on the ground, and two more were caught and tied together by some providentially discovered cords in the pockets of Mr. Sykes.

"That's lucky," said Sykes, deliberately uncoiling it, while four others held the unfortunate victims by the throat; "that was meant for last week, but we wasn't so fortunate as to catch 'em."

After this the fight seemed pretty general, and the keepers were too intent upon the care of their prisoners, and too much winded by their exertions, to do much in the way of pursuit. Mr. Sackham observed too "That he knowed 'em, and knowed pretty well where to find 'em, when they was wanted." Poor Joe was safe enough, with a companion who had stuck to him more faithfully than Dan Morton.

The latter in the meantime continued his struggle with Laurence Bradfield, while a little distance from them the fray had progressed amidst curses and imprecations, not always or entirely on the part of the aggressors. Blows on the head, and especially in the discharge of a duty, will make even gentlemen swear. Morton and Laurence Bradfield were pretty equally matched. An accident on either side (and they were embracing each other in a deadly struggle) might give the victory to either. At length that accident happened. As they shifted their ground, aiming ineffectual blows at each other, Morton's foot caught in a root or tangled briar; he lost his footing and fell heavily to the ground, dragging his opponent with him, where they rolled over and over. In this case Bradfield's greater activity served him in good stead. He was quickly on his legs, and planting his knee heavily on the other's chest, he seized his wrist with one hand and his neckcloth with the other. Perceiving that Morton's stick had fallen from his

grasp in the fall, he adopted this fashion of subjugation in preference to the advantage which he might have taken, and laying his weapou on one side called upon him to surrender. Morton answered sulkily, with a violent oath, and continued to struggle.

"Mentmore, Stapleford, come here, quick," shouted Bradfield.

The former was at his side, having left his prisoners in good hands. At the same moment Sackham came up, and whipping from his pocket a light dog chain, the three were not long in securing the arms of the powerful ruffian, so as effectually to quiet him. The battle was over; and though the account is long to relate, it had not lasted ten minutes from the time of its commencement to the capture of the prisoners. Six of them were helplessly captive.

The first thing to be done was to place them in the middle of their captors, and march them to the house; and as the moon was now up, and all need for concealment over, it was not difficult to manage. The owner and his guests, the keepers and their assistants, formed a strong body-guard which it would have been impossible to break through. Before starting, however, it was necessary to take stock of the victors, who had not achieved success without some losses.

"Trumps, your hat seems to have suffered."

"It has; and has not quite saved my head," said he, applying his hand to a very prominent bruise, which had been partially averted. The thickness of even a guardsman's skull would not have withstood the assault, but for his hat.

"And your coat," added another, observing that garment to be in a somewhat tattered condition.

"That's not mine; my head and my hat are. Mentmore's valet insisted upon lending me his master's coat, as we came away."

On looking round, there was a manifest deficiency of neckcloths, and a pocket-handkerchief or two were declared to be missing. Stafford Carrington had lost a valuable cigar case, having been down in the *mêlée*. Of wounds, Lord Dallington's was the most severe, one arm being quite disabled. Lord Mentmore himself had a blow on the cheek, which was flushed and swollen; while the most discomposed

in toilette, but the least apparently hurt, and the most composed in mind, was Laurence Bradfield. One or two of the keepers had had some sharp fighting, and exhibited signs of it externally.

"Now," said Mentmore, "are you ready, Sackham? Let's be off. Oh! untie those poor devils' arms; they can't get away now, if you put them into the middle."

"Don't trust 'em, my lord; I knows 'em."

"Then loosen the cord, and strap each of them by the wrist to a sound keeper; they can't move as they're tied now"

Mr. Sackham, with assistance, did as he was bid.

"To-morrow morning you had better come and pick up the lost property. Now then, march." And they did march, to Silvermere.

"And now, my lord, what's to be done with 'em? it's only two o'clock."

"You must untie them, and lock them safely in some place until the morning. Send a man over to Coppernails for a proper escort, and we'll have them taken there to-morrow. Get warrants made out, and have them before the magistrates on Saturday."

All which things were done, with one only exception; which defect under the circumstances could not well be helped. They appeared before the magistrates, save only the greatest ruffian of them all—Mr. Daniel Morton. His absence can be accounted for.

When Lord Mentmore and his guests had dressed their wounds, and they and their sleepy valets had retired to bed, Mr. Sackham selected fit and proper places, as he thought, for his prisoners. Two were placed in one room with a watch outside; three were placed in another equally secure; and Dan Morton was shut up in a small untenanted room adjoining the rest, which was accommodated with iron bars to the windows and a strong lock and chain to the door. A sentinel was added, with injunctions to pay frequent visits to see that his prisoner was right; and then Mr. Sackham betook himself to the back-kitchen, a fire, a pipe, and a pewter, and fell asleep.

Nor is it much to be wondered at, that, after having once looked in upon Dan, and finding him with his eyes hermetically sealed, his sentinel should have done the same as

Mr. Sackham, the pipe, pot, and the kitchen-fire. He only fell asleep, under greater difficulties.

Dan Morton was in the matter of sleep a perfect weasel. So he began to think as soon as he was alone, and his thoughts took a natural turn—how to get out of the scrape at the smallest expense.

I have said that he had long been hampered by his doubts as to turning the documents he had stolen from Sommerton into a profitable investment. Circumstances now suggested Mr. Laurence Bradfield as the fittest recipient of those papers. The reasons were obvious. They concerned him nearly ; he would give as much money or as many promises, as his father ; he was near at hand ; and he would add to it all the active influence (as Dan foolishly thought) he could to get his present punishment as favourably considered as possible. A *suppressio veri* seems to a poor man a venial fault, and a *corruption of justice* an easy expedient, where money or position are brought to bear.

One other sentiment remained over and above, which is scarcely worth mentioning, but that he had few virtues to throw away—he felt some gratitude and a fair share of admiration for the way in which Laurence Bradfield had fought the battle. Having made up his mind to the course he should pursue, he bethought him of the papers which he still carried about with him. He dived at once into his pocket to take a last look at them, and to assure himself of their reality : for they were very like a bank post-bill, which one likes to pass in review occasionally, lest it should have escaped altogether. As he put his hands, first into one pocket, then into another, a spectator would have been struck with a change of countenance in Dan Morton. First it was red, a roseate hue suffused his face, and drops of perspiration stood upon his brow. This lasted for a few seconds while he searched sedulously the pockets of his shooting-jacket, in which he had usually carried it. Then he transferred his attention to a side-pocket, in which he felt a conviction that it *was not*. By slow degrees the perspiration became cold, and then he knew that his features became deadly pale—that a sickly hue overspread them ; and he clenched his knotted hands as he summoned up the occurrences of the last few hours. Where had he left it ? in that cursed wood ? He had dropped it.

In searching his pockets for the missing deed, he had found something which might be of service. It set him thinking again. At this moment his gaoler moved outside. It was then that he was overtaken by sudden and heavy sleep. No sooner, however, had his gaoler retired, than he rose slowly and stealthily, and examined the window and its bars. He took from his pocket his newly discovered assistant. He removed from around the bars the tightly-fitting mortar. In twenty minutes it was loosened; in half-an-hour the bar shook to his well applied and gigantic strength. In a few more minutes it was out; and in another five Dan Morton was out too.

His first move was to the wood. Alas! the moon had hidden her light; clouds obscured her face; and his search was unsuccessful. He dared not stay to meet the dawn; for he knew that before long his flight would be discovered, and wreckers would be rife around the hill—the scene of battle. And so it was that before dawn Dan Morton was miles away.

The fate of the rest is obvious. The stolidity of one gentleman, who had made his money in trade, and who had no interest in game, but whose hen-roosts were defended by law, was not sufficient in this instance to refute the testimony of so many to an aggravated assault, and the poachers were committed to take their trial; when in due course of time, they received, each according to his merits, the reward of his deeds.

As Bradfield sat alone in Lord Mentmore's library on the following morning, wondering how long the present ministry would last with its foreign policy, Lord Mentmore's servant entered.

"Mr. Sackham has been to the wood, Sir, and brought back a quantity of sticks and neckerchiefs. He found Mr. Carrington's cigar-case, Sir; and he thinks this must belong to you." At the same time Mr. Stubbs put into the hands of Bradfield a paper, torn and soiled, whose writing was yellow, and whose edges were black, bearing on the outside the word "Sommerton."

Bradfield thanked the valet, opened it, glanced hastily at the contents, nodded his head, and Mr. Stubbs quitted the room.

CHAPTER XXIX.

LAURENCE BRADFIELD BEGINS TO ACT.

"What thine heart findeth to do, do it with all thy might."

THREE or four days after the affray with the poachers, the week's sport ended with some private racing in the park, and the party broke up. Evelyn Carrington and Ellen Bradfield had improved the opportunity which this visit had given them to become more intimately acquainted. Mrs. Bradfield felt flattered and happy at an evident predilection for her daughter; and Lady Carrington was not able to resist the natural beauty and sense which her daughter's friend displayed. There was a little similarity between the characters of the two; and although Ellen had not pride of birth, which was natural to Lady Carrington, and which had even been increased by her marriage, she had a more genuine pride of her own.

If Lady Carrington had suspected the true state of the case, or of the feeling which was growing rapidly in her son towards Ellen Bradfield, she would probably, but vainly, have striven to withdraw; but Carrington was a very undemonstrative person—he was apparently indifferent and unimpulsive—not likely to fall in love, so people thought, without a very sufficient cause; and very susceptible withal of a certain ridicule, which he, commonly with others, attached to victims of the tender passion.

Stafford Carrington had been, in the first place, like his friend Lord Mentmore, attracted by the personal beauty of Ellen Bradfield. It had occurred to him quite suddenly, and in spite of a powerful but irrational prejudice against the name. There was no such thing in either the one or the other of these men as love at first sight. Mentmore was too cautious; and Carrington, by habit of mind, incapable of such a thing. But the beauty of the girl was so radiant, so commanding, yet of so delicate a character; the mixture of the conqueror and of the captive was so subtilely blended in her beautiful liquid eyes, whose usual expression was one of

partial surprise, in her straightly-cut features, her short curled vermilion lip, the decision of a marked under jaw, and the luxuriant richness of her wavy golden hair, that few men resisted the influence of her charms. Had she been like some women she would have lived in a halo of unpremeditated conquest. Her decision of manner, and total absence of coquetry, preserved her victims from self-immolation and herself from the slightest taint of calumny. In the society in which she moved (and great wealth commands a position in this country), it was felt that the manufacturer's daughter might worthily aspire to the highest honours.

Mentmore thought so too. Since his former visit to the house, he had been accustoming himself to regard Miss Bradfield as essential to his happiness, capable of adorning his home, and of putting an end to those preposterous pretensions to the management of Silvermere by certain dowager ladies and their aspiring daughters, which Mentmore was too clever not to see, and too generous ruthlessly to trample upon. Lady Elizabeth, his aunt, had long counselled such a step; and had she known the state of his finances, and the inroad Newmarket and Leicestershire had made upon his princely fortune, she would have thought it none the worst that the lady should have been able to pay handsomely for the honour. I need scarcely say that this was not an item which entered into Mentmore's calculations.

During the visit to Silvermere his attentions had been at the service equally of all his guests. When he could do so without infringement of etiquette, he had endeavoured to distinguish Ellen Bradfield by some little mark of kindness, by word, by look, or by actual courtesy, which could not, as he imagined, have failed to strike her. Indeed they did so; and she had never failed to exhibit the gratification she felt. Externally Lord Mentmore and Miss Bradfield were fast friends, mutually pleased with each other, and wanting but time and sunshine to ripen the fruit of such an intimacy. How very little we know of one another; and how unjust we are to women!

The fact is that this easy acceptance of little favours, delicate attentions, and the ready expression of thanks for them, is not a sign of its having taken root. Yet these are the women that some men call coquettes, when a too facile interpretation of their kindness induces a premature proposal,

which is refused. Mentmore had seen hundreds of women jump at the same sort of attentions, and knew that they only waited for the favourable moment. Women hate to give pain as a rule. But they are not all equally expansive in their desires or their demonstrations.

When Bradfield had retired to his room, which he did after pretending to finish the newspaper he was reading, he drew slowly from his pocket the paper which had been placed in his hands by Mr. Stubbs. He was anxious to ascertain how far that gentleman or any of his friends had profited by the opportunity given them of ascertaining the contents of the document. He rang his bell, and desired his servant to ask Mr. Stubbs to come to him for a moment.

"Will you tell me, Mr. Stubbs, who brought this paper from the wood?"

"Yes, Sir—it was one of the watchers; he said he found it on the hill, at least at the foot of it, and as he couldn't read, Sir, he asked me what it was. I opened it, Sir, and I saw it was some old paper about a release of the Sommerton property; and as I saw your name, I thought of course it was yours." The answer plainly showed that the man was speaking the truth.

"Thank you, Stubbs, it belongs to my father." Mr. Stubbs backed himself out.

Three or four days after the party broke up. The Carringtons and the Bradfields travelled together, with exception of Laurence Bradfield, who had gone to London the day before. On his arrival he found the season commencing in earnest. It was seven in the evening, and carriages were hastening through the streets to their several engagements. It was a bright warm evening immediately after the recess, and he was greeted by several of his parliamentary friends as he turned down St. James's Street. Those who spoke to him failed to notice any change. He was, however, listless, *distrait;* his mind was full of incertitude and vague anxiety. But men are very slow in their perceptions of this kind, and, full of their own schemes and interests, regard but slightly those of other people. A woman would have seen it in a minute; but Laurence Bradfield eschewed the drawing-rooms of his acquaintance, and went straight to his club.

He read his letters. His father was in Sommerton still —very busy, and venting his ill-humour in the county, which

had quietly submitted to the imposition of Stafford Carrington, and seemed very well satisfied with its burthen. Then he dined, and although exceedingly anxious to have a little privacy, and time for thought and determination, he found himself unable to get it among questions on the coming debate, the Two Thousand, Lord Crossover's stud, New Tenor, the Law of Marriage in Scotland, and the Retirement of the late Master of the Pytchley. At length the day was done; artificial light had assumed the place of the waning sun in the streets; and lighting a cigar, and putting on a warm overcoat, he strolled into Pall Mall.

Within ten minutes his mind was made up upon the first steps to be taken.

John Grosse Codicil was a man of the highest reputation as a solicitor; he occupied a high position, which he had attained by hard work, brains, and money-lending, when it was a profitable business among the fast men of a previous generation. When Crockford required ready-money, Codicil had to find it.

He had long retired into a magnificent house, and indisputable respectability; but he still was accessible to men of position, and kept his name up on the firm, though younger men did the business.

John Grosse Codicil had shared the confidence of the first Mr. Bradfield, and the present proprietor of Sommerton, with the Darvilles. The latter solicitors being purely of provincial fame, had nothing to do with the northern estates and money matters of the ironmaster. Their business was almost wholly confined to his Midland property. In person, the old man was tall, thin, grey-haired, not bald, almost unbent. He was a scrupulous dresser, had the appearance and manners of a gentleman, and retained only a few provincialisms, which had clung to him tenaciously from his earliest youth. At half-past nine in the evening in question, he was drinking his glass of rare port, while the lady whom he designated his housekeeper was preparing his coffee in another room. He sat without closing his curtains, and his silk handkerchief was spread over his head ready for repose, when he was roused by a knock at the door.

Mr. Laurence Bradfield's card and candles were brought in at the same time.

"Is Mrs. Tanner in the next room?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Then ask Mr. Bradfield to walk in here."

The servant retired, and returned ushering in Laurence Bradfield.

After an apology for the lateness of his visit, and a disclaimer from the old lawyer, Laurence continued,

"What I particularly wish to know is, whether you can give me any information about the Sommerton property."

"That is exactly the subject on which I should have consulted you," replied Mr. Codicil, shading his eyes from the light, and speculating upon the probability of his old client's son wanting a loan.

"I mean on its purchase, title, and mortgages upon it, if any exist. You forget I was not born at the time, and have scarcely lived there since half-a-dozen years altogether."

"Your grandfather bought it, Mr. Bradfield, for little money. In other words, he bought the interest of other parties in it, to whom it was mortgaged, but redeemable within a certain number of years. The property was not redeemed within the specified time, and it lasped into your grandfather's hands. The title, I believe, is excellent; and it must be worth, with its iron works, at least four times the purchase-money. Yet—stay—one moment, Mr. Laurence; there might be a difficulty. I cannot refer here; but I think there was some understanding that it was to be settled on the females, with only a reversion to yourself. You have a sister, I believe?"

"Yes, I have; though that scarcely enters into the question."

"Excuse me, it's the main point. Money might be raised by thousands by other means. In your case, personal security——"

"My dear Sir," said Laurence, rather amused in the midst of his anxiety, "I don't want money."

The old gentleman took down his hand from his eyes, as if such a phenomenon were not commonly to be seen there.

"Oh!—ah!—I see—that's another matter; then I'm sorry I have delayed you. The fact is, the Darvilles of Saxonby had the business. They bought the property or rather

the interest of the original mortgagee, and I am sure he would give you every information. I have but a very limited acquaintance with the purchase."

"And our title?"

"Is as good as any in the world. That's certain; because some quarrel gave rise to a trial, a most ill-judged proceeding, some five-and-thirty years ago, upon the presumption that the money had been paid and the property redeemed within the time. Sir Reginald Carrington borrowed a quantity of money from me to pay his personal debts; he was the most accomplished man alive, and the most needy. Not a particle of evidenee was adduced that the money had been paid; and certainly no receipt or acknowledgment could be found, or had ever been heard of. Anything I can do for you, Mr. Bradfield, I shall be delighted; but Hugh Darville has always done the business at Sommerton, and done it well, I believe."

Bradfield thanked the lawyer, and walked home. His anxieties were not by any means at an end, not even allayed by his visit. The paper, however, might be a forgery for some malicious purpose, and the sooner the mystery was cleared up the better. So the next day towards evening, having attended the business of the House in the morning, he took the train for Saxonby.

It was late when he reached Saxonby; so he ordered a fly from the station to take him to Sommerton. In passing through the town, however, on his road, he caught sight of a light in Scarsdale's window. It was not a blaze of light, such as that with which a bachelor curate is wont to greet his friends when he assembles them round a hospitable board; it was rather the feeble glimmer of one seeking that quiet, or guarding that retirement, which was now to be broken in upon. On a given signal the flyman stopped, and the neat, good-looking little maid—smiles, ribbons, and braid—came to the door.

"Is Mr. Scarsdale alone?"

"Yes, Sir," said she; "you can walk up. Stay, Sir; there's no light."

"Coachman, I shall not want you, I think, to go to Sommerton to-night. Order me a bed at the 'Bear.'"

He ascended the stairs, and Scarsdale's maid-of-all-work knocked at the door, and opened it at the same moment. It

was a very feeble apology, that knock, for the boldness of intrusion.

Scarsdale was "done up" for the night, as he thought. The kettle boiled away on the hob; on the table were glasses and a spirit-decanter; the master himself was dressed in a light smoking-jacket, almost recumbent in an arm-chair. He was reading a good book, and smoking a pretty good cigar.

"Nothing the matter, I hope, Bradfield?" said he, his thoughts recurring at once to his parish, and fearing something might be wrong at the Hall.

"Nothing whatever, my good friend; and therefore, if you will give me a glass of hot gin-and-water, I'll sit down and smoke a cigar with you. I want to talk to you about myself." And lighting a cigar, and taking the opposite side of the fireplace, he began to smoke too.

If gin-and-water and cigars are favourable to conversation, they are no less so to concealment of purpose and feeling. Had they not been so, it is possible that his friend might have detected a difference from his usual quiet, idle manner, to that which now characterised his movements. His voice, too, was eager, which was quite unnatural to him; and he changed his seat once or twice while speaking, eventually standing with his back to the fire.

After a little time, and when a pause in the conversation came, which it is sure to do when one or both of the speakers are thinking upon different or irrelevant subjects, he said abruptly, turning his cigar round, and pretending to look at it very critically,

"Scarsdale, I want to speak to you."

"Then I think I can guess what it is."

"I think not;" and Laurence Bradfield again twisted his cigar with great care.

"Marriage, Laurence? I congratulate you."

"Why should that be the subject on which I wish to consult you?"

"The old and the sick and the poor consult me on other points, but not the young and the strong and the wealthy."

"At all events, you're wrong this time. Listen, Scarsdale; there may be nothing in what I have to say, it may involve much. Since I have been down at Lord Mentmore's some-

thing has happened;" the glow deepened on Scarsdale's face; candlelight did not betray him.

"Miss Bradfield," said he, with the fortitude of a martyr. "I'm glad to hear it; a most brilliant prospect, and one of the best fellows in the world."

"Wrong again; don't guess any more. The racing prophets are better than you, and they are exceedingly bad." Laurence Bradfield then told Scarsdale of the poaching expedition, of his meeting with Dan Morton and Job Fletcher, and eventually of the paper which had been brought to him on the following morning. "That document contains a very extraordinary announcement."

"And where did it come from?"

"Doubtless from the pocket of one of those marauders."

"Did you not ascertain?"

"No; the one I suspect made his escape, and though there is a warrant out against him, he has not yet been traced;" he drew from his pocket as he spoke the paper in question; "there, read that."

As Scarsdale rather spelt than read the paper of which mention has so frequently been made, his astonishment gradually subsided into one long-drawn sigh. It contained a simple release of the Sommerton property by Mr. Henry Bradfield to Sir Reginald Carrington. It bore date May 29th, 1820. Enclosed in the same paper was, at the same time, a receipt signed by the same person for a sum of three thousand five hundred pounds, being the last instalment due on the Sommerton property. Scarsdale sat for a minute or two, spell-bound.

"Now, Scarsdale, what do you think of that? and how came it in the hands of Mr. Dan Morton?"

"What do I think of it? Laurence, are you sure, do you know that this is your grandfather's signature?"

Bradfield brightened a little at the possibility of escaping from a conviction. He took the paper and looked again closely at it; and then said in a low, husky voice, "Indeed, I believe it is; it exactly resembles those I have seen, and is very peculiar."

"That peculiarity might have made it less difficult to imitate."

"No; I think it is his; the paper, the writing, is manifestly of the date assigned to it. Scarsdale, you know some-

thing of this ;" this was said with an energy, that carried conviction. Scarsdale was not proof against the impulse.

"I know nothing of this ; but I have some knowledge of the circumstances connected with this business. What does this involve ? Your loss of property ? "

"Not mine, Scarsdale ; the Sommerton property belongs to my sister." Scarsdale uttered a half-suppressed groan. "Yes, it's hard upon her, poor girl ; but she need never know poverty ; and if she should, I never knew anyone who would better grace it."

"You speak coldly of its disadvantages."

"They are always magnified ; but there's more than this. I fear for my father. You don't know his temper, his susceptibility, and uncontrolled feelings ; his impatience of disappointment ; and Scarsdale, Scarsdale, if there should be disgrace, dishonour fall upon him, upon the house he has striven to found, at the sacrifice of everything really valuable——"

"You conjure up more serious ills than exist. I have heard something of this before, and it is—yes ! I know you, Bradfield, and it is better that you should know all ; " and Scarsdale rose from his seat and went to his desk. He brought out the torn and soiled note which he had received from Giles Morton in the workhouse, and placed it in the hands of his friend. "There, Laurence, when we know the worst we can take the better steps to remedy the evil." Laurence read,

"'*May* 13, 1820.

"'If Sir Reginald Carrington will do me the honour of coming to Patcham on Wednesday, the 29th inst., I shall be happy to give the release, which is already prepared on the receipt of Sir Reginald's cheque, or note of hand for the balance of the mortgage.

"'I have the honour to be, Sir,

"'Your obedient servant,

"'HENRY BRADFIELD.

"'To Sir Reginald Carrington, Bart.'"

With trembling hand, but steady and determined will, the young man compared the dates, the writing, and the very paper mark. They were the same; and as he sat down, faint from their perusal, he folded his arms, and looked

quietly up in his friend's face for further intelligence. He was unable to speak.

Scarsdale then proceeded to give a detailed account of his conversations with old Morton in Saxonby Union. He held out some hopes which he himself had derived from the state of the man's mind, and from the remarks of Hugh Darville. He pointed to the probability of some rascality which was not yet fathomed; of the probable innocence of his grandfather; of the money never having been paid him, although the release had been prepared; of the likelihood of the money and the release having been stolen, and neither having reached their destination; he urged the arguments which Hugh Darville had made use of, and which he himself had set at nought.

Bradfield was quieted, but not convinced. He had so much at stake that he dreaded the consequences. His mother, his sister, above all, his father; for he felt that he had sometimes judged him harshly, and added to his irritation; and generous minds forget their provocations when the authors of them are in trouble. He thought but little of himself; but he had his own burthen to bear. How should he again present himself before Evelyn Carrington, when his father's long usurpation should be revealed? He was saved the bitter pain of knowing that his very name was distasteful to Sir Michael, and that long prejudice would be gratefully revived by such a catastrophe as the present.

"You should have mentioned these things, Scarsdale," said he, with some impatience, "to my father at the time; better that we should have sought out means to do justice and right before it was forced upon us by accident."

Scarsdale was obliged to tell him of their quarrel, and of the effect it had in estranging him from the house; but he did not tell him that there was another cause which held his hand from the infliction of pain.

They separated late; but it was settled before they parted, that the next day Hugh Darville should be taken into his counsel, and that time and consideration should be called to his aid before any publicity need be given to the affair.

"The sins of the fathers," said Scarsdale, to himself, "are visited upon the children even in this world; but it is difficult to attach serious discredit to them for anything which happened before they were born."

CHAPTER XXX.

HE TAKES COUNSEL, BUT NOT COMFORT.

"Vos lene consilium et datis, et dato
Gaudetis almæ."—HOR.; *Odes.* lib. iii. 4.

THE difference of temperament in these two men, equally honourable and in some things equally prudent, would have been shown in the manner either would have acted under the same circumstances. Had Scarsdale been in Bradfield's situation he would not have slept before he had proceeded to unravel the mystery which surrounded him. He would, possibly that very night, have knocked up Darville to see how far he could assist him; he would certainly have visited the lawyer upon an empty stomach the next morning. He would have issued emissaries in search of Mr. Dan Morton, and he would have rushed straight off, documents in hand, to Sir Michael Carrington, and have run the risk of a great amount of needless and irreparable mischief. Laurence Bradfield slept well and soundly, although he felt sufficiently the possible difficulties of his case. When he woke he revised it carefully. It was the loss to his sister of a magnificent estate; to himself it raised up inconveniences and distresses, which as they affected him more slowly than other men were likely to affect him more deeply. He felt that; but it never quickened his pulse. He was determined to do justice, cost him what it might, but he meant to do it with such deliberation as should leave no room for regret, no need for retrogression. Altogether, with his own feelings, his sister's position, his mother's gentle patience, who, he knew, would feel most and say the least about it, and above all his father's critical position, which could, however, be cleared by a single word, as he hoped, he had plenty to think of, and therefore was in less haste to act.

It was midday before he called upon Darville. The people in Saxonby saluted him as he walked down the street; and many thought they had never seen a finer-looking fellow, as with a slow deliberate walk he almost lounged along, a

head taller, and many inches broader than most whom he met. He looked in their faces too, with his bright blue eyes, as honestly and openly as the god of day himself, and Mr. Brand and Mr. Parrott made some comparisons between fathers and sons, not complimentary to the former.

Before we get into Hugh Darville's private room, the reader may as well enter a more private sanctum, Hugh Darville's conscience.

Hugh Darville was not a bad man: he was kind and generous, warm-tempered and enthusiastic; not of high principles, nor a high sense of honour; but there are thousands worse, as there are thousands better. His was a mixed character, with perhaps the good predominating.

The way in which he became involved in Mr. Bradfield's affairs at all was purely accidental, and requires us to go back to a distant date, when the present generation was young. He became possessed in early life of a knowledge which was dangerous, by one of those circumstances which happen to his profession, in which men with more firmness and principle, or as some will have it with lest temptation, act differently.

Henry Bradfield died; somewhat suddenly, certainly inopportunely. He left his affairs, prosperous in the highest degree, in some confusion, arising from a bad habit of trusting nobody. His son, sent for at the last moment, and not knowing much of the new property which had come into the family, as he presumed by legitimate purchase, placed the business in the hands of Mr. Darville, senior, the most respectable solicitor for many miles round. It so happened that a severe attack of illness prevented the old gentleman from paying that personal attention to it, which a client of such importance, pecuniarily speaking, invariably enjoys at his solicitor's hands. Young Darville, an extravagant young man, fresh from London, Cambridge, and a Continental tour, and not long married, was destined to supply the place of his father, at a critical moment, and within a very short period of that father's death.

Amongst the papers, documentary and testamentary, which fell into his hands, was one manifestly not intended for him; one which contained a secret, almost a confession, involving the reputation of Abel Bradfield, and the possession of the Sommerton property. It was evident that

oversight had left it among those papers, which are generally placed in the hands of the family solicitor, as matters of business. It should have been seen by no one but by Abel Bradfield, for whom it was intended, and to whom it was addressed. The purport of it is soon stated. It admitted, in simple terms, the existence of a release and receipt for the mortgage money for the Sommerton Estate; it owned without much remorse and with some exultation the deception and robbery that had been practised upon the Carrington family, as a set-off against the proud and insolent spirit with which the mortgagee had been treated in all transactions by the mortgagor. It forgot, or intentionally omitted to say, where this extraordinary document was to be found; and it rather implied that the testator would not die less happily, if the heir to the Sommerton property proved as callous and indifferent to the claims of justice as he, Henry Bradfield, himself had done. Whether this was intended as a draft of what would be a letter to Abel Bradfield to be opened after his father's death, or whether it was positively lost and not recovered, amidst the numberless papers belonging to a man of no education, no business habits, and with a multiplicity of irons in the fire, is impossible to say. There the letter was, when Hugh Darville was ordered, in a spirit of assumed importance, to run his eye over "those stupid papers;" when Mr. Abel Bradfield felt the consequence which newly-acquired wealth gives to a vain person of five-and-twenty.

He did run his eye over the papers, and, understanding the value of this one, put it in his pocket.

Circumstances, more than anything else, determined him as to its destination. Within three days he was sent for on business by Mr. Abel Bradfield. That business was to read, in the presence of the old man, and witness the signature of his will. Mr. Henry Bradfield, although at his last gasp, was perfectly sensible. He had, however, been attacked by paralysis, which rendered his speech very imperfect. There was nothing in his state, however, to call for immediate apprehension when Hugh Darville left the room, having accomplished all that was required of him.

Five minutes more and a bell rang violently. It was followed by the hasty footprints of a valet, old Bradfield's favourite servant. Mr. Abel was wanted immediately, and

he went. The old man was dying. He held with one hand metaphorically to life, with the other, physically to his son. A great struggle was apparent. The eyes dilated—the lips formed inarticulate words. He called plainly on the names of Carrington and Giles Morton. He spoke of the room below that in which he was dying, pointing energetically towards it, and uttering the word "release, release," several times in succession. His valet was sent over for Probewell, and the dying man was left with his son alone. Abel Bradfield strained every nerve to catch his meaning. Suddenly the old man seemed to recover a little, and with a vast effort, he said—

"God forgive me—the wrong I have done—not yours, not yours, my boy. Give it back—all—all—the release—the release."

His head fell back upon his pillow, and Henry Bradfield was no more.

The disclosures which took place between these two men, led almost necessarily to the inference that there existed somewhere a release of the bond or mortgage on the Sommerton property; that that estate belonged once more wholly and solely to the Carrington family; that Giles Morton was somehow the agent employed by old Henry Bradfield in his treachery; but that the necessary documents to prove all this were in the power of Abel Bradfield, involuntarily, at least, as far as concerned their concealment. And why did these two men confide in one another? Abel Bradfield was surprised into trusting Hugh Darville, for he had no one else in whom to confide. Darville had a better motive for resigning his discovery into the hands of the man to whom it belonged, and leaving him to act upon it as he thought fit. Had Darville been a man of honour and of courage, he would at once have urged the necessity of making a proper disclosure to Sir Michael Carrington, or have threatened to have done so himself. It was the duty of both to have made every exertion, and taken every step to have ascertained their true position. Neither had courage or honesty for this trial; and the temptation was too much for them. Bradfield had a direct object—the accumulation of wealth, the fulfilment of his ambition; and at that moment he was deep in speculations in the North, which required increased wealth for their development. What he

might have done, had he then been in the enjoyment of his present affluence, nobody can say. Darville was overcome by a sudden temptation to err in the prospect of immunity and professional success. Once having been guilty of this concealment, his life had been one of regret, but not of repentance. He never dared retrace his false steps ; and at the present moment could better bear the stings of his own conscience than the taunts of a society he had outraged. One other circumstance confirmed their resolutions. Every agent or supposed witness (for they knew but of one—Giles Morton) was away from the country. Would Abel Bradfield desire to find the missing papers? Certainly not, at first. Their absence was an easy solution of his difficulty. Later, when urged to it by Hugh Darville, he would have found them ; but he had then assumed sufficient courage to have destroyed them.

Since Darville's conversation with Scarsdale, he had felt the probability of a discovery. The confession of Giles Morton, the evident complicity of his son in the plot, and the whole circumstances of the case, tended to produce that impression. From the moment he conceived this probability, he made up his mind to do what many such men would have done—to do anything he could to further the ends of justice without implicating his patron, if possible—at all hazards without criminating himself. That is a principle of English law, which he chose to consider it criminal to transgress. But he had other reasons for endeavouring to shield his client. It is true that he had occasionally suffered from his irritability and insolence ; and at times he had been goaded almost into a desire for revenge, even at the sacrifice of his own reputation. But these feelings were as transient as any others to unstable minds. They were peculiarly so in his case, for he had a sincere respect for Laurence Bradfield, and almost an affection for his sister. Her little intercourse with this unprincipled lawyer had enslaved him, much as she had enslaved her other admirers. With the children of Sir Michael he had enjoyed a more restricted intimacy ; they were greater people. With Abel Bradfield's family he was more at home, and circumstances had made their acquaintance more close. He had known them better, and loved them more. Besides this, he had determined to be guided by circumstances as they

arose; all weak men are. The strong guide the circumstances.

"Well! Darville, how are you?" said Laurence, entering the room, and addressing him as if he saw him every day of the week instead of about three times a-year.

"Bless me! Laurence, how you startled me. It seems an age since I saw you."

"I want your advice, if you can give it me."

"With pleasure; sit down. Now, what is it?"

"Something about Sommerton; and, I suppose, I can apply to you with a certainty of your knowing all about it."

"Well, I ought to know something about it. My father bought, and I have received the rents of it. It is a fine property, perhaps, the finest property of its size in the county."

"Can it be money?" thought Darville, "or can it be this terrible business?" He was soon undeceived.

"I had a long conversation with Scarsdale last night; and some information he gave me, and some I received elsewhere, have caused me anxiety."

"I can hardly imagine anxiety and Laurence Bradfield coupled." And, perhaps, at that moment there was as much anxiety in Hugh Darville as in the other.

"Then, read that." And without more ado he placed in the lawyer's hand the paper which had been found in the wood at Silvermere.

Darville's face underwent a change, notwithstanding his preparation for what was coming; for the last person whom he expected to find the possessor of the release sat before him. Thousands of emotions passed in a minute through his mind; and conclusions the most contradictory chased each other through his brain as rapidly as the cold drops of perspiration rose upon his forehead. The nature of Laurence Bradfield, however, was not a suspicious one, and he attributed to another cause the emotions which seemed for some moments to overpower his adviser. At last Hugh Darville spoke—

"And how did you become possessed of this document? Excuse this question, but to act efficiently, we must act in concert."

Bradfield gave him a full account of his meeting with Dan Morton, and his suspicions of that person.

"Of course, you have no idea how he became possessed of it?"

"Indeed, I have. I think he stole it from my father's house on the night of the Saxonby ball."

Darville pondered again. Laurence Bradfield seemed to know too much, or to conjecture too accurately.

"And why?"

Laurence related his previous encounter with the poacher, and the capture of his stick.

"That stick," added he, "was a remarkable one, and has been identified as his by Nanny Fletcher."

They sat silently looking at one another. The evidence had brought them to Sommerton.

"And where is Dan Morton?"

"God knows," said the young man, "I wish I did. Had Job Fletcher anything to do with this business?"

"None, none," said Darville, in a confident tone. "He was a child; nay, I should think not born."

"Has this Dan Morton any friends of his youth with whom he associates? Think. You know the neighbourhood."

He did think, and replied, "None."

"None at Newmarket?" demanded Bradfield.

"Newmarket," repeated Darville. "Ah! that's possible. There is some man there, a trainer; I've heard something of this before. Dan Morton has many trades you know. Prizefighter, poacher, housebreaker, tout. Yes, there is some man——"

"Then we must find him out, Darville. Such men never act alone in such matters. In a multitude of counsellors there is danger as well as wisdom. One word more. My poor father, was he—have you—that is, any suspicion that he can have known of this?"

The words came slowly, and singly out, as if every enunciation gave him pain; but he desired to know the truth, and be guided by it in his measures.

"Your father, Laurence, oh! impossible—that is—certainly not."

The young man was only half convinced. In any other he would have repelled the suspicion as an insult; he could not do so in himself.

Before two days were over, Hugh Darville, on his own account, had made himself master of all the antecedents

of Mr. Jackson from his earliest years to his trainership under Lord Mentmore. There were some curious revelations among them, and Dan Morton had played his part in them.

CHAPTER XXXI.

UN EMBARRAS DE RICHESSES.

"Methinks there be six Richmonds in the field."—*Rich. III.*

In the meantime the two families had arrived safely at home. Nothing particular marked the arrival but an increased inclination to closer intimacy on the part of the elder ladies. They mutually respected, and were beginning to like each other.

"Where are you going to-day, mamma, after lunch?" said Evelyn Carrington.

"To Mrs. Bradfield's; I'm going to call upon her. Will you go too?"

"Certainly, if you like, mamma; I was going to ride."

"I've just ordered the carriage, Ellen; I think we ought to call and inquire for Lady Carrington. Will you go with me?" said Mrs. Bradfield.

"I'd rather not to-day, mamma," said Miss Bradfield. "I should leave them to call first. I don't mean to say that they would take umbrage, but there are plenty of good-natured people who would say we wanted their acquaintance."

"My dear, that's absurd," said simple-minded Mrs. Bradfield; "after all the kind things they said and did at Silvermere; besides, they asked us to go over as early as possible."

"I think Ellen is right, my dear mother; I wouldn't go to-day;" and as Laurence's word was law with his mother and sister, the carriage was remanded.

"Where is my father, Timmins?" said Laurence, two days after his interview with Hugh Darville.

"In the small room at the end of the passage, next to the small drawing-room, Sir."

"Is he alone?"

"I rather think he is, Sir;" and Mr. Timmins, on whom very old Madeira was beginning to tell, hobbled out of the breakfast-room.

Laurence Bradfield had taken two days to make up his mind, and went in search of his father.

He was not alone—he was with his bailiff.

"Is that you, Laurence? Wait a bit—sit down, that's a good fellow. I've something particular to tell you."

In the meantime he went on ordering new buildings for one tenant, whitewash for another, a roof for a third, a pigstye for a fourth: "and so you think we may give up that bit of ground to Mrs. Wiggins?"

"Well, Sir, 'deed I do. She's an industrious body wi' them two boys o' hern to keep, and it 'ud be a help to her."

"Then let it be done at once, ready for summer-planting;" and the astonishment depicted on the bailiff's countenance was not more extraordinary than the apparent generosity, and glow of cheerfulness, which exhibited itself on that of Abel Bradfield.

"Now, Laurence," said he, turning round as his man of business left the room, "I've some news for you, capital news, extraordinary news, but you'll never guess."

"I've some for you, Sir," said Laurence with, however, less exhilaration.

"Well, well, that will keep. What do you think of a letter from Lord Mentmore?"

"I too have a letter from Lord Mentmore," replied he, but with a face that did not place the honour of that correspondence quite so high.

"A letter—yes—very likely; but you're so slow; you never do see anything. What do you say to a proposal—a proposal for our Nelly?"

"I'm sorry the answer does not rest with us, Sir; the question is what Ellen will say to it."

"Say to it! What should she say, man? She'll go out of her mind. Fancy, Laurence! Now will they say I don't know the world, and the value of money? My Ellen Countess of Mentmore!—Mistress of Silvermere!—and half-a-dozen places besides! I haven't told your mother

yet. Luckily I put the letters in my pocket, and opened them here. Ha! ha! A fig for my Lady Carrington and her airs now!" and the successful manufacturer snapped his fingers with great glee and vulgarity. "There, read that," and he tossed over Lord Mentmore's letter to his son. "My daughter, Sir, will be the first woman in the county. It'll take down the pride of some of these precious aristocrats; and now you can go and pick and choose among the best of them." Prosperity and good-humour had made Abel Bradfield more vulgar than heretofore.

Laurence Bradfield read Lord Mentmore's letter, of which he had not exactly a duplicate, but a retainer in the cause. It was precisely what might have been expected. Amongst other things it set forth that the laws of hospitality had prevented his pressing so delicate a subject personally upon his guest, but that his affection was the no less ardent, his attachment no less sincere. His letter to Laurence begged for his aid in presenting him before her in this light, with all those other valid reasons for acceptance, which, wi n fathers and brothers, a peer of the realm, with some sixty thousand a year, is not likely to want.

"She might have been a lucky woman, if——"

"Might have been? What the devil do you mean? She is a lucky woman, unless you're expecting one of the royal princes to propose for her. Don't I tell you it will be the making of us all? These infernal Carringtons will bow their heads when they hear of it; perhaps they had an inkling of it when they recommenced their intimacy. They were all here yesterday—the new member and all. I hear he wanted to see me."

"I saw him instead, as you were away from home. But doesn't it occur to you, my dear father, that this luck might have fallen elsewhere, if the Carringtons, for instance, had had Sommerton instead of us?"

It was a curious speech, under the circumstances, and came out partly unawares. His father, however, was too much engrossed with his own plans to see anything but wealth, honour, Debrett, for his daughter and himself; a peerage, was it not possible for his son? and looking at Laurence with more affection than he had done since he was at school, he got up and wrung his hand warmly—

"Come, Laurence, I know I'm irritable, and have my

faults like the rest of us, but this has delighted me. You don't see it in the same light."

"Not exactly, I confess, Sir; perhaps I know more of my sister's sentiments than you do. Perhaps she might not feel inclined to accept Lord Mentmore."

"Not feel inclined?" and here Mr. Abel Bradfield broke into a laugh almost hysterical. "Not feel inclined! and why not, pray?"

"She may not like him—at least, may not love Lord Mentmore——"

"Do leave off talking such puling sentimentality as this. Not love him! Where did you ever see a woman who did not love sixty thousand a-year? I tell you, man, with her property they'll be among the richest nobility of England. It's a capital match for both of them. If she don't love him, she must learn to do so, or marry him first and love him afterwards; but I won't believe it. Send for the girl;" and Abel Bradfield, quite put out by the appearance of opposition, rang the bell, and desired that Miss Bradfield might be sent for.

"Stay, Sir; before Ellen comes, let me discharge one part of my duty towards you both. You know that Stafford Carrington called here yesterday. Have you, perhaps, overlooked one of your letters this morning?"

"No."

"Have you then no idea of the object of his visit?"

"None whatever; perhaps you can enlighten me—you seem behind the scenes."

"He was here yesterday to propose for my sister's hand." Abel Bradfield rose to his feet, with every sign of passion on his countenance. "Stay, my dear father; hear it all. You think that Ellen or Carrington has deceived you. Nothing of the sort. Carrington's attachment has been of longer growth than we thought, and nothing but our unfortunate misunderstandings have prevented its proper exhibition. His aunt, Miss Carrington, knows of it; and since we have met so frequently, especially at Silvermere, he has found opportunities of declaring himself. He was here yesterday to see you, to endeavour to conquer your prejudices, and gain your consent, as he has the affection of your daughter."

"Do you mean to tell me," and Abel Bradfield hissed out

with frightful emphasis each separate word, "that my daughter has dared to encourage the attentions of a man who is my enemy, the enemy of our house—whose family have treated me with the grossest indignity—who has done all in his power to thwart me—and whose wretched jealousy has been the curse of my very existence? Do you mean to say you are come here to plead his cause yourself? Traitor to your party, as you are, can you stand in the presence, Sir, of your own father, and tell him this?"

Mr. Bradfield had literally lost every particle of colour from ill-suppressed passion; his cheek and lips were bloodless.

"You know, Sir, my sincere regard for Lord Mentmore; and you must know that I knew nothing of his proposal until this morning. I could not foresee it; and, although Ellen and I should regret to oppose your wishes, we cannot regard the Carringtons exactly in the same light as you do."

"Fool! renegade! you have the virtues of the spaniel and the worm—you can fawn and bear the heel of the oppressor. You have counselled her to accept him."

"On the contrary," said the young man, looking down with a painful effort at composure, "I have not counselled her at all—her acceptance of Stafford Carrington is impossible. Had I known what I know now, I might have saved her some pain."

"Excuse me, Laurence, I was unjust. But this other marriage must go on—you will help me. No girlish prejudices must thwart our interests. She cannot marry Stafford Carrington; she must be Countess of Mentmore—she looks it all over."

As he spoke the door opened, and, not to give the lie to his last assertion, she stood before them radiant with the freshness of morning beauty, and looking only as Englishwomen can look in the face of early day.

Abel Bradfield was swaying about between violent passion and the necessity of conciliating his son: his heart was still beating, his breath came short, and he had not recovered his colour. It was with difficulty he spoke at first to Ellen Bradfield; his voice shook and his hand trembled as he essayed to give her a chair. She dropped into it, and sat back, looking first at her brother, then at her father. She

saw all was not right. After a little beating about the bush (Abel Bradfield never looked anyone in the face, excepting when his passion conquered his fear), he said to her,

"Ellen, you are a fortunate girl; I have to congratulate you on a conquest."

The smile with which he said this was a sickly one; the one with which she received his congratulation and answered it was open, honest, and healthy.

"Ah! my dear, dear papa, then there is no trouble. I feared a little opposition, for prejudices are stubborn things; but I see Laurence has been my friend."

Laurence looked down, for he divined the mistake she was making.

"We are playing at cross-purposes, Ellen: there were no prejudices to overcome. Read that." Saying which, he handed her Lord Mentmore's letter, and folded his arms.

She read it deliberately, taking time to think. She guessed the storm, for she knew the precursors of it well—disappointed vanity and opposition. But it was best to trim the vessel at once.

"Generous; so like Lord Mentmore. How to make him feel the disappointment least?"

"You will do that by accepting him. It is true that I learn from Laurence that we have been honoured"—here he laughed ironically—"by an offer from another quarter, which of course, under the circumstances, is not to be thought of. An impoverished country gentleman, and an earl with sixty thousand a year: one must be refused at once—civilly, of course."

Ellen Bradfield sat bolt upright. "Civilly—more than civilly. Lord Mentmore has paid me a compliment that I never can have deserved." The tears started in her eyes. "For his sake, if he thinks I should make him happy, I regret it is one that I never can accept."

"And what, Miss Bradfield, is the fortune you have marked out for yourself? if I may be so bold as to ask."

"I have accepted, and am ready to return, the love of an honoured and honourable gentleman, well descended and of a position at least equal to my own, of a true and generous heart, of spotless reputation, and worthy the friendship of my brother. If he thinks not, let him say so."

"And who is this spotless, well-descended gentleman

whom you and your brother have selected without the consent of your family?" His voice trembled, he breathed with difficulty, and again a ghastly pallor overspread his face.

"Stafford Carrington."

The morning sun streamed through the window, and lighted up her cheek and glossy hair with its golden beams. Her heightened colour gave a Pythoness-like grandeur to her stature, as she rose to her feet to confront the insolence that trembled on her father's lips.

"An upstart beggar, that would marry you for your thousands." Ellen's lip quivered, and her eyes filled with tears, but she showed no signs of yielding. Her brother interposed. "Silence, Sir."

Laurence looked down again. His manner was cold, and he had lost that *moqueur* spirit in which he was wont to treat serious subjects; but Ellen was not to be thus put down.

"Thousands, papa—yes; but surely that may be one reason why I may reject the wealth of Lord Mentmore, to bestow mine on one that never sought it, though he may be glad of it."

"Listen to me, Ellen. I would rather you should follow my corpse from this door within one week, than that you should give your hand to Stafford Carrington. Thousands—your thousands, I said: I could blow them to the winds with one breath. You are no heiress. There exists a paper which robs you, God knows how! of all you have." His voice grew more and more uncertain; twice he stopped, and put his hand upon his heart to still its flutterings. "Where is it? I know not. There stands your brother—fall back upon him. I tell you, you are no longer the heiress, but the despised daughter of the manufacturer." His face was livid, but he still stood erect. "Marry Lord Mentmore, I tell you. Come, come, Nelly—the Countess of Mentmore, with sixty thousand a year."

"I do not pretend to understand you, papa; but it would be more honest to follow your corpse to the grave than to marry one man while my heart was in the possession of another. I cannot obey you. I respect, I esteem, but I cannot marry, Lord Mentmore."

In the meantime Laurence Bradfield had approached his

father. "There should be no secrets between us, father. I have thwarted and irritated you many times, sometimes unintentionally. I cannot enter into your views always; but forgive me. What trials we have to bear, let us bear together: we have thousands of blessings, and cannot be without our trials. We three can share them; there's plenty of courage amongst us to do what is honest and right. Let us keep them from my mother: we have still thousands, and to spare. Poor Nelly!" and he went round, and put his arm round her waist and kissed her. "Now, Sir, let me tell you why she cannot marry Stafford Carrington. I have the paper you are in search of, to restore to its rightful owner. There is the release."

Abel Bradfield seized it with both hands, looking fixedly on it for a second or two, tore it in half, and was about to repeat it, when his son and daughter caught his arms. He looked at them kindly, affectionately; the papers fell from his grasp; he put a hand upon each of them; a spasm passed rapidly over his face; and he was a corpse.

CHAPTER XXXII.

AWKWARD DISCLOSURES.

"Good heart, what grace hast thou, thus to reprove
These hearts for loving?"—*Love's Lab. Lost.*

UNREGRETTED, excepting by his wife, his son, and his daughter, Abel Bradfield died and was buried: he was too wealthy and influential a man for his exit to be wholly unnoticed. There are, however, plenty to worship the rising sun, and in this instance the homage was well transferred.

The suddenness of the catastrophe was a sufficient excuse for some delay in replying to the important business mentioned in the last chapter; but it was felt that to Lord Mentmore a reply, as early as circumstances would permit, was due. Both he and Stafford Carrington were at no loss to conceive why the answers to both were not immediate.

The latter question, Laurence Bradfield took entirely upon himself. He wrote and told his friend so; and pointed out that his sister, at this moment, might well be excused from receiving anyone, even himself. He more than hinted that obstacles might arise. Stafford Carrington was fain to wait Laurence Bradfield's time. He made the interval as short as he could.

Ellen replied to Lord Mentmore herself. It was a singular effort, and one which caused her much regret. Not, indeed, that she was not to be Lady Mentmore—not that she was not to be the envied of all her acquaintance. She had no regret to bestow upon this, but that she must inflict pain upon so generous and so delicate a lover. She desired to make him feel how much she esteemed him, how much she liked him, and how far short of his deserving such sentiments fell. But she knew she could do him no kindness in deceiving him, so she left none of those loopholes which disappointed men love to detect. Fortunately Mentmore understood her—appreciated her. Her refusal made him her friend for life.

I am a privileged acquaintance—to the world these things are a dead letter. Happily!—for just conceive the malignity of Lady Hardingstone, at her having had the chance; the bitter astonishment at her folly by Lady Elizabeth Derwentwater; the petty jealousy of dear Lady Mary Gwendolyn, who is a good-natured girl where her affections are concerned, and really took a fancy to Ellen Bradfield; and the mute surprise of Lady Carrington and Evelyn, until enlarged views shall have fully explained—and very reasonably explained—her rejection of such an offer.

A fortnight after the funeral, when Mrs. and Miss Bradfield were in Eaton Square, when the greater part of Sommerton Hall had been closed, when Laurence Bradfield was living in a couple of rooms, for the purpose of concluding his business with Mr. Hugh Darville, and when the parish was again reviving under the sanitary influence of Scarsdale, whose ministrations had lately been a little infringed upon, one leisure morning presented itself. The best use to which it could be put, appeared to the young squire, as the people were desirous of dubbing him, to be by a visit to Miss Philadelphia Carrington. The lady was not ignorant of the events that had taken place, and was not, therefore,

very much surprised when Mr. Laurence Bradfield was announced. After the ordinary introduction of conversation upon such occasions, he said,—

"You know we have sustained a severe loss since we last met."

"The loss of a parent, I presume, Sir, may always be considered so." This was not meant to be unkind, but Aunt Philly never flattered anyone. "And so Mrs. and Miss Bradfield are gone to town?"

"The house is nearly shut up, Miss Carrington, and will be so entirely in another week, I hope."

Bradfield spoke with some degree of *empressement.*

"I am sorry we are to lose you from the neighbourhood, Sir." This was equally true with the other. "I hope not for long."

"That must depend upon circumstances. It is more than probable, however, that I shall henceforth live in the North." The old lady looked at him scrutinisingly. "Miss Carrington, very extraordinary facts have lately come to my knowledge, and I am told you can throw some light on them."

"I'll tell you, Sir, how far I have penetrated the family secrets. You have honoured me by your confidence—you wish to marry my dear Evelyn. I'm glad of it; though I see certain obstacles in the way. They must be overcome. Then"—and the old lady counted upon her fingers—"my nephew has made an offer to Miss Bradfield. I'm not so glad of that, for she'll have a large fortune, and I don't like the idea of the Carrington estates being patched up by a marriage. However, that's their business. I love your sister, Sir; she's very handsome, and, I think, very honest and good. My nephew—I mean Sir Michael—has very strong prejudices, and his wife, who is a good soul, has imbibed them. But I don't intend a life to be sacrificed to prejudices which, between ourselves, have had their day. And now what do you want to know?"

"I think I've heard that when the Sommerton property lapsed, there was some suspicion of the existence of a release."

"There was so strong a suspicion that my nephew was advised to try the question—badly advised, as it turned out."

"Not so badly, Madam, as you seem to imagine. There was a release."

"Do you mean to say, Mr. Bradfield, that there was a legal redemption of the property of Sommerton, which had been mortgaged by my eldest brother, Sir Reginald Carrington?"

"I do, Miss Carrington!"

"And how do you know that? for your father was not married at the time I speak of."

"I know it, because I have seen it; in fact, because I have it;" and as he spoke he produced to the astonished old woman the two halves of the torn release, which he put together. She adjusted her glasses and examined both that and the other memorandum with great care.

"God is great, Sir! And you found this in your father's house after his death?"

"Indeed I did not." And Laurence blushed as he said it.

"I'm thankful for that. How did you become possessed of them?"

He related to her the poaching affray, with which the reader is already acquainted.

"And where do you suppose this Morton obtained them?"

"I have no certain knowledge as to that. I have set men to work, who will do their duty. In the meantime, will you tell me once more, precisely the circumstances of your eldest brother's death, Miss Carrington?"

"With pain." And she related the circumstances, as we have already heard them.

"Then those men murdered Sir Reginald?"

"Scarcely that; he fired upon them, and, according to the only evidence we could get, they struck him in self-defence. They meant to commit a robbery, not a murder. They would have been very properly hanged, Sir, in those days; now, I suppose, they would suffer a year or two's inconvenience, and be out again, on leave, to commit new robberies or murders, as the case might be."

"Was there a man of the name of Jackson concerned in it?"

"The postillion's name was Jackson. He was supposed to have been tampered with. It could never be proved; but he made no defence, and has never been heard of since the affair."

"I beg your pardon. The Mortons have escaped us ; one by death, the other by stratagem ; but Jackson is in this country, and we know where and when to find him."

"And now what are you going to do ?"

"I am going to deliver these papers into Sir Michael's hands."

"But they may be forgeries."

"I think not; and shall act upon my convictions. That property belongs to your family, Miss Carrington ; at least I shall offer no opposition to any steps that may be necessary for the establishment of the claim. Thank you for your hearing and assistance ;" and here Laurence Bradfield rose to go; the old lady rose too.

"Laurence Bradfield, you're an honest man. In this world to be told so, is not so equivocal a compliment as it seems to be." He took the old lady's hand, bent over it, and kissed it, and left the room without recurring to his own anxieties.

Sir Michael and Stafford were in the stables.

"What do you mean to do with your horses, Stafford ?"

"I've taken six stalls at Tattersall's for the week before Ascot. They begin to look pretty well."

"You had better have kept them. I thought you liked them ; and good horses are dearer than they were in my day; they were always difficult enough to find, and now almost impossible."

"The difficulty is to find the money, Sir. However, I think they will sell pretty well, and I must go to Ireland with the produce. I wonder whether Bradfield means to sell the horse he rode in the run from Everton's osier-bed ?"

"Mr. Bradfield, Sir Michael," said a servant, coming to the stable door, and presenting a card to the baronet.

"Mr. Bradfield," repeated the old gentleman, "are you sure he asked for me ? Didn't he ask for Mr. Stafford ?"

"No, Sir, he said 'Sir Michael,' I'm sure." Sir Michael prepared to go in, and desired the servant to show him into the library; the library in which a memorable scene had taken place some months before between the fathers, and of which the sons and daughters knew nothing.

It was impossible for even Sir Michael not to feel the distinction between the present and the late Mr. Bradfield. Manner, education, natural and acquired powers were all in

favour of the son; even his politics. Sir Michael acknowledged it by the kindliness of his reception. He asked after Mrs. and Miss Bradfield. He contrasted his last interview with Abel Bradfield in that very room; and half regretted that the man whom he had rejected as a son-in-law should be such as he was.

"Sir Michael, I fear I may detain you some few minutes; but the business on which I am engaged is so important, that you will forgive it, when you know it."

"No more poaching business, I hope, at present?" said the baronet, laughing good-humouredly; for he had heard all about the fighting, and was mightily entertained at the capture.

"Not exactly; but the results affect yourself, as I imagine, very materially." He then told Sir Michael of the recovery of the release, and his own impression that it was a genuine document. It took some time to explain; and Sir Michael Carrington was too much interested to comprehend at first the full value of the intelligence. Of course he asked a great many questions which it was impossible for Bradfield to answer; as to how Morton came by it? where it had been hidden for the last five-and-thirty years? was he legally entitled to it? and how could his solicitor best consult Mr. Bradfield's convenience in dealing with any claim he might think it his duty to renew?

Bradfield could tell him none of these things. But he told him that until that day he had been unable, from pressure of business consequent on his father's sudden death, and his uncertainty upon some minor points, to surrender to him the document in question.

"Now, Sir Michael, I do so with a regret that your family should have from accident on our part suffered so long and so grievously at our hands. I thank God, that I have been able to make the first action of my independence the restoration of a right."

Sir Michael was not a man of fine sentiments, nor very refined feelings or language, but he was an English gentleman of very high caste, and the openness of the whole transaction, the avowal, and the manner and address of the speaker produced a most favourable impression in the baronet's mind.

"Is there nothing, nothing at all,—think well, Mr. Brad-

field,—nothing for yourself that I can do to oblige you? to soften this—this—what shall I call it? disappointment?"

Bradfield did think. It required not a second for consideration. He did know what would have repaid him for all. But he stopped, while the words were on his lips, and instead of indulging his own day-dream, he said, "Yes, Sir Michael. You can, if need be, spare the memory of those who have gone before me."

He thought the danger was over, and was proud of having surmounted it. Not so. The conversation took a new turn, and Sir Michael Carrington began to discuss some political questions of the day with the young man. Insensibly he found himself listening to him. Then he felt interested in spite of himself, and entered upon dangerous ground; the hopes and anticipations of an able and ambitious man, the prospects and immediate intentions of a wealthy and influential one.

"My mother and sister are in town. I must go down to the North after the session, and put my affairs to rights. Business is not to my mind; and retirement from it will enable me to do a good turn to a cousin, who knows more of it than I. We shall probably winter in Rome."

"And then I hope we shall hear of your settling in your own country; you young men of position have a duty to perform by your people, your tenantry, and no man can quite do the position justice without a helpmeet."

It was an unlucky speech, but a perfectly guileless one.

"Had circumstances not been untoward, Sir, I should have looked for one near home. I did not intend to touch upon a subject so closely connected with yourself; but I might have hoped that time would perhaps have conquered the natural prejudice, which, I understand, exists to such an alliance, and have sought the honour of Miss Carrington's hand."

Sir Michael was less astonished than might have been supposed. He had been made aware to some extent of Stafford's infatuation for the daughter of his enemy, but regarded it as less serious than usual in such cases. He received the present intelligence coldly enough. "Let us not discuss problematical conditions, Mr. Bradfield; some time hence we shall meet, I dare say. Time is an assuager of ills."

"I am going to town shortly, and shall be glad to see your son before going. Is he at home, now?" This was said very abruptly.

"Then come out, Bradfield, and see the horses; I left him in the stable-yard when I came in;" the baronet had shaken off his little attack of frigidity, which he began to feel was unworthy of himself and unmerited by his neighbour.

"Will you have a stroll round the garden, Bradfield?" Stafford Carrington had never proposed a walk round a garden before; but it was necessary to go somewhere, for he conjectured that this visit was to him, as it was in fact.

Bradfield was provokingly silent when they got into the garden, and then began about the apricots, and the beauty of the Whisteria when in bloom. Carrington, with more consistency, asked him whether he would like to sell the horse he rode from the osier-bed to Sommerton.

"Carrington, I am charged with a message from my sister to you. Forgive her, if it pains you." Carrington looked surprised, almost offended, while Bradfield continued, "The sudden death of my father, and some circumstances you have yet to learn from Sir Michael, make it imperative that — well! that we should proceed no further at present."

"I might have been prepared for opposition from your father, but I could scarcely have expected it from you."

"Ah! how little you comprehend me. There is no person, with one exception, whom I would so happily call my brother-in-law. You know your own father's prejudices?"

"I don't think they weigh with you."

"They do, though. I've a foolish pride as well as he. I believe it stood in my way to-day. My sister was an heiress."

"It did not prevent my proposing to her. I have too high an opinion of her."

"She is not so to-day. She has nothing."

"That should not prevent her accepting me. We shall not be rich, but I shall have enough for both."

"Nevertheless, the thing is impossible at present. Will you take my answer, or shall my sister write? Say which it shall be."

"I do not wish to be impertinent. May I hear from

your sister? The change is sudden, and there should be something important to justify it."

"You shall hear from her;" and he did hear, that both their situations were changed; that a proposal was always conditional; that she could have bestowed wealth upon him but that the manufacturer's daughter could not accept it from him. That he had more to offer now, and she less than when their relations were different. What children the best of us are! Pride, foolish pride, that invents a rod for its own back, and inflicts a double wound at every blow.

In a few days he knew it all. Hugh Darville had the pleasing task assigned him of relieving two patrons, the one of his money, the other of his anxieties.

But it was later that they knew how the brother had toiled to dispossess himself of his money, and his sister of a bridegroom; and how then they both went into exile.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE TWO THOUSAND, AND HOW IT CAME OFF.

"No, by my word; a burly groom
He seems, who in the field or chase
A baron's train would nobly grace."
Lady of the Lake.

A SHRILL whistle, and a prolonged scream, and a heavily laden train began to discharge its hundreds, almost thousands. It was the morning of the Two Thousand, a treat for the upper ten thousand, and the place in which they were set down was Newmarket. Fifty omnibuses were there, one hundred and fifty flys, and porters innumerable in attendance. Mysterious men were about, and they caught still more mysterious men by the button-hole, and they all sought a corner apart. They needed not to have troubled themselves, for everyone was bent upon business of his own. Whence came they all? What singular combination of mutual intelligence made them all go to the same trades-

man for their boots and trousers? How did they get into these former and how did they ever remain in these latter? Ah! I know; in some cases it was the straps. As to the trousers? Man is a fatty substance. He was boiled down and poured in a melting state into them.

The omnibuses and flys rattled into the one clean countrified street, and nearly disposed of the little boys, newspaper vendors, and card sellers. They are honester than the card-sharpers who came down. And then they deposited their loads at the Duke of ——'s, Lord ——'s, and Mr. ——'s, and some went to their solitary bed-rooms to refit. Mr. Tattersall was selling young ones in front of the rooms; they were lame and weedy—they had been tried half-a-mile, and found wanting; they were too bad even for that. The ring was loud too, and very vicious. America and France were silent, grave, unsympathetic. And some of the horses were considerably knocked about, on that sunshiny forenoon.

Lord Mentmore had arrived the Monday before, in time for dinner. He had transacted business at Tattersall's that morning much to his satisfaction. For he found Stonehenge gone down a little, but a monkey restored him again. Still the horse was under a cloud.

All our friends at Mentmore's, or nearly so, we have met before. Wilfred Jones was there of course. Stafford Carrington too. Trumps and his colonel. Lord Dallington, Stapleton, and others. They had plenty of money on it, generally on Stonehenge, with perhaps a cock-boat. The lucky ones had hedged, but they had been let into the secret early. The Duc de Belle Alliance had on a pony and stood it all; whilst the Duke of Splinterbars having heard a whisper that the trainer's money was the other way, hedged immediately and stood to win a thousand to nothing instead of seven thousand to one. How the duke heard the whisper nobody knows. It was not from its being a loud one; perhaps it was, like some curses, deeper than loud. The duke, however, was not the only one who had heard it.

"You are sure of your information, Mentmore?" inquired Wilfred Jones, the night before, when Carrington and the rest of the guests were supposed to have retired for the night. Some were smoking, and the rest looking over their books in their rooms.

"As certain as a man can be on such a subject. In fact I'll tell you who my informant is, if you like; Laurence Bradfield."

"He doesn't know much about it, I should say."

"That's the very reason I trust him; he has no interest to serve, and has not deceived himself nor me. Those clever fellows who know too much are the men to take care of. However, this time I mean to act upon it. If I'm wrong, I am the sufferer."

"Mind the public, that's all," said Wilfred Jones.

"I begin to think the public is rather a mistake. The public is always touting and meddling; it never pays a farthing towards my trainer's bill; it always puts itself in the hole by some blunder, and then abuses the owners of horses. It has all the fun and pays none of the mouey; I don't quite care so much for the racing public myself. But I'll tell you how Bradfield got his information, if you like."

"I am a little curious; as it's a serious busiuess to go into."

"A man of the name of Morton, who is known to have been a former pal of Jackson when in differeut circumstances, and who has been seen here about his house lately, has been what he calls in trouble—that means, in jail. He wanted assistance and sent for Jackson. Jackson refused all aid, and they had a violent quarrel. The natural consequence has been a split between the confederates; aud as Morton conceives himself to be under some sort of obligation to Bradfield or his family, he has eased his conscience by telling Jackson's secret. It's rather a left-handed way of repaying it, as Laurence Bradfield never betted a shilling in his life."

"You forgot to tell me the precise nature of the information; we shall be able to judge better by that thau anything."

"Did I? Well, my horse is to have a good three miles gallop early in the morning in private, besides an unnecessary, though public, sweat. The calculation is that no three-year old can stand that and win in the company he'll have to meet. If there is any accident about it, the boy who rides him, young Strongitharm, a nephew of Jackson's, is to make him safe before he gets to the hill, say about the bushes."

"And what do you propose to do?"

"I've brought over my own man from Silvermere, Evans, who knows quite as much about the horse as Jackson, and who has never deceived me in his life. He has two police-

men in plain clothes. Before daybreak the horse is to go out; he will be stopped at the stable-gate, by my orders; and from that moment Evans will not leave him. He will have very gentle exercise instead of his three miles and his sweat, and I think he can win. There will not be the slightest row, or suspicion of anything wrong. Jackson will continue the ostensible manager, and thinks himself quite safe with his jockey."

"And how about the boy?"

"At the last moment he'll be changed—I've a boy quite as good, and ten times as honest; and I think we shall put Mr. Jackson's friends in the hole, as it will be too late to hedge a sixpence."

"Upon my word, Mentmore, you deserve great credit for your prudence. Most men would have had a scandal."

"A scandal does no good to anyone but the press. I shall get rid of Jackson; you must help me to win this Derby, if the horse continues right; and then I shall give it up.

Wilfred Jones's face fell. This was an unexpected piece of prudence for which he was not prepared.

"Give it up! Why what the deuce can you do?"

"Go abroad for a year in the yacht: you can come too. And when I come back I shall take the hounds. Good-night, old fellow. We had better both be up early. The horses will be out at eight."

Wilfred Jones took his candle, and mused long on this change of purpose. He fell asleep, dreamed that Stonehenge was a hare, and was coming up the hill, hunted by the rest of the field, ridden by a monkey in Mentmore's colours. The hare first and the hounds nowhere. When he was wide awake he reflected that this was part of the battle of life, and when one went down another came on. If Mentmore was tired of keeping horses for other people to make money by, there were plenty more ready and willing to stand in his shoes; and though a change could not well be for the better, there were still oysters for those who knew how to open them.

The account which Lord Mentmore had given to Wilfred Jones was substantially correct. Morton had been recaptured and taken to Saxonby; so he sent for Jackson. The terms which the former desired to make for himself

when his sentence (whatever it might be) should expire, appeared to the latter simply ridiculous. Jackson treated him *de haut en bas;* which the stronger and bolder ruffian, forgetting the vast differenee between a great public robber of thousands and a petty villain of a housebreaker and poacher, resented. The quarrel grew; and though the vials of Morton's wrath were uncorked, his secret remained bottled up as elose as ever. The devil threw Laurence Bradfield in his way, who, admiring a hardy ruffian, said a few kind words to him. The leaven of malice and wickedness sunk for a time, and sineerity and truth rose to the surface. So the mode and the measure of the robbery eame out. Dan Morton, free, was a dangerous person to Mr. Jackson; so Mr. Jaekson had made friends with him, told him thc "how" and the "when," and was for having him in to assist in watching the horse; but that fatal poaching business spoilt it all. Dan Morton, an inearcerated gaol-bird, was nobody; who would listen to him, with his eock-and-bull stories? was not Jaekson, Mr. Jackson, trainer to Lord Mentmore, unassailable, even by the mistake that he himself had committed?

An hour after the train came in, that is at half-past twelve, the little town was for moving on to the course. Tattersall's rostrum was down, the newspaper boys were plying their trade at the earriage and fly windows, and the eards men were more numerous than ever. At the opposite side to that whieh we have seen, where lies the railway, and the lime-kilns, and the training-grounds, the population made its way to the racc course. Hundreds on foot, thousands on horseback, many in earriages; one costermonger's cart, and Mr. Joseph Jones in a very bad buggy. The sun was bright; but the wind was easterly, and the dust flew in elouds. The demon of sore-throats presided over everything. But a raee is a raee at Newmarket, and not a pie-nie, so everybody went out to see it.

"The raee of the day had eaused much speculation, mueh exeitement. Lord Mentmore's horsc had been shifty; not so firm as might be, notwithstanding his own book, and his repeated assurances that he should win. Commissions had been out against the horse; not in influential quarters, yet for money. And now as he eantered down to thc ring, before the first racc, he vowed it would win. The French

party was clearly not to be trusted. Their tactics on a previous occasion had been such as to shake the faith of all men.

"What's to be done about the French filly?" inquired Lord Scapegrace of a professional handicapper, who was supposed to know something about the stable.

"I shouldn't back her, my lord; she won't win."

"What do you think of the favourite, Filcher?"

"I think very well of him; but there's the American just come with a rush, as good a favourite as Lord Mentmore; he opened his mouth last night for the first time since last Goodwood meeting."

The ring was very full indeed; and the minor races were almost disregarded, so anxious were men to get information about the favourites for the Guineas.

"Rappahannoc is at five to one; the American says he's in earnest this time, my lord," said a pork butcher, who had failed in Smithfield and paid one and threepence.

"I'll lay you five monkeys to one, then."

"Done;" and out came the books.

"Now I'll do it again if you like, or my horse beats him for a place, for the other monkey, if you prefer it."

"Now, I'd rather back you, my lord;" and off went this worthy to make himself safe.

As the time approached the noise became greater, but the whole wore the decorum of a cockpit in which game-birds fight to the last and die without a cry.

The numbers were up. Thirteen of them. The most remarkable, Stonehenge, Rappahannoc, and La Belle de la Saison; the rest lived upon their private trials, and the public had not trusted them with much.

"I shall back the mare; I want the odds about the Frenchman to a hundred," said a young swell, galloping into the ring at the last moment.

"Don't be such a fool. She's as good as boiled."

"How the d—l do you know?"

"Because I'm on," said his friend; "come here, I'll tell you all about it."

Just then the bell rang; the horses were seen to go down a little distance off, there was a general move, the ring broke up, carriages made off to take up a position near the foot of the hill, horses galloped away to the rising ground opposite

the stand, and the real amateurs planted themselves at about the bushes.

"We shall know how it goes here, John."

"Yes; it's most over by the time they get here; that is to them as has brought their brains as well as their eyes with 'em. Why! who's that on the favourite?"

"Strongitharm, to be sure."

"No, no, it isn't, though; Lord bless me! I know who it is; what's his name? Lor! it's that boy as comes down from our country; down near Lowestoft there; Markham. Lord Mentmore's own boy. Capital rider; they do say. How proud his old mother will be if he wins the Guineas, to be sure."

"Well! they got Strongitharm's name down, anyhow, on the board."

"Ah! that don't signify: that's the boy—so I tell you."

It appears that Lord Mentmore had been as good as his word, he had stopped the gallop and the sweat; and just three minutes before the race, he had divested Mr. Strongitharm of his cap and jacket, and put up a favourite boy of his own, who had ridden the horse in a trial or two, but who was too honest to be entrusted when a robbery was to be committed.

"They're off!" shouted the crowd; and for once the world told the truth. Down they came from the start, steadily and in a cluster, with the bright sun gleaming on their many colours, the wind whistling round them, and the dust rising in clouds as they passed. At the bushes you could have told that many were out of the race, but the winner was yet in abeyance. Stonehenge was not in front, Rappahannoc was on the near side, the French mare leading on the outside, further from the rails. "The favourite's beat," shouted the short-sighted and ignorant, "the French mare wins." "Rappahannoc," shouted the American party, and those heavy bookmakers Messrs. Pickett and Fleeceall, who stood to win thirty thousand on her. They were at the bottom of the hill. "Ultimist wins," as that gallant outsider made his effort. "Rappahannoc," "Ultimist," the "Belle's" beat, Stonehenge is beat; and Mr. Jackson looked up from where he stood, with a face blanched with fear and rage. He knew better. At that moment the boy who had been riding as steadily as if nothing depended on his performance

saw his opportunity; in two strides he quitted the ruck, of which he had been in the front rank; in three or four more he had passed the Belle; Ultimist died away when he was collared; and there remained nothing but the American to dispose of. Within fifty yards of the winning post Lord Mentmore's horse caught him, Rappahannoc raced for two strides, and Stonehenge went in a winner by a good length, amid the delighted shouts of a discriminating populace.

Mr. Jackson scarcely waited for the completion of the race. From the moment his jockey had been displaced, he saw that nothing but one of those happy accidents which are common to racing could possibly save him. His suspicions were aroused by Lord Mentmore's orders and the appearance of Evans; but the change of jockeys put the seal upon his doubts. From that moment he watched with a mixture of terror and rage the horse which was to defeat all his hopes, and to make him a beggar. In that one race were gone the savings of his dishonesty. But he had made up his mind what to do; his preparations were made with due care. His name would have figured among the defaulters—what of that?—he could afford it, if he got away. The horse was not stopped, when he essayed to go. At that moment a hand was laid on each shoulder, and the face which he knew well, of Mr. Champion, the detective, begged to speak with him a moment. There was a fly ready, and no resisting the polite invitation.

The termination of the Two Thousand was so far satisfactory, that the honest men won their money, and the robbers had to pay. Mr. Jackson was too conscious of his own guilt, a hazy sense of general iniquity, to resist even to ask where he was going, or for what he was wanted, so he sat passively enough till he was in the train. Being there with only his official attendants,—for the trains from Newmarket before the evening are very empty,—he learnt the necessity of his attendance about one Dan Morton, who had escaped from Saxonby (Morton was very clever at this); but who was supposed to have been engaged in a highway robbery some years back. It was suggested that Mr. Jackson could throw some light upon it. The examination was to be a private one: of course, the witness need not convict himself. The witness knew that. Indeed he began to

wonder how he got where he was; he ought to have declined. Where was the warrant? And the liberty of the subject? It was too late now; and in the course of the day he was with Hugh Darville, Laurence Bradfield, and Sir Michael Carrington, with closed doors.

And how was all this managed?

Simply enough. The only persons concerned were anxious themselves to hear the disclosures that could be made, and Hugh Darville had no difficulty in finding Mr. Jackson, *ci-devant* post-boy; since of the bush, Australia; and just now employed in the capacity of trainer to Lord Mentmore.

Jackson had a well-founded apprehension that more was known of his antecedents than was desirable. This made him obedient. Hugh Darville's was a name well known to him; and better known than trusted by men of his character. After some preliminaries they opened the business to Mr. Jackson, and very soon reassured him. At this moment his mind was affected with a diversity of ills, which lessened the poignancy of anyone of them. He was fully prepared to criminate any one but himself, and he did so. The much injured man told his varnished tale.

"Well, gentlemen, I was post-boy and helper at the White Horse at Claygate, a good many years ago, certainly; I won't deny it." And as two out of the three men must have been alive at the time, it was no great virtue to confess it.

"Not much posting on that road," said Darville; there was but little more difference between these two than is made by education and circumstance.

"Well, not much; however, as you ask about that particular job——"

"What job?" and Darville looked for applause; the lawyer's blood was stirring in him.

"Oh! you know very well, gentlemen. I know what I'm here for. It's about that case of old Sir Reginald. You want to know everything, and I suppose you think I can tell you." Mr. Jackson was in for it now, and tolerably reckless; so he went for a good stake.

"We know a good deal, Mr. Jackson. You seem inclined to make a bargain. Do you know you are in our power *particeps criminis?* It's a case of highway robbery.

Jackson scarcely looked as abashed as Hugh Darville. Certainly not as grave as Laurence Bradfield.

"There'd be great difficulty in convicting me, I think, a poor post-boy;" and he looked down at his own prosperous-looking figure, and laughed. "Old Morton's dead, he was one of 'em, and Dan Morton's got away again. They won't catch him, he's away. I know he's gone." Hugh Darville nodded his head at his companions; it was true, he had managed it last night. They did think that Jackson helped him to what he wanted, money and tools. We know better than that.

"Come, gentlemen, the information is worth something to you; money's nothing. Let me tell my own tale, and give me one thousand to see me out of the country."

"D—d scoundrel," said Sir Michael.

"Bless my soul, the man's mad," said Darville, staggered at the amount.

"Let him have it," said Bradfield, nodding slightly to Darville.

"Five hundred's a good deal of money," said Darville, doubting, yet hoping.

"A thousand is twice as much," rejoined Jackson; some nods and winks settled that he should see Darville by-and-by.

"Well, then, I took Sir Reginald in the carriage to Patcham; he spent the morning with old Mr. Bradfield, the old gentleman of all, and your father. I don't know what he did there, but he stayed late. Coming home we were stopped."

"How many?"

"Two of 'em."

"And you couldn't get away?" Jackson was silent; in a minute he resumed.

"The old man fired a shot. He was a gentleman, and turned out; but one of 'em, old Giles Morton, struck him, and stunned him. They took his purse, and they found some papers in the carriage."

"How do you know?" said Bradfield.

"Because I saw them. It was all they wanted."

"But it was dark; how came you to see them?"

"They brought them to the lamps to read, and then I saw what it was. It was a receipt for several

thousand pounds, and a release for the mortgage on Sommerton."

"You seem to have made an accurate survey, Mr. Jackson?"

"I've seen it since."

"Where?"

"In the hands of Dan Morton, who stole it from Sommerton." Laurence Bradfield had made up his mind to know the truth. The last assertion was not a pleasant one as far as he was concerned. But he bore it like a stoic.

"And you could'nt resist, nor ride forward, with two men?"

"Look ye, Mr. Darville; there was one hundred pounds and a free passage on one side, and a bullet on the other. I chose the former. Would that I had never come back."

"Do you know where the papers went?"

"I do; they went to old Mr. Bradfield, and Giles Morton put them away in a secret drawer in a mantelpiece. We all went away together, and we all broke our promise by coming back again."

"And where did your hundred pounds and free passage come from?" said Laurence Bradfield.

"Giles Morton gave it me; I asked no questions, and I think you had better follow my example."

There was no resisting the impudence of Mr. Jackson. Sir Michael Carrington stared and said, "D— the fellow! should you know it again?"

"Indeed I should," said he, very collectedly.

"Is that it, or like it?"

"It is it. I can swear to it; it has been torn in half since."

The case was closed. "Darville, you had better see him alone now;" and the two gentlemen rose to go.

"Sir Michael," said the younger of the two as they went out, "there's nothing more to be said; it is as I told you. Forgive me for the injustice we have done you these years; all will now be put straight. Thank God it is so. Remember your promise. We go from England in a fortnight."

"Good-bye, Bradfield. We shall meet again." The old gentleman shook hands warmly with Laurence; but he did not trust himself to say any more. He thought of his

daughter, and determined not to commit himself by needless cordiality.

After all he was but the first gentleman of his family.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

AN INTERVAL, BENEFICIAL TO THE READER.

"Intervalla vides humanè commoda."—HOR.: *Sat.*

HAVING cleared up the mystery which hung over the rising fortunes of the house of Bradfield, and soured the temper and embittered the days of its master, it might be supposed that all was over. The public can see nothing, however, in a novel without a marriage; and as nine-tenths of our readers are of the handsome sex, whose end is matrimony, I desire to gratify them at the expense of the ugly sex, who prostitute that institution too often as a means. First, however, as an act of public justice to all, I must turn off those of the *dramatis personæ* with whom we have travelled so far; and then we will look at the matrimonial finish, which can be got at by skipping this chapter. It will not be complimentary to me to do so, for I always take as much pains with the last page as with the first, and intend it to give the same satisfaction.

Lord Mentmore is in the East, after winning the Derby; and as this chapter occupies exactly one twelvemonth in point of time, we may leave him in the enjoyment or retirement he has sought, until he appears amongst us again. He has left the turf; having become convinced that, although it has its duties and advantages to be pursued by English gentlemen, at a vast sacrifice of time, money, reputation, and dignity, no man ought to tie himself to it for life. He certainly did his share of the work allotted to him while he was connected with it.

Darville was not found out, and lives a happier man and a wiser one. When he next falls in with a secret, he will

probably make a better use of it than of his last. Even now society would be very hard upon him, upon all of us; and it is a very merciful dispensation which exposes our weaknesses and vices alone to that all-seeing eye which knows how much there will be to pardon by seeing how much there is to condemn. A lawyer's is a life of temptation; all honour to those who stand.

Jackson was right. Dan Morton was not forthcoming after his second escape; and as Mr. Jackson was anxiously inquired for at Tattersall's on the Monday, and has been as anxiously looked for and with as little success for a great many Mondays since, let us hope that he has joined his friend Morton. There is no fear of their reappearance on the surface of society; they are safer than any convict of my acquaintance, and their ticket of leave is post-dated at a considerable distance of time.

Job Fletcher is thinking of reformation in the Coppernails Penitentiary, with every prospect of success, he will have Nanny to look after him instead of Dan Morton. He is just the subject for a good wife's attentions, and will probably repay them; his little trouble came just in time to save him; and he owes a debt of gratitude to the Chief Justice, for locking him up during his insanity at Government's expense.

These are the outsiders, and we have disposed of them according to custom. The remainder must have more than a passing notice.

The lawyers, in a friendly way, took possession of Sommerton; and having taken a little of the gilt off the gingerbread, presented it again in admirable condition for eating to Sir Michael Carrington. Everything was most satisfactorily settled, and Hugh Darville and his friends deserve immense credit for avoiding a scandal, which would have wounded more than one of our friends. The pictures, the library, the furniture, are gone up to town. The works remained, and the baronet found himself with an improving property, which was paying cent. per cent. of its original value, by the energy and capital of—the—the—late mortgagee. Yes! it was decided that that was the proper way to put it. And so it was. No living soul had anything to reproach themselves with; and the world was none the wiser.

Lady Carrington took Sir Michael to town, he having given up his seat in order to enjoy the country; he forgot that his daughter's claims led him to the neighbourhood of Grosvenor Square. "D— it my lady," said he, basking one afternoon at a Chiswick breakfast in the full blaze of a July sun, "I might as well have been in the House."

"You forget Evelyn, Michael; see, she's with the Duke of Splinterbars, a most amiable person and the best coachman in town."

"So he might be, my dear, without setting the Thames on fire with his coachmanship," rejoined Sir Michael.

Evelyn Carrington *was* with the duke; and the duke, who was a good-looking fellow, paid her marked attention. He was always dining in Grosvenor Square, riding with Carrington from twelve to two, of course not unfrequently with his sister. But he felt that he made no progress. Evelyn Carrington was too remarkable a girl not to have admirers; but she gave no encouragement to one over the other. Lady Carrington wondered why Mentmore was not among them. He had won the Two Thousand and the Derby; there could be no want of money, and yet he was gone abroad. A violent passion for yachting indeed!

Evelyn had been a girl of exceedingly high spirits; fond of society, gaiety; buoyant beyond expression. Now, though she was cheerful enough in a quiet way she had lost her elasticity. She preferred home. Her mother was loth to admit that she was affected by any recollections of Bradfield; yet suspicions of it sometimes forced themselves upon her. She had taken a great fancy to Laurence Bradfield herself, and honestly admitted the possibility of his success with a girl so young as Evelyn. If it was so, absence did not remedy, but rather increaso the disease. "She'll get over it very nicely," is an aphorism which requires investigation.

One thing was very remarkable. Bradfield's name, somehow or other, had been constantly before them ever since his absence. They had been accustomed in the country to hear him spoken of as a first-rate man. In London they realised it. He had written a pamphlet which was on every table. His views seemed singularly striking, new, yet bearing strict examination. His party

regretted his temporary absence from debate. Sir Michael, and Stafford, who both led club-lives, were full of his reputation. The former would have heard less, the latter would gladly have heard more.

It is very awkward, certainly, when a man whom you desire to be forgotten by your daughter will obtrude himself by his talents upon your notice and hers. The more so when a comparison with other men is favourable to your *bête noire*. This was just the case with Laurence Bradfield. He had positively been playing Sir Michael's game; been running away from the woman he loved, who knew somehow or other that he loved her, and who certainly had the strongest inclination to love him. London society is not made up of these strong affections, and therefore it is a pity that the representations of life as it is, should deal so largely in them; but they do exist sometimes, and become obstinate in a heated atmosphere too. It was the case with Evelyn Carrington; and altogether the London trial was felt to be something like a failure. So, having got through Ascot, Chiswick, "The Hugenots," "Faust," and Mr. Gye's bill of fare generally; having done the Crystal Palace, the Castle at Richmond, one drawing-room, a Buckingham Palace concert, a Queen's ball, Rotten Row, the dentist, any number of "at homes" and a batch of morning concerts, some time before Goodwood, and before their term was up, the Carringtons packed themselves, their servants, their horses and carriages back again for Spring Vale, with the exception of the M.P for ——shire.

That gentleman is also deserving of notice, for he, too, was in love; and he managed to feed his flame without the palatable food on which his sister was enabled to nourish hers. For of all the thousands in that huge metropolis who worshipped her brother, scarcely one would talk to him of Ellen Bradfield. A lisping guardsman swore she was "wemarkably fwesh-looking," and a heavy-cavalry man with drooping moustache acknowledged that she was "one of the finest fillies out, showed lots o' quality." Stafford could have shot them both, but then shooting is over under those circumstances. He swallowed his wrath instead of his adversary's fire. He was one of those men who chew the cud, who ruminate when they feel deeply. He could have ade no confidant of his male friends; his mother and

sister, he was persuaded, would never believe in his weakness; and as to Aunt Philly, she — and then he stopped short. The very woman to talk to; she was not sentimental, but she was very honest, and he knew he would get the truth; perhaps without comment, which made it all the more palatable.

One afternoon when Stafford had been out with the cubs in the morning and found nothing to amuse him afterwards, he determined upon a visit to Aunt Philly.

"So, Sir, you're come to see me once more? Your cousin Walter is a great deal more attentive than you."

"Then his are professional visits; he comes to see that you are not wandering from the fold. The good shepherd looks after his sheep, aunt."

"I'm a very tough old mutton, indeed; and as I'm past wandering, his visits are very disinterested. Now, I wonder whether yours is the same?"

"No, aunt, I want your advice."

"I'd rather give you some money, Stafford," said the old lady, fitting her teeth, however, into her mouth, which she did preparatory to exercising her tongue with the greater effect, barking and biting, if needful.

"Why?"

"Because you might take the one, I'm sure you don't intend to take the other."

"I beg your pardon; I came for nothing else."

"Then tell me first what is your father going to do with Sommerton now he has it?"

"Do you suspect him of any difficulty in getting through the rents?" and Stafford rather implied by his smile, that he could have plenty of assistance.

"No, Sir; but the house, what's to be done with the house?"

"To tell you the truth, I think he's rather bored with that part of the affair. I suppose he could let it, if he furnished it, for the winter. There's a little shooting, and good stabling for eight or ten horses."

"He could do better than that."

"How?"

"Lend it to you; it's high time you were married, Stafford." This was a very promising opening, more so than he could have expected.

"Do you know that's the very thing I wanted to talk to you about?"

"Bless the boy, what should an old woman of eighty know about such things? I thought you wanted some information about Lord Castlereagh and Roman Catholic emancipation, which you know Pitt really promised, and left us a bone of contention for O'Connell to throw down, and your friends to fight about. But come, out with it. I hope it's a good match."

"Match? you're too fast, my dear aunt, by half. I want your advice."

"Oh! then you shall have it, and welcome. I'm sure you'll take it. All persons do upon such matters as that. Lady Sarah? The duchess will be furious; she means her for Lord Litterdale."

"No; nor Lady Mary Borodaile, nor Fanny Beauchamp."

"Then it must be that pretty widow of poor Lord Charteris, who lives in that great lonely castle of hers, with all her money. But she's nobody, you know. Only a dean's daughter: and though deans and those sort of people are on a most respectable footing in society, they don't go for much in matrimony."

Stafford couldn't help smiling, though he hardly knew whether the old lady was in earnest. "You're a great stickler for blood, then, aunt?"

"Did you ever know a Carrington that was not? They never allowed anything but absolute necessity to indulge in a Lord Mayor's daughter, or something of that sort, when they were almost out at elbows; and that's not your case, now you've got that poor girl Bradfield's property."

"Of course; I knew what you would say; one does not live in a hunting county for nothing; blood—blood—mere blood. To be sure, one ought to go for blood, if—if——" The old lady looked rather amused, but did not attempt to interfere with the eloquence of an M.P.

"If there wasn't quite as much to be got out of a puddle, is what you are going to say; and from which I utterly dissent."

"Indeed I was not, aunt; to be sure, after a time, you know, the puddle settles, and clear water remains at the surface."

"Yes, but clear water is not blood, and I don't know of any admixture of qualities which will make it so."

"Heigh-ho! I knew you'd say so; the thing seems impossible to you. I shall have to do as I think right after all, without—well! I suppose if she had the beauty of Venus, the wealth of Crœsus, the temper of an angel, the talent of a Dacier, Miss Bradfield would——"

"Who? what's the boy talking about now—Miss Bradfield?"

"Yes, Aunt Philly, that 'poor girl Bradfield' that you mentioned just this minute. Do you know I'm in love with her? I wish to marry her, and I've told her so; her brother has refused me, but she has not. Now, will you tell me what to do? I'm afraid it's all water."

"You'd better have fallen in love with Lady Mary Borodaile, or Fanny Beauchamp, but being in love with Ellen Bradfield, you'd better marry her. That's my advice, and I think it's the first I ever gave you, which you are sure to follow."

"And my father?"

"Is a terrible Tartar, and will swear a great deal at first; but I think he's to be managed."

"And my mother?"

"Did she ever refuse you anything? Wait a little, and you'll have her calling upon you and your wife at Sommerton."

"What will Evelyn think?"

"Ah! she'll be difficult to manage. You'd better leave that to me; and as you can't propose till next year, there will be time enough to talk about it to them. When you want to relieve your mind, come and talk to me."

When Stafford Carrington was gone, the old lady rang the bell and ordered her bonnet and maid for a walk in the garden, saying to herself with a very cheerful chuckle, "What a match-making old devil I am becoming in my old age."

"Miss Evelyn, Ma'am, is in the drawing-room," said Mr. Nurse, throwing open the door to his mistress at the same moment.

"And what does Miss Evelyn want with me?" said the old lady, hobbling up to her great-niece and embracing her.

"Miss Evelyn wants advice, aunty," replied the girl smiling, a little mournfully, for she was not very happy. The following was the state of the case.

Evelyn Carrington had returned to Spring Vale, certainly not cured of her predelictions by her season in London. Instead of forgetting, she had rather dwelt upon the memory of Laurence Bradfield, and public rumour flattered her choice. It must be remembered that Bradfield had not been wholly discreet; and that he had only been prevented from making the girl an offer, by a knowledge of untoward circumstances, which restrained him. Evelyn Carrington's affections had not been engaged, unsought.

A crisis had arrived. Splinterbars had proposed.

"And you love him?" said the old lady, shrugging her shoulder, that is to say, the movable one. "You love him?"

"Indeed I don't," replied the other, shaking both shoulders. "You know I don't, Aunt Philly."

"Indeed, I know nothing about it. Then you'd better refuse him."

"It's very easy to say that, but you don't know how difficult it is to do so. You know what a splendid match is is; and——"

"Nothing is splendid that is not honest," chimed in Aunt Philly, unheeded.

"And mamma and papa are so anxious about it; and though Stafford says nothing, of course he would be all against me."

"And with all this you don't love the duke?"

"Don't talk of it, aunt; it makes my blood run cold."

"Then you must not marry him, my love, that's certain. You must not marry anybody."

"Not marry anybody?"

"Of course not. Make an excuse to get rid of Splinterbars. A most magnificent connection—a Plantagenet—almost as direct as Mentmore; and say that you will not marry."

"That I will not marry—that is—not marry anyone, aunt?" Evelyn Carrington blushed; but having come down to make a confession, she made up her mind to go through with it, *coûte qui coûte*. "Must I say that?"

"Yes, my dear, if you have no better excuse."

"I think I have another excuse; but how can I tell papa and mamma? besides, aunty dear, you will despise me for it. I lovo somebody else." The last words came very slowly but distinctly from her; and she never looked up.

"My love, come and sit upon this footstool, and put your head in my lap; I'll tell you a story." There was something very beautiful in this sympathy between youth and age. The thin, wrinkled faco of dear Aunt Philly, bending over the lovely girl, whose eyes had filled with bashful tears, and which dared not look up to the place whence she expected aid. Aunt Philly began in a low voice, and it was wonderful how sweet it had become, and how memory softened the tones which betokened too often hardness and disappointment.

"I was not always what I am now, my child. I am told that I was not ugly nor deformed. I think that is very likely true. I saw a great deal of society, and your great grandfather was proud of me, and made me his companion. In fact, he liked me better than my brothers, whose occupations took them from home. Among other things he wanted me to make a great match; I knew this, and tried hard to please him; but the right people would not propose. I could not help that, you know, Evelyn; nono of us can. I could no more fall in love with the men who mado love to me than you can with Splinterbars. It's a great pity, for he has excellent blood in his veins."

"But I will try, dear Aunt Philly, if you particularly wish it."

"It's not necessary, my dear. Amongst the men who came to my father's house then, was a captain in the navy, of the name of Gray; he was a distinguished officer, when there were more of them than now; but ho was of the 'aucune famille,' as he himself acknowledged; and in our house it required a great deal of moral courage to acknowledge that. I knew how it would grieve my father if such a thing wero contemplated as an engagement between Captain Gray and myself; you see, it was not necessary to marry anyone whom I did not love even to please my father; but I refused the man I did love, and who loved me.

I bore it like an Indian at the stake, or rather like a shipwrecked sailor in sight of land, who refuses to be saved for the credit of his cloth. I refused poor Charlie," the old lady's eyes dropped all she had left of tears, "and I never told my father, nor did he ever suspect that I had had an opportunity of doing so. I hope it is a noble nature that learns to bear well, without crying out. I tried it, and failed. I strove, if not for victory, for patient endurance. But it was too much for me. I endured torture upon torture; and all the diversions of my age, and the scenes through which I was hurried, served to increase my pain. I don't look it now, dear, do I? It's almost laughable to hear an old woman talk in this way;" and then the dear old lady put her shrivelled hand over the smooth brown hair and feverish cheek of her niece. "My health suffered, and at last my father, I forget how, detected my secret. All was to go well. Had I only mentioned it before! said he. But I knew better, though he believed what he said to be true. Fancy, Evelyn, the pleasure of the letter which was to recall him from the dangers of his profession! It was written and sent. I lived in an ecstasy of enjoyment heightened by my previous self-control. The letter which I wrote crossed the one which announced his death, and brought one solitary lock of hair, as his last and only offering to the woman whom he loved so well. He was killed in action, and died as it became him; but I never forgave myself for the heroism with which I acted." Aunt Philly stopped abruptly; at the close of a minute she laughed a little discordantly and said, "Who would ever have thought of this little hunchbacked old woman with a lock of hair and a sentiment? I wonder what Mr. Nurse would say if I told him that? Come, Evelyn, you must laugh, or I shall tell you no more of my personal adventures." But Evelyn was past laughing, and only looked up in the little old woman's face, till she could see nothing for her tears.

"Now I'm not going to have you sacrificed for a sentiment, my dear; so tell your father all about it."

"*You* must do that, Aunt Philly."

"And your mother; what's to be said to my Lady Carrington?"

"I'd rather tell papa than mamma; and as to Stafford, he'll never forgive me."

"But you've never told me the name of the forbidden guest. Well! never mind. I'm glad it's not Laurence Bradfield. Stafford never would get over such a *mésalliance* as that."

As she spoke the old lady caught her grandniece's beautiful face between her hands, and when she released it, it looked happier than it had done for some weeks.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE FINISH: A DEAD HEAT BETWEEN TWO, AND THE REST NOWHERE.

> "The pleasure past supplies a copious theme
> For many a thought, for many a happy dream."—POPE.

FROM June to June, one year, seems a long time to look forward to, a very short time to look back upon. It took all that time to combat Sir Michael's prejudices, and to reconcile Lady Carrington to certain changes. Two of their own household were traitors, or became so; for whether Aunt Philly told, or whether they found out each other's secret, Evelyn and Stafford ended by concerting to betray the garrison, and open the gates to the enemy. They were assisted by a vigilant veteran outside of the walls. She cared very little for Walter Carrington's invectives; who, being a country parson and the representative of Christian forbearance and humility, was more violent than usual. She was more lenient to the obstinacy of her own nephew and his wife, who, after all, were the parties especially concerned.

"You seem to forget, aunt, the question of family altogether," said that worthy divine.

"You don't seem to forget, Walter, that if those children do not marry, you will be heir to one of the finest properties in the county. You had much better marry yourself than find fault with others."

This was a regular facer and doubly undeserved. The rector was not thinking of his own proximity to the title; indeed he was older than his cousin; and he was proverbially a non-marrying man. But the dread of such a suspicion kept him quiet.

It is said that according to military science the fall of any place is certain under particular conditions: as, the capability of the enemy to surround it; its consequent blockade; and the absence of any superior relieving force in the field. Now as the assailing party fulfilled these conditions, and as the assault was not only vigorous, but continuous, the garrison was prepared to surrender, somewhere about the beginning of the following summer. It was an understood thing, too, that they should go out with all the honours of war. So Sir Michael and my lady were prepared to yield.

I cannot say that it was done without a struggle, perhaps a harder one than some people suppose; for a favourite prejudice is hard to overcome. It must not be imagined that these people entered into discussions as your ordinary vulgar souls would do; even as Abel Bradfield, if he had only been alive, poor fellow! would have entered into a discussion upon the Mentmore proposal. It was understood, after six months' coldness on the part of Sir Michael and extraordinary kindness on the part of Lady Carrington, neither of which had any effect upon Stafford, that he was, in process of time, to have his own way. Luck is the great divinity worshipped by people of position, and luck was left to decide the question of "when" and "how."

It is a much more agreeable method of doing business after all, when the business must be done.

"Well! Lady Carrington," said the most intimate friend of the family, "so Stafford is to marry that beautiful Miss Bradfield."

"I suppose he will some day," says Lady Carrington, not pretending to be amused by the conversation, but implying rather that a Carrington is a privileged person and can do as he likes. Of course Miss Carrington is at present "out of the hunt," Mr. Bradfield not having declared in form. But Evelyn has no mistrust, and the correspondence with Aunt Philly is a very appetising one; she retails what she likes of it, and keeps the hopes and the fears to herself.

London has become exceedingly warm, and Sir Michael again curses a house in Grosvenor Square, but is compelled to inhabit it, during the stipulated two months. It is but right that he should do so. Evelyn Carrington is going through the mill once more, but this season with renewed success. She is gay, intelligent, charming, full of spirits; she must have quite recovered from that "Bradfield" attack, which had been surmised last season; nobody knew "how" or "why." The young *attaché* to the Italian Embassy thinks he has a chance; he tries and fails—most likely because the offer was made in broken English, which he speaks but imperfectly. That's his version of it. But two or three very desirable English *partis* offer themselves, and are gently rebuked; just kept at arms' length. The beauty is growing proud. That's what the men in the parks and at Tattersall's say, when they have time to think of such social questions.

It was the very height of the season. Monseigneur le Duc de Belle Alliance was bent on a fête that should eclipse all others that had been given. He had many materials for effecting his surprise: an excellent house, five miles from town; a lovely garden, rich in exotics, and all those natural flowers which make an English lawn, redolent of sweets, and burnished with colour, unequalled in the world. He had a library the most *recherché*, a gallery the most interesting, combining gems of Continental art and genius, with the best productions of our own. He had wit, cheerfulness, generosity, unbounded means, and the very best confectioners in Europe at his command. Could he fail to attract the whole of London to enjoy themselves at his villa, from five P.M. till midnight, at the beginning of July? Certainly not.

The "Morning Post" and the "Court Journal" gave the names of the most aristocratic of the company, and added three or four, &c., &c., &cs., for the Smiths, Joneses, and Robinsons, who necessarily nowadays adorn a royal fête. You see everybody goes to court, and a person who has been admitted at the court of his own sovereign, is fit company for anybody. There's an especial exception made in the case of returned convicts.

So down they came to the duc's villa, stirring up clouds of dust, along the Kensington Road, obstructing the public

ways, and frightening the Bayswater sparrows, about tea time, who were not at all prepared for this sort of thing so far out of town, and so early in the day. Carriages of all sorts were there, from the most brilliantly-appointed equipages, with silk-stockinged and well-powdered footmen and coachmen, to the more humble conveyances of the non-resident foreigners. There were the neat dark coloured broughams with their quick-stepping cobs, drags with their loads of guardsmen and foreign-office *attachés*, the Lord Mayor's coach, and the sheriffs, with stout thirsty-looking women, all smiles, feathers, and colour. There were the loveliest women that England, land of beauty, can produce, from the middle-aged leaders of *ton* to the budding blossoms of a first season. There were the ambassadors and their wives, with their white or olive faces and bright eyes, and foreign-looking toilettes, adding a piquancy to beauty not altogether English in its quality or character. And single horses with cabriolets and broughams brought down the "swells," who were pretending an admiration for their countrywomen, which usually terminated in their own boots.

There was one carriage, bearing a freight not often seen, of late, in the gay world. Since Abel Bradfield's death, his family had remained abroad, and since their return to England had been but little in society. Amidst the towering structures, Ossa, Pelion, and Olympus all on the top of one head, was an unpretending toilette of the very best taste, in slight mourning, surmounting the loveliest face of them all. Madame la Duchesse de Belle Alliance declared her to be French, too well dressed for any Englishwoman; and Monseigneur the Duc vowed she was English, as she was far too beautiful to be anything else. In fact, he knew her at once; it was the daughter of his host of the preceding year. Ellen Bradfield was again in England.

Among the pleasures of the fête was one which had been announced as forming a part of the business of the day. A lottery, the proceeds of which were to go to the distressed foreigners resident in this country, was to be superintended by the members present of the Royal Family of any country, or by their representatives, the aforesaid ambassadresses. Along one side of the lawn, forming a green alley, decorated with all that wealth or elegance could devise, the marquees

of the ladies who turned Fortune's wheel, this time away from themselves into a worthy channel, were erected. Over each was the heraldic device and escutcheon of the family and country, with the name of the presiding deity at length. The beauty and gaiety of the flowers, flags, and embroidery were enhanced by the charms of the occupants of the marquees, where the dark pale cheek and long soft eyes of Spain, contrasted with the beautiful fair cheek and laughter-loving dimples of our own country, and the grace and vivacity of France with the finely-developed form and graver beauty of Vienna or Berlin. Music and flowers were there in abundance; and here and there tents devoted to light refreshments and confectionery antecedent to the heavier hospitality which was to crown the day's enjoyment. The duchess's fête, like everything which she did, was unique of its kind.

Need I say that the *allée verte* was the centre of attraction? that as the men all went there, the women followed (of course this book is written by a horrid man); or put it rather, mutual attraction brought them there together. Need I add that when once there they would not budge? The good-natured duc requested the ladies who had drawn to move on; the equally good-natured and charming duchesse did the same by the men. Not a bit of it; in their admiration for themselves and for one another they would stand there to see and to be seen. In the midst of this terrific squeeze, which was alone unprovided for by an *affiche*, "This way In," and "This way Out," the language of all nations was going on, as each exhibited his or her prize. "Beautiful," "Real Sèvres, I declare." "What! gingerbread? what are you going to do with it?" "Make Charlie carry it." "What a lovely piece of point to be sure, Clara!" "Ah! Lady Ellington!" "Charmingly painted!" "Doesn't Madame von Schönstein look well? slightest possible cast in the eye, but what a skin!" "Is that the Austrian or Prussian coat?" "There's a bonnet!" "What a love!" "What did you get, Lady Mary?" "A small Skye; what did you?" "A turquoise brooch; let's change." "Certainly, if you wish it." "What shall I do with the terrier?" "Put him in the boot of the drag." "Who's that, Mr. Carrington? do tell me, you know everybody;" "Mrs. Noseworthy, of Noseworthy." "Lovely

woman." "Glad you think so; you're the most charitable woman alive." "Dear me, that stupid woman has sent me out without a handkerchief." "Here, my dear, I've just drawn this; don't lose it, the lace is very good;" and so it went on, in English, French, and German.

It so happened that at this time, the crowd being very great, Stafford Carrington had with difficulty made his way to the neighbourhood of Mrs. Noseworthy, who was a very good woman, but no beauty, being large, coarse, red, and loud, when once more the pressure compelled him to stop. He did so in front of Madame von Schönstein, and was lost in admiration of her very white skin, and that very slight cast in her vixenish-looking eyes, when he heard his own name mentioned almost in a whisper. He turned suddenly round, and there he saw for the first time since her father's death, Ellen Bradfield. She stood slightly in advance of her mother and Laurence Bradfield. To say that there was no awkwardness in their salutation would be untrue, but the inconvenience of the situation was overbalanced by the real pleasure of the meeting, and violent emotion is not fitted for ducal gardens or good society.

After the first greetings were over, the men fell into their ordinary habits of conversation; something was to be said about the hounds, the studs, the house, yachting, and the clubs, the men who had disappeared, and the new-comers in the county since last season. The ladies were not long in entering upon Paris fashions, scandals, and Long Champs, in return for London, the new tenor, Rotten Row, and the fulness of Ascot. Sir Michael was not there, Stafford being enlisted because there was no house.

"Stafford, will you go with us to call upon the Bradfields?" said Lady Carrington, a few days later in the season.

"I don't think I can to-day, mother."

"Why not? I think we ought to call upon them, under all the circumstances."

"So do I; but I was there yesterday."

"Yesterday! were you? and whom did you see? Laurence Bradfield?"

"No; I saw Miss Bradfield."

"And her mother, I suppose." Lady Carrington was pumping; indeed, giving herself unnecessary exercise in that way.

"Her mother was out of town, with some friend at Twickenham, and not coming home till the evening. Bradfield was down at the House."

"And what in the world did you talk about?"

"Indifferent things, my dear mother. Amongst others, I asked her to be my wife."

"Stafford, you're mad; what do you mean to live upon? what will your father say?" And Lady Carrington did not *pretend* astonishment at the very rapid movements of her son.

"Most likely what his father said, when he applied for permission to marry you." Stafford had been a little spoilt since Eton.

"And what in the world was that?" said she, looking up, and laughing, in spite of the serious nature of the news he had told her.

"Ah! that, of course, I can't tell, but it's quite clear what my father *did;* with or without his permission he married you; and I don't think he has ever regretted the day, my dear mother. I shall most probably follow his excellent example. There, don't look grave, mother dear, I know you mean to give way some day or other. Aunt Philly has made it all right with Sir Michael; what Walter would call 'squared the governor.' But I can't go with you, because I have only just sent a letter to Mrs. Bradfield. I think you had better postpone your visit till to-morrow;" and she did so.

Everybody knows the steps by which these natural conclusions of happy novels are arrived at in polite society. How little shedding of tears, how little emotion externally, how well the anxious, doubting heart is taught to yield to circumstances; but it must not be imagined that if the refinements of life, and the demands of the world, polish the surface, so as to reflect only the objects which fall lightly upon it, the human heart has no depth. It has been taught to exhibit the surface as more readily appreciable; but it does occasionally happen that Cupid falls upon his legs, in the highest circles of fashion. Why that little god has legs as well as wings I cannot tell, unless it be emblematical of

those slow-coaches, who walk into love with their eyes open, instead of falling or flying into its embraces by pure accident or from inconsiderate rashness. Love in a cottage would have exhibited a grand array of tears, swoonings, a heartless father, an unsympathising mother. Love in a palace has such things; but keeps the exhibition of them only for the servants' apartments. Embryo duchesses do not drown themselves in the Regent's Canal.

There was a remonstrance at his precipitancy, when Sir Michael came to know all about it, just as there was a remonstrance in Charles I.'s reign, to which nobody paid any attention. Stafford Carrington, for reasons of his own, thought it right to speak out; and he did so. He thoroughly understood all the circumstances by which he had been thwarted, and the grounds on which he had been "refused," as Lady Carrington called it, until Stafford got out of temper. Then she called it so no more; but took the bride-elect by the hand, and rejoiced in her daughter-in-law.

"And where are you going to live, Stafford?" said Sir Michael, as he leant on his son's arm along Pall Mall aud up St. James's Street, towards the end of the season.

"A small house in May Fair, Sir, I conclude is the right thing with our income; we can come and see you at Spring Vale, if there's room in the Manor House, if not——"

"You'd better go to Sommerton. In fact, suppose you go to Sommerton altogether."

"What! upon three thousand a year, Sir?"

"D—— three thousand a year! it's about twelve; it's only going back again. Poor girl! it would have been hers, if she'd had the good luck to have had no grandfather at all," said the old gentleman, enigmatically.

I do not see how Sir Michael exactly made it out, for we all know that the reverse of that is the case; and that she has to thank her grandfather for the husband she has. It will all come right in the end.

"And here comes Laurence Bradfield." He looked remarkably handsome; he had the same charming *insouciant* smile in his clear blue eyes and the same idle manner of walking, a heavy gigantic roll; but his figure had been set up since his absence, and his club habits had given him a *tournure* which he otherwise might not have possessed.

"Where are you going for the autumn, Bradfield? that is, when the session is up?" inquired Sir Michael.

"To Scotland."

"And afterwards?"

"I have no idea; perhaps to Ireland, to buy some horses."

"Come to us; you know more about the partridges at Sommerton than we do; and Lady Carrington expects your mother and sister."

"I'll come, Sir Michael; when shall it be?"

"Whenever you like."

It is needless to add more to our story.

In the winter of that year, the Rev. Walter Carrington had a double duty to perform; and it is perhaps worthy of remark that one clergyman was considered sufficient to marry two couples without the intervention of bishop or dean. The house was full and the festivities were great; and the tenants of Spring Vale and Sommerton came in for their share of the good things. Aunt Philly did all but dance.

"Well, Sir," said Stafford, as he stepped into the carriage that was to take him to the rail for Paris, "I hope you approve of your son-in-law."

"I don't think a man of his weight, who can ride one horse from Everton's osier-bed to Sommerton, at the pace we went, can be a very bad one."

I've seen these two men since: Laurence Bradfield and Stafford Carrington. It is difficult to say, in the race of life, *which is the winner.*

P.S.—Lord Mentmore has just arrived in London, he has been introduced to the belle of the season. She is the handsomest, best-bred, and wealthiest woman in town, a charming person mentally and physically; and he is perfectly satisfied that, having accepted him, she marries him for himself alone. Poetical justice required this termination. Had I not been able to state this as a fact, we should have had our publisher's box swamped with inquiries for his "whereabout." If it is any satisfaction to the fairer portion of our readers to know it, Scarsdale has the family living and is still unmarried. His cousin knew too well how to fall to kill himself with hounds, but died of rheumatic fever caught by riding a quick twenty minutes in a waterproof coat, and taking it off afterwards. Aunt Philly, who sur-

vived him by a few years, when she heard of the death of the Reverend John Mucklestone, of Broomfield, Yorkshire, and her friend Scarsdale's nomination, declared her conviction that her nephew Walter was right for once in his life. John Mucklestone was what he had always asserted, "a good one to go."

THE END.

PRINTED BY W. H. SMITH & SON, 186, STRAND, LONDON.

19—8—63.

SELECT LIBRARY OF FICTION, 2/- PER VOLUME.

MARIAN WITHERS.

BY MISS JEWSBURY,

AUTHOR OF "THE HALF SISTERS," "SORROWS OF GENTILITY," ETC.

"One of the noblest works of fiction that has been for some time published in this country."—*Observer.*

"A clever and brilliant book, full of the results of varied knowledge of life. The personal sketches remind one of Douglas Jerrold. The style is admirable for its caustic and compressed vigour. 'Marian Withers' will take a high rank among contemporary fictions."—*Weekly News.*

THE JEALOUS WIFE.

BY MISS PARDOE.

"A tale of great power. As an author of fiction, Miss Pardoe has never done anything better than this work."—*Globe.*

CHARLIE THORNHILL.

OR THE DUNCE OF THE FAMILY.

A NOVEL.

BY CHARLES CLARKE.

"Though professing to be a mere sporting novel, and adopting the unassuming second title of 'The Dunce of the Family,' CHARLIE THORNHILL is obviously the work of a man who is a classical scholar, not from pedantry, but from real love of the thing, and who has had plenty of that experience which we understand by the expression 'seeing the world.' He is quite at home in the drawing-room, and can make an English lady look and speak like an English lady—very refreshing after the Kate Coventrys and Aurora Floyds, and other deplorably fast damsels, who frighten a young man out of his wits, and tire an old one to death. He can send his heroine to see the hounds 'throw off' without making her talk like a horse-dealer and ride like a fiend. Though she does 'come to grief,' which for stage purposes is inevitable, the catastrophe is neither indecent nor improbable; its eventual result is aristically veiled and postponed, so as to keep up our interest to the end of the story; and her character is so well drawn, while at the same time so much is left to the reader's own imagination, that he falls as deeply in love with frank, sunshiny, blue-eyed Edith Dacre as does Charlie Thornhill himself."—*The Times.*

SOLD BY ALL BOOKSELLERS, AND AT THE RAILWAY STATIONS.

SELECT LIBRARY OF FICTION, 2/- PER VOLUME.

MY UNCLE THE CURATE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE BACHELOR OF THE ALBANY," "CLOVER COTTAGE," &C.

"The publication of the book is opportune. It is, in effect, a sermon, witty and wise as one of Sterne's, on the moral of the rate in aid. The author has seen as well as read much, and the tastes of the scholar, most agreeable when corrected by the experience of the world, give a peculiar charm to his writings."—*Examiner.*

"In genial, good-natured satire, we think he has now hardly an equal."—*Daily News.*

WOMAN'S RANSOM.

BY F. W. ROBINSON,

AUTHOR OF "MILLY'S HERO."

"'A Woman's Ransom' will fascinate the attention of the reader to the very end."—*John Bull.*

"The interest of this story is unflagging."—*Observer.*

CASTLE RICHMOND.

BY ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

"A novel, by the author of 'Doctor Thorne,' is certain to yield a good deal of amusement to all novel readers of both sexes, who have the necessary amount of culture and knowledge of the world to bring to the reading of them. 'Castle Richmond' is a clever book; full of acute and accurate observations of men and manners in the south of Ireland, besides containing a good story concerning people worth telling stories about."—*The Globe.*

THE COUNTRY GENTLEMAN.

BY "SCRUTATOR."

"There is plenty of stirring interest in this novel, particularly for those readers who enjoy manly sport."—*Messenger.*

"An exceedingly well written and admirably told story. The characters are cleverly drawn. The incidents are very interesting."—*Sporting Review.*

SOLD BY ALL BOOKSELLERS, AND AT THE RAILWAY STATIONS.

SELECT LIBRARY OF FICTION, 2/- PER VOLUME.

THE WHITEBOY.

A STORY OF IRELAND.

BY MRS. S. C. HALL.

"Full of vivid descriptions, life-like sketches of character, dashes of genuine Irish humour, with occasionally scenes exhibiting the strong passions and affections of the Irish people, drawn with exceeding energy and power."—*Atlas.*

"Indisputably Mrs. Hall's best novel."—*Athenæum.*

THE OGILVIES.

A NOVEL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE HEAD OF THE FAMILY," "JOHN HALIFAX," ETC.

"The Book is charming. It is written with deep earnestness and pervaded by a noble and loving philosophy; while, in giving form to her conceptions, the writer evinces at once a fine and subtle imagination, and that perception of minute characteristics which gives to fiction the life-like truth of biography.

THE BACHELOR OF THE ALBANY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "MY UNCLE THE CURATE."

"The 'Select Library of Fiction' is enriched with that capital novel, 'The Bachelor of the Albany.' We are glad to meet with it in a cheap form."—*Weekly News.*

NEVER FORGOTTEN.

BY PERCY FITZGERALD.

"In 'Bella Donna' he has produced a remarkable but repulsive sketch. In 'Never Forgotten' he has elaborated a picture which has many merits, and in which the most prominent figure deserves very high praise. The character of Captain Fermor is an original creation, and deserves to be studied. . Mr. Fitzgerald's hero bears no great resemblance to Mr. Trollope's Crosbie. . Crosbie is a commonplace man of society. But Fermor's is an exceptional character: his figure stands out in prominent relief from the crowd of walking gentlemen of fiction. . . . The minor characters are for the most part thoroughly life-like. Liller Brett is a capital sketch; Hanbury forms another; and so does Sir Hopkins Pocock. Lady Laura, too, is excellent, and there is grim humour about the description of her last struggle. Indeed, the story is full of humour, and there is real nature in it also."

SOLD BY ALL BOOKSELLERS, AND AT THE RAILWAY STATIONS.

CHARLES LEVER'S WORKS.

RAILWAY EDITION,

WITH PICTURE COVERS BY H. K. BROWNE (PHIZ).

Jack Hinton, the Guardsman. 2s.
Harry Lorrequer. 2s.
The O'Donoghue: an Irish Tale. 2s.
Barrington. 2s.
The Fortunes of Glencore. 2s.
Luttrell of Arran. 2s.
Sir Jasper Carew. 2s.
Maurice Tiernay. 2s.
A Day's Ride. 2s.
One of Them. 2s.
Charles O'Malley. 750 Pages. 3s.
The Daltons. 708 Pages. 3s.
Knight of Gwynne. 630 Pages. 3s.
Dodd Family Abroad. 672 Pages. 3s.
Tom Burke of "Ours." 704 Pages. 3s.
Davenport Dunn. 772 Pages. 3s.
Roland Cashel. 618 Pages. 3s.
Martins of Cro' Martin. 704 Pages. 3s.

The collected works of CHARLES LEVER in a uniform series must, like the Novels of Scott, Bulwer, Dickens, and Thackeray, find a place on the shelves of every well-selected library. No modern productions of fiction have gained a greater reputation for their writer; few authors equal him in the humour and spirit of his delineation of character, and none surpass him for lively descriptive power and never-flagging story: and the whole Press of the United Kingdom has lavished the highest encomiums upon his works.

The above can be had in sets of 18 vols., bound in cloth gilt, price £3.

SOLD BY ALL BOOKSELLERS, AND AT THE RAILWAY STATIONS.